

# Coffee to Go | Easter 2 | Year C

## SUMMARY KEYWORDS

Easter season, resurrection, Holy Spirit, spiritual journey, darkness to light.

## SPEAKERS

Blake Smith, Karin Peter

### **Karin Peter** 00:28

Welcome to Coffee to Go, where we center ourselves in the scriptures, seasons and holy days of the Christian tradition. I'm Karin Peter, and I'm here with Blake Smith, and we welcome you on the journey. We are in what's called "The Season of Easter". And this season lasts from Easter day, which was last week, all the way into May, and the day of Pentecost. It is 50 days from Easter to Pentecost. It has to do with a lot of traditions, both from both Judaism and early Christianity, that we don't have time to go into because it would be our full episode. So instead, we will just say we are on the second Sunday of Easter, and let's check out where we are with Jesus this week. Well, we are still listening to John's account of the resurrection and the aftermath of that surprising encounter, and here we find the disciples of Jesus huddled in fear following the resurrection. Think about it, crucifixion, resurrection. It's gotta be scary. They do not know what's going on, so they are fearful of the powerful religious leaders who are opposed to Jesus or threatened by the ministry of Jesus. And it is into this climate of fear that Jesus appears.

### **Blake Smith** 02:03

And we are still in the 20th Chapter of the Gospel according to John. Today, we are reading from the 19th through the 31st verse picking up where we left off from Easter Sunday.

When it was evening on that day, the first day of the week, and the doors were locked where the disciples were for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood among them and said, "Peace be with you." After he said this, he showed them his hands and his side. Then the disciples rejoiced when they saw the Lord. Jesus said to them again, "Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, so I send you." When he had said this, he breathed on them and said to them, "Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them. If you retain the sins of any, they are retained. But Thomas, who was called the Twin, one of the twelve, was not with them when Jesus came. So the other disciples told him, "We have seen the Lord." But he said to them, "Unless I see the mark of the nails in his hands, and put my finger in the mark of the nails and my hand in his side, I will not believe." A week later his disciples were again in the house, and Thomas was with them. Although the doors were shut, Jesus came and stood among them and said, "Peace, be with you." Then he said to Thomas, "Put your finger here and see my hands. Reach out your hand and put it in my side. Do not doubt but believe." Thomas answered him, "My Lord and my God!" Jesus said to him, "Have you believed because you have seen me? Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have come to believe." Now, Jesus did many other signs in the presence of his disciples that are not written in this book. But these are written

so that you may continue to believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that through believing you may have life in his name.

Why does this matter? We often quickly turn our focus on, as we talked about I think last year even, we quickly turn our focus to this doubting Thomas, as he has been named. And there are some other things that are going on here that I want to focus on. This passage we start, here are the disciples locked in a room for fear of the Jews. And I can just imagine what it might have been like. We kind of criticize the disciples a little bit too. Why weren't they just out doing that? Why did they deny Jesus? But in some of the contentious situations that we have in our current world and understanding, I understand what it means to stand against power and the fear that, that brings fear of retribution and what might happen. I mean, they had put Jesus to death.

**Karin Peter** 05:20

But it wasn't like a mass of Jews that they're afraid of. It was these religious leaders who happened to be Jewish who had all the power. Yeah.

**Blake Smith** 05:26

Absolutely, and that's a very important distinction, because we're not trying to, we don't, well, we don't want to encourage antisemitism. This wasn't about all the Jews. This was about those who were in positions of power, who themselves, were fearful in some ways, and that's why they were doing the things that they were doing. The disciples that are gathered, they're experiencing all kinds of emotions, angst and anxiety and terror and despair and grief, and if we're being honest, probably even a little bit of guilt. I know for myself when I don't stand up to power in a situation because I am afraid of what might happen to me, I often end with guilt feelings and really struggling with that. And it's actually, I think, a good thing that I struggle with that. I need to do better, but it's okay for us to struggle. Jesus, like I said, had been brutally tortured and killed, and they're probably thinking, Now what do we do? Now what do we do? So into this, steps Jesus, and he in his appearance, breathes the Holy Breath. He bestows on them peace and forgiveness and a cleansing of their feelings of guilt and panic, and he sends them out of that place. And so he breathed on them the Holy Spirit. And so it was in a churchy word, it was empowering, but more importantly, it was a calming sense of peace that was being provided here in the midst of all these feelings. But of course -

**Karin Peter** 07:19

With this one, it's like last week where we talked about Mary, it was dark when she showed up at the tomb, and she was in a dark place. Physically, in a dark place. Emotionally, the same thing is happening here. Even though Jesus had appeared to the disciples, they still didn't know what to really make of this. They're in a dark place. They're fearful. And so when I read that, so as the Father sent me, I send you as a seventy I think about that as, oh yeah, he sends us out in mission. But when I look at this again, it's like I am sending you from this dark place, right? You need to be in this dark space. There's light out there.

**Blake Smith** 08:01

Yeah, that's a great point, because, like Mary, like you said, I mean, she's in the morning, and it's still dark, and now this is evening. So, there's the physical light, darkness issue, and also the darkness of

their soul, with all of these emotions. So, Jesus is bringing light. Thanks for that, Karin. I think it's important for us to understand because so well, what I started to say earlier was that we know from this passage, or we gather from this passage, if it's as it actually happened in the moment, Thomas was not there in that first gathering as the story is told, and he gets a bit of grief for saying, well, until I do, until I see his hands and the nails and the nail prints, I'm not going to believe. But he is experiencing the same emotions that the rest of the disciples were and they had, had the opportunity to be physically in the presence of Jesus and receive that calming spirit. And he deserves the same encounter. He deserves the same encounter. He deserves as a disciple who's going through this darkness to have that same encounter with Christ, and that's all he's asking for. And here it's about experiencing Christ in person. But I think one of the things that we can take from this is that we all experience God differently. So there might have been someone there, or that wasn't there, who believed because someone told them. But for Thomas, who had been in intimate relationship with Jesus, as the other disciples had been, he needed that particular thing. Some of us need time and contemplation. Some of us need to be engaged in social action to encounter God. Some of us do it through study, and some of us encounter God in relationships with others. There's so many ways that we can encounter the living Christ and encounter the Divine, and so we just need to be mindful of that. So if you're one of those who experiences God in a way that you are not often experiencing, it's okay for you to ask to have the type of experience you need to accept and believe and understand and connect with Christ. So don't, don't carry guilt for that. Fear and joy, doubt and faith that are being experienced here are also part of our spiritual journey. And it's not a linear thing. It is up and down depending on the circumstances in our life, and it's kind of this ongoing dance that is complex, and so wherever you are, again, no guilt for needing a particular way to get out of your darkness, but know that there is a way out of the darkness and into the light. So some questions we might ask ourselves are, "Would I need to see?", or "What do I need to see today in my own journey with the Divine in order to make that connection?" "Do I need to see?" "Do I need to hear, to feel, whatever?" "How is it that you connect with the Divine?" "What is it that you need today?", and "How do I find spiritual solace? Is it through contemplation, through social action, through study, through relationships, how do I find spiritual solace?"

**Karin Peter 12:07**

So, I have to admit, Blake, I'm a for most of my life. I'm a need to see person. That's how I understand myself, because I'm so pragmatic. So I'm right there with Thomas, right? Yeah, I want to see too. But as I've gotten older, I have been able to depend more on the community seeing. So, I might not be the one to see. You might be the one to see. But because I'm in relationship with you, I'm trusting your experience as well. But that's hard to do, and so I find that it changes throughout our life, the way that we primarily connect with God. But for the most part, in my humanity, I'm probably closer to how Thomas is than some of the others. I'll just name that right up front. So how will we experience this passage on the second Sunday of Easter? This what's called the upper room. And I think if we remember that Jesus showed his wounds to Thomas, he was willing to do that. We all bear wounds of some kind in our own human and spiritual journey, and so this week, be vulnerable and see if sharing your own woundedness with someone else, whether it's in prayer or in conversation or through a spiritual practice, whatever that looks like for you, see if sharing your own woundedness with someone allows you to heal or find strength for your journey in a new way. So that will be our weekly practice for this second week of Easter.

**Blake Smith 13:56**

Our blessing today comes from Donna Ashworth in the book *Wild Hope*, and it's called, "Let Your Wounds Close". Karin, in our experiencing, talked about wounds, and I am particularly mindful because of my own family circumstance of the woundedness of having to be a caregiver. So, I just want you to think as you hear the blessing and think about it, things might be going really well in your life. I hope that they are, but there can be small wounds from being worn down by things that you might feel guilt for even feeling that way. So, I just am mindful of that as I heard Karin talking about the experience. So, allow yourselves to acknowledge your woundedness, and so I give you this blessing from Donna Ashworth, "Let Your Wounds Close".

Do not pick at them as they heal. There is much valor in this act of stitching up raw flesh, soul and heart, much science, much magic, much closure. Let them. Do not press them to make them hurt. Do not scratch them when they itch. Let your wounds heal, my love. It's okay, it's commendable in fact, to be half skin, half scars in this life. But you have no time to be walking around unhealed, with open, festering wounds. Let them close. Let them seal. One day, not so far away, you will trace your finger around the silvery shine of their new surface, and remember what you overcame.

Blessings to you this week. Thanks for joining us here at Coffee to Go. We invite you, of course, to join us next time for the next part of our journey through the liturgical seasons and holy days of the Christian tradition.