

Coffee to Go | Last Sunday of Easter | Ascension Sunday

SUMMARY KEYWORDS

Jesus, rest, discipleship, story bearers, disciples, wait, rest, bless, 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. I'm Karin Peter here with Blake Smith, and we welcome you on the journey. So this Sunday is the last Sunday of the Easter season for this year, and it's also called Ascension Sunday. The Ascension of the Lord doesn't always fall on a Sunday, but it's often celebrated the Sunday closest to Ascension Day. And so it's called Ascension Sunday. And on Ascension Sunday, the Scripture depicts Jesus departing earthly life, walks with his disciples, and he leaves that and returns to God's presence. So that's what we're going to hear about today to kind of answer our question, where are we with Jesus this week? Well, it looks like maybe we're saying goodbye. So let's hear the Scripture today. Blake...

Blake Smith 01:32

All right, today's passage comes from the Gospel of Luke, the 24th chapter, and it is the 44th through the 53rd verse.

Then he said to them, "these are my words that I spoke to you while I was still with you, that everything written about me and the Law of Moses, the Prophets, and the Psalms must be fulfilled." Then he opened their minds to understand the Scriptures, And He said to them, "thus it is written, that the Messiah is to suffer, and to rise from the dead on the third day, and that repentance and forgiveness of sins is to be proclaimed in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem. You are witnesses of these things, and see, I am sending upon you what my father promise. So stay here in the city until you have been clothed with power for one high." Then he led them out as far as Bethany, and lifting up his hands, he blessed them. While he was blessing them, he withdrew from them and was carried up into heaven. And they worshipped Him and returned to Jerusalem with great joy. And they were continually in the temple blessing God.

Now on Palm Sunday, we had Jesus entering Jerusalem from Bethany. And just a little quick tidbit of trivia here as well. In Second Samuel, we read that King David, when he was leaving, fleeing Jerusalem, he fled through the east gate, which is the gate that Jesus entered on Palm Sunday. And though Second Samuel doesn't specifically mention Bethany, it does say that David went up to the top of the hill, which is a similar description of the town of Bethany, and that's where he was given a donkey

to ride away from Jerusalem. So just an interesting tidbit, I'm not sure exactly what significance it has. But as we're talking about fulfilling prophecy, and coming around full circle, I thought it was really interesting. So, it's here in Bethany that he tells the disciples to stay in the city. And he leaves Jerusalem and heads towards Bethany takes them out as far as Bethany, there's also apparently some real significance to Bethany, it could be that it's just the closest town when you leave the east gate, and that's where you kind of take a stop in a resting point.

Karin Peter 04:08

Blake I think it's the suburb where the Costco is because everybody

Blake Smith 04:15

Yeah, and if there's any, anybody who lives in Lamoni, that would be a, Bethany is where the Walmart is. It's the nearest town. This is all symbolic of the fulfillment of Scripture and prophecy. I mean, he's mentioning that he says, These are my words that I spoke to you. And it's so that the law of Moses and the prophets and the Psalms would be fulfilled, and we could look at a bunch of different scriptures where that's foretold. One in particular because he is specifically mentioning Jerusalem, is in Isaiah, the second chapter, the third verse. It says, Let us go up to the hill of the Lord to the temple of Israel's God, He will teach us what He wants us to do. We will walk in the paths he has chosen for the Lord's teaching comes from Jerusalem. From Zion, he speaks to his people. So there's a lot of symbolism and symbolic importance here. What is really important about this passage is that Jesus is commissioning his disciples, yet again, right before he is ascending into heaven. He tells them that they are the witnesses, they are the ones who are going to be the story bearers of new life, they are the ones that are going to be the story bearers of repentance and forgiveness. And he tells them to wait there, and that he will send what has been promised, so that they will be empowered, and that is the Holy Spirit, so that they will be empowered to be creative, and authentic and brave and all the things that they need to be the story bearers. And it wasn't just for them. That commissioning, again, talking about symbolism, and being symbolic, is also pointing toward us. So it's there where Jesus blesses them. Another symbol that happens there, he raises his hand, these are the hands that still show the marks of the nails in his hands. It's in some ways, a symbol, also of vulnerability. But he blesses them, he raises his hand and blesses them, and, again, tells them to wait and rest for the Spirit to come so that they will be empowered to do. It's that that time of rest is really important, especially as we sit here on this Sunday in between Easter and Pentecost. At the end of the Easter season, we have been on an absolute roller coaster ride, in those last days of Jesus's ministry, coming into Jerusalem on Palm Sunday, all of the events that took place during Holy Week, the crucifixion, the resurrection, emotions, they've got to be absolutely drained. So, here, Christ gives them a blessing again, and allows them a time of rest, because right around the corner, will be the coming of that promised Holy Spirit through the Pentecost and things are going to get crazy again. So it's just important that we see that this is ushering in another busy time of active discipleship and story telling and story bearing, we might also take heed to that need for rest as we consider our own discipleship, we also need that rest. So and the other thing is that, you know, Jesus says that the Spirit will clothe you. So if you need something really positive to look at, who doesn't like new clothes? Right? Who doesn't like new clothes?

Karin Peter 08:04

Pentecost apparently, what's not to love there? Yep. Right?

Blake Smith 08:08

Right. I don't necessarily like to shop but I like some new clothes. Every once in a while.

Karin Peter 08:12

Somebody like by the time I've been through a really active, you know, period of ministry and I need some kind of downtime. My attitude also needs to be re clothed, if you will. So it's really a good thing to get some of those new clothes on Pentecost.

Blake Smith 08:31

Jason Byassee writes, Jesus must withdraw to make room in the disciples, for the Spirit to come, which is another interesting perspective. We look at the ascension, Jesus is going to be with God. But Jesus needs to give space for the His disciples to rest and be ready to receive what is yet to come. I like I kind of liked that image. Yeah, that's so in the meantime, though, hang out here, go get some rest be a blessing to one another. I mean that they've gotten the blessing from Jesus, but they're also in and we look back over the last couple of weeks, as we've talked about abiding in the vine and abiding in one another, that we're also called to be a blessing to one another. The waiting in this case can be the blessing. The waiting can be the blessing. I that's a that's a message I need to hear myself because I don't like to wait. I don't like to wait. I like to get it done or move on or stay busy. So let's take the time here to rest and be with one another. And bless one another. Some questions that we might ask ourselves and picking up on that idea of being clothed, clothed with the Holy Spirit. Jesus will send clothing of the Spirit. But the question is, Will we wear it? Will we wear it? Or, are we gonna want to return it? You know, it's, it's become way too easy to order things, try them on and send them back these days with online shopping. So

Karin Peter 10:17

Yeah, that's really interesting when you when you really look at that image of being clothed, yeah, Jesus is sending it, but will we wear it? Will we really were the the clothing of discipleship?

Blake Smith 10:31

Yeah, and the other side of that is, how will we make room for the Spirit in our life? We might get really comfortable in that waiting space where Jesus has withdrawn and the Spirit hasn't come and we're not challenged, we can just rest. But that resting time is to make space for the Holy Spirit.

Karin Peter 10:56

Yeah. Good point. Well, let's talk about experiencing this. This scripture this week, there's this wonderful pattern in the scripture that sets that's the, the waiting, the resting and the blessing, are seem to be the Active Words, that's that stand out today as we read this scripture. So I'm thinking and experiencing this week that maybe it is simply to kind of rest in prayer, listen to our breathing, kinda let that live with us. And so we did a counting prayer last week. So this might feel a little bit like that, but it's a resting blessing. It's a blessing for that resting. Wait, rest and bless. So it's the breathing in and breathing out. So you were gonna breathe in the same three words, and then breathe out those same three words. And we'll just do it three times. And you can do that as many times this week as you feel like doing it. But it's simply to breathe in and as you breathe into, to kind of let those three words be in

your being in your centering. So you breathe in with weight, rest and bless. And then you breathe out. Weight. Rest, bless. And do that three times in sequence. And that will be our way of breathing, waiting, resting and blessing in our breathing this week.

Blake Smith 12:41

Well, speaking of blessings, we'll finish off today with a blessing by Jan Richardson, and it is entitled "Stay."

I know how your mind rushes ahead, trying to fathom what could follow this. What will you do? Where will you go? How will you live? You will want to outrun the grief. You will want to keep turning toward the horizon, watching for what was lost to come back, to return to you and never leave again. For now, hear me when I say all you need to do is to still yourself ... is to turn toward one another ... is to stay. Wait and see what comes to fill the gaping hole in your chest. Wait with your hands open to receive what could never come except to what is empty and hollow. You cannot know it now, cannot even imagine what lies ahead. But I tell you the day is coming when breath will fill your lungs as it never has before. And with your own ears you will hear words coming to you new and startling. You will dream dreams and you will see the world ablaze with blessing. Wait for it. Still yourself. Stay. Amen.

So thanks to all of our listeners for joining us here at coffee to go. 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.