

Coffee To Go | Trinity Sunday

SUMMARY KEYWORDS

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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. Today is Trinity Sunday. And this day is the first Sunday that follows Pentecost. In Christian tradition, we celebrate the Trinity, the idea of a God who is experienced by us in kind of three persons is the language of that God, the Creator, often referred identified as the God the Father, God, the Jesus Christ, or God, the Redeemer, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, the Comforter or Sustainer. And often the Spirit is referred to in the feminine in both scripture, and in Christian tradition. So in our understanding then today, especially when we focus on the Trinity, we're talking about a God who is one God, but it's also three somehow, and it's confusing. And if it's confusing to you, well, great, you join the 2000 or so Christians before you then have been confused by Trinitarian thought. You join Blake and I in the same way. That's part of exploring God as one and three. And so we do believe in one living God who meets us and is revealed in us through Jesus, and this guide moves in all creation as the Holy Spirit. And we find this in our basic beliefs, that we affirm the Trinity, a God who is in God's self, a community of three. And, you can look up the full statement on that on the community of christ.org website under basic beliefs. So having shared all that kind of I feel like I just offered an official disclaimer for some kind of new prescription drug but that's, that's kind of necessary sometimes when we try to sort out what Trinity means. So where are we in the Scriptures with Jesus this day on Trinity Sunday? Well, we are eavesdroppers today. We are with John in John's gospel, and we are listening in and overhearing a conversation that Jesus has with a man named Nicodemus. So Blake, let's listen.

Blake Smith 02:59

Allright, and that scripture passage today comes from the Gospel according to John the 3rd chapter, the 1st through the 17th verse.

Now there was a Pharisee named Nicodemus, a leader of the Jews, he came to Jesus by night and said to him, "Rabbi, we know that you are a teacher who has come from God, for no one can do the signs that You do unless God is with that person." Jesus answered him, "Very truly I tell you, no one can see the kingdom of God without being born from above." Nicodemus said to Him, "How can anyone be born after having grown old? can one enter a second time into the mother's womb and be born?" Jesus answered, "Very, truly, I tell you, no one can enter the kingdom of God without being born of water and Spirit. What is born of the flesh is flesh. And what is born of the Spirit is Spirit. Do not be astonished that I said to you, you must be born from above. The wind blows where he chooses, and

you hear the sound of it, but you don't know where it comes from or where it goes. So it is with everyone who was born of the Spirit." Nicodemus said to Him, "How can these things be?" And Jesus answered him, "Are you the teacher of Israel, and yet you do not understand these things? Very, truly, I tell you, we speak of what we know and testify to what we have seen, yet you do not receive our testimony. If I have told you about earthly things, and you do not believe, how can you believe if I tell you about heavenly things? No one has ascended into heaven except the one who descended from heaven, the Son of Man. And just as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up, that whoever believes in Him may have eternal life, For God so loved the world that He gave His only Son so that everyone who believes in Him may not perish but may have eternal life. Indeed, God did not send the Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him."

Well, there's so much in this passage and we have to focus these episodes a little bit. So I want to focus on Nicodemus's encounter with Jesus. I'm glad Karin, that you already took care of all of the answers regarding Trinity. Yes, I am a part of that group of people that that struggles only to articulate what that means. Because it's one of the mysteries of God, I think that we have to just step forward in faith with, so but, and we talked a little bit last week in our episode when we were talking about Pentecost, and the whole reaction of the group of people to the indwelling of the Spirit, the Spirit coming in, in such a way that they were bewildered and confused. And we're not talking about the Spirit here, we're talking about Jesus' teachings. But we see another example of where here this learned man, a leader of the Jews, Jesus even says, aren't you a teacher of the Jews? So he is one of the pious leaders of the Jews, and yet he is confused by Jesus' teachings. He didn't always see what Jesus was pointing to. Because this was so new and different than all the things that he probably had been teaching for a while, I mean, but, even though here was this man who was a wealthy member of the religious ruling class, he was born into his status, by you know, it was his birthright, sitting with a man who was a peasant from none other than Galilee, of all places. And yet, it's apparent that Nicodemus could see something there. He believed in something, whether it was the signs or the healings, we don't know what exactly it was drawing Nicodemus in, but he kept showing up, he shows up to Jesus in darkness, because, you know, as it is, with anybody who's kind of seeking something new, and they're a part of a different group, they don't want to be judged by that group. He's trying to figure this out, without the pressures and judgment. And so, you know, he comes back to Jesus, this whole thing doesn't make sense. I've already been born what how do I be born again. And Jesus, of course, is talking about a transformation, as much as a physical birth, more so than a physical birth, a transformation when we are born into the kingdom of God, and changed and transformed. That's how we begin to understand what it is that God wants in our lives. So, Nicodemus is there, we're going to see him again and again, throughout the scriptures. He's going to be there during Jesus' trial. He's going to be there to anoint Jesus with Joseph of Arimathea, and put him in the tomb. He really was, even if somewhat secretively captured by what Jesus was doing, and saying, and, and teaching. And we're kind of drawn in by this passage into the idea of being a people who are the children of God, born into God's kingdom, God's presence and asking that question, what does that mean? And just like the idea of Trinity, it can get really confusing. We have to ask ourselves, what does it mean if God loves all of the world, friend and foe alike? That's different than the culture we live in. We're taught to make those distinctions, and God is essentially trying to get us to quit making those distinctions, and see each other as children of God. So, it's easy for us, if we're the pious are the ones who are trying to be

religious, and follow what Jesus is teaching. It's hard for us to understand how God could love us and those who doubt. If you don't, if you don't have doubt, I wonder whether you're thinking about it at all. Because there's so much confusion. Doubt is a natural part of the process. And I think actually God would revel in our doubt, that because that means that we are processing that we're moving toward God. So, on Trinity Sunday, we read about this God who is divine and human and Spirit three in one who loves us in our incompleteness, in our confusion, and in our errors. I think that's an important piece for us to hear. Some questions we might ask are, when have I been confused about what it means to follow Jesus?

Karin Peter 10:30

Well, daily, ... if I'm really honest, I'm always trying to, to navigate, you know how to be, how to live into that most fully. I don't think a day goes by where I don't at some point have to stop and kind of question myself a little bit on that.

Blake Smith 10:57

Well, if you know if you're engaging in the world, and really paying attention to what Jesus taught, there are always questions about how we interact with each other, how we interact with creation, how we interact with God. So, I have to say for me, too, it can be very confusing. Another question is, Where am I willing to keep showing up? Like Nicodemus? Where is it that I'm willing to show up even if I'm confused, in my spiritual journey, in human relationships, in the presence of divine mystery, in just daily life? Where is it that we're willing to keep showing up? And finally, what does it mean to me to be a child of God? What does it mean to me to be a child of God? I think that when we explore that question, and we kind of need to explore that question first before we can grasp what it means for others, to also be children of God.

Karin Peter 12:04

Yeah. So, let's, let's think a little bit back to Trinity. I know growing up in church on Sundays, I've witnessed a lot of people trying to explain the Trinity using something that has three aspects to it. And I can remember hearing the story about St. Patrick, and the Shamrock and the three leaves and using that to explain the Trinity, whether that's legend or myth, or truth is, doesn't matter. It was still used to explain it. I've seen people use an egg to explain it with the shell and the white, and the yolk. So, I'm going to share my favorite way, which I think I shared last year on Trinity Sunday, but you know, if you didn't listen, last year, it's all new. So, what is a pencil. So, for me, a pencil kind of explains the Trinity because you have the wood that the pencil is made from, you have the lead inside the pencil that actually writes that you can see, and you have the eraser that kind of erases when you make mistakes. So for me, God is the wood and Jesus is the eraser that redeems me from my errors and the lead is the Spirit that I can actually see and to have witness of when I am in one with God in working in league with the Divine One and God's purposes in the world. So this week, afraid to pencil or whatever it is that works for you that has three parts to kind of symbolizes the completeness of God's love for you in the world and put it somewhere where you notice it each day and just take a moment to kind of be present like Nicodemus, you don't have to be certain you can be confused and doubting and all the other things that we are rushed in the morning or frustrated or even angry, but notice it and notice its presence in your life this week.

Blake Smith 14:09

I want to just say that I liked that image of the pencil, but for me, I don't know about anybody else. It probably doesn't describe any of our listeners, but I think that my pencil needs a bigger eraser. I have a separate gum eraser on my desk because I tend to have days where the mistakes seem to pile up. And ...

Karin Peter 14:32

So you're saying grace looms large in your life, Blake?

Blake Smith 14:37

Yes it does. All right. Well, our blessing comes today from Meta Herrick Carlson and it is called "Knowing Your Worth."

There is kindness and love to show and tell you how much you are worth. Tend yourself like fertile ground. Recognize what deserves to take root in you, bearing beauty that knows what matters.

And get a gum eraser.

All right. Well, thanks to our listeners as always for being with us here today at Coffee to Go. We invite you to join us next week for the next part of our journey through the liturgical seasons and holy days of the Christian tradition.