

Coffee to Go | Fifth Sunday of Easter | Year C

SUMMARY KEYWORDS

Easter season, post resurrection appearances, farewell discourse, love one another, table fellowship, welcoming the other, Christian discipleship, Holy Spirit.

SPEAKERS

Blake Smith, Karin Peter

Karin Peter 00:27

Welcome to Coffee to Go where we center ourselves in the scriptures, seasons and holy days of the Christian tradition. Your hosts are Blake Smith and me, Karin Peter, just for fun and mix that up a little bit this morning, and we welcome you on the journey. So, we are still in the Easter season, which is from Easter day until Pentecost, 50 days of Easter. So, get out those chocolate eggs. And during the Easter season is in the scriptures, we find Jesus appearing to the disciples in what are called post resurrection appearances. He offers last teachings and promises the divine presence to always bring comfort and be with the people. So, this week, we are with Jesus. He has just sent Judas Iscariot out. He's basically said, You know what you're going to do. Go do it. So I'm paraphrasing the gospel. You can go find that yourself. So then after Judas leaves, he begins to really share with the disciples. And this is part of what's called the farewell discourse, the final words before departing. It's a literary device. It's a rhetorical device that people used in different ways, still use in different ways, in writing literature, and the Gospel writers use it here. So let's see what that sounds like Blake.

Blake Smith 01:58

Well, I first want to just acknowledge that you made post resurrection appearances sound so elegant. You did that so nicely. A couple weeks ago, when we first talked about this, I stumbled all over that that was very

Karin Peter 02:13

Big words, absolutely.

Blake Smith 02:15

Word to the wise, let Karin say the big words. Our Scripture today we are, as you said, back in the Gospel of John, again, we are in the Gospel According to John chapter 13. And it is short passage today. It is the 31st through the 35th verse.

When he had gone out, Jesus said, "Now the Son of Man has been glorified, and God has been glorified in him. If God has been glorified in him, God will also glorify Him in himself and will glorify him at once. Little children, I am with you only a little longer, you will look for me, and as I said to the Jews, so now I say to you, where I am going, you cannot come. I give you a new commandment that you love

one another. Just as I have loved you, you also should love one another. By this, everyone will know that you are my disciples. If you have love for one another."

Why does this matter? You know, this passage is one of the simplest messages, but one of the hardest to live out. It seems so simple. Just Jesus says, just as I have loved you. I've shown you how to do it. I've modeled it for you, just as I have done it, you should also love one another. So, as you said earlier, so go do it, [yeah]. And like you said, also, this is in this passage, which is part of the farewell discourse. Obviously, this is one of the things, if not the thing, that Jesus considered most important when you think about it. I remember when I was at Graceland. I don't know if they still do it, but they used to have a last lecture series, and I got invited to speak at one of those, and to really sit down and think about, if this was the last thing I could say to folks, what would it be? And this is Jesus' farewell discourse. These are words that are so very important that he just wants to imprint them, apparently, on their hearts and their minds, because he says it several times in just a couple of verses, as I have loved you, so I want you to love one another. Love one another is at the heart of what Jesus wants us to do. And so, you know, the disciples, they've watched, they've learned, they've discussed, as I said, Jesus has modeled these things. They have even acted out some of this with Jesus. Sometimes a little reluctantly, like when we think about the feeding of the 5000, they're like, come on, Jesus, send them home. We're tired. But ultimately, they acted it out. They were there with Jesus, and they have been learning all this time what it means to love one another, and we experience those same things. You know, when we engage in table fellowship, and I know that was our practice, either last week or a couple of weeks ago, to take someone and take something to someone and share with them in table fellowship. None of us can deny, maybe sometimes it's with the people we love and are comfortable with, but the powerful things that can happen in those moments of table fellowship. If we expand that, then with others, as Jesus did, our world also expands. So, another piece of that is, well, welcoming the other, and that is welcoming, not just those who we love, those who are easy to get along with, but welcoming, truly welcoming the other and affirming the other. Jesus acted out washing feet. So, we might not want to do that in today's culture, but the act of humble service is a piece that we have learned from watching Jesus, and it's something that the disciples had learned, and that is what Jesus is ultimately saying to the disciples in this moment, Love one another and love being an action word, not just a feeling of the heart, but something that is lived out and acted out. Extending love to all kinds of people is what Jesus did, and to Samaritans and Pharisees, to the sick, to women, to children, to both the oppressor and the oppressed. I mean, there was no one that we find in Scriptures that Jesus turned away or didn't extend love to love one another. So, in our context, there are some immediate things that come to mind, and welcoming the stranger, we have an issue in our in the US culture in the country, and I know that it's also a world issue with immigrants and refugees and thinking about how we turn our love toward them, and whether or not we act in peace. If we act in peace, then we do things like Jesus did. We feed the hungry, we care for the sick, and we look for and out for the lost. So, some questions we might ask ourselves in that context are, Whom do I find it hard to welcome and why? And do I act in peace? Am I moving toward Jesus, the peaceful one? This is something that we, in Community of Christ, have been talking about now for several years. Am I moving toward Jesus the peaceful one are my actions, my thoughts, my interactions, likened to the peaceful way in which Christ interacted with others? And what does that mean in my context? So those are some pretty tough things for us to think about, but very important for us to think about. When Jesus makes it pretty clear that loving one another is what matters most.

Karin Peter 08:28

So I think, I think in my context, because I live in the United States, this is so interesting, because sometimes people hear this love one another, and it means they think it means love one another, as in love the people in your own group, in your own vibe, in your own Friendship Circle, whatever it is. But that's not what Jesus means by one another, because he already showed that one another includes everybody. And so in our context, the Christian dialog, and then using Christian very lightly here, because the Christian dialog is all about excluding one another, excluding those who aren't like us or who don't look like us or worship like us or speak like us or whatever, And claiming that as part of Christian discipleship, and Jesus is clearly modeling here and saying the end of his on-earth ministry that that's not okay. And so, we have to look at our own selves and say, oh dear. Have I fallen into the trap of this kind of public dialog about Christianity that's leading me in a way that is actually moving me away from Jesus, the peaceful one? We have to be honest with ourselves. Am I spouting that kind of language? Am I posting those kinds of things on Facebook or liking those kinds of posts on Facebook? What am I actually doing? In here with my life, and if it's not this direction, then why not? And so, this is a good week to live in that question. What does it really mean to love one another and to go out of your way to love someone who is other than you, very other than you. So back to that first question, Who do I find it hard to welcome and why? So, I had this experience all you know, thought out that would be really simple and nice, but instead, I want to share it. I don't know if I've shared this here on Project Zion. I might have, but I want to share this children's peace practice that we did with our, with our book club. And so, in your imagination. So, if you're a contemplative great, close your eyes and have a little you know, prophetic imagination. If you're not, just listen. But in your mind, think of someone with whom you do not get along, so someone you would find it hard to welcome, whether it's a person you don't like, or a whole tribe of people you're uncomfortable with, or, you know, whatever it may be, picture that in your mind, and then picture yourself building a good solid wall between you and them. Build it up really high so you can't see over it. And think about how secure you're making yourself feel you are feeling much better, because now you have a wall between you and the other people. But now, now you have this commandment to love one another, and so you have to figure out what you're going to do about this wall. So now, in your imagination, go find a ladder and get that ladder and bring it over to the wall, lay it up against the wall, and crawl up that ladder like not don't scurry up, don't, you know, don't get too excited about this. Love one another. Just climb up and peek over the top of the wall at the other just peek over the wall and look at them. And while you doing that, try to hold them in a, in a cradle, let's say of peace within yourself. You can pray, if you're a prayer. You can sing, if you're a singer. I think of our friend Larry McGuire. He might sing at this moment, whatever it is to help you navigate your, this commandment to love the other as you're peeking over the wall, and then as you begin to release some of that fear or anger or discomfort and allow yourself to be more in community with the other. Go back down your ladder, and you'll find that there's a door in your wall. So farewell discourse, love one another. Are you going to open the door?

Blake Smith 12:53

Well, well, well, I want to, I want to add one thing to that is, I was thinking about this when you were when you were talking about it, one way that we can love one another is, of course, we can pray for

one another. And you know, we that that's something, but to listen to the other, find that person who is other to you, and commit to listening. Now I'm not talking about sitting down with them so you can debate with them or convince them, or whatever, but just commit to sitting and listening. And listening with an open heart. That is a love language for some people to truly be heard and and I could, you know, I could share testimonies of of times when I sat down with someone that I really probably would have preferred not to, and ended up becoming actually friends at a deeper level, yeah, because we knew we could speak our truth and just be listened to. And when you offer that to someone, it is, it can be an act of love. So, when you open that door, when you come back off the ladder and you open that door, try to find the courage to just listen. [awesome] You might not only see their heart change, but also your own heart change. So, our blessing today comes from "Prayers for the People." It is by Terry Stokes, and it is adapted a little bit just to use a little bit more inclusive and current language

God who makes every effort to restore us to right relationship with you and with each other, we know that when we do everything we can to mend relationships, we are walking the road you have paved. When we have listened, repented, accepted responsibility, expressed contrition, made restitution and requested forgiveness, help us to rest in that, if there be no improvement, yet, let us not veer from our commitments, but rather continue to pray earnestly for the heart healing, which is the specialty of the Holy Spirit who reigns with you and our Lord Jesus Christ, one God in faithfulness, undeterred. Amen. [Amen.]

Well, thanks for being here with us at coffee. To go again this week. We invite you to join us next time, for the next part of our journey through the liturgical seasons and holy days of the Christian tradition.