

# Coffee to Go | Proper 6

## SUMMARY KEYWORDS

parables, poetry, God, holy invasion, disciples, Jesus, journey, mustard seed

## 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, and I'm here with Blake Smith. We're your hosts, and we welcome you on the journey. We're still in Ordinary Time. And you remember it goes all the way through the year from Trinity Sunday, right after Pentecost, until the Reign of God Sunday, right before Advent starts again, late this Fall. So this week, we're still hanging out with Jesus as he does some teaching. And he is still using those parables to get people to thinking and so hopefully we'll talk a little bit about that, and what that really looks like for the disciples and others who listen to his teachings. So Blake, let's hear the Scripture.

### **Blake Smith** 01:21

All right. Our Scripture today comes from the Gospel of Mark again, and it is the fourth chapter, the 26th, through the 34th verse. He also said, "The kingdom of God is as if someone would scatter seed on the ground, and would sleep and rise, night and day, and the seed would sprout and grow. He does not know how. The Earth produces of itself, first, the stock, then the head, then the full grain in the head. But when the grain is ripe at once he goes in with his sickle because of the harvest has come." He also said, "with what can we compare the kingdom of God? Or what parable will we use for it? It is like a mustard seed which, when sown upon the ground, is the smallest of all the seeds on Earth. Yet when it is sown, it grows up and becomes the greatest of all shrubs, and puts forth large branches so that the birds of the air can make nests in its shade." With many such parables, he spoke the word to them, as they were able to hear it. He did not speak to them except in parables. But he explained everything in private to his disciples. So as we know, Jesus uses parables a lot in the, in the Scriptures. And they're short stories, with some kind of message in them. But they're not always easy to understand, as we find with the disciples that there are many times actually that the disciples asked for an explanation, or Jesus offers an explanation. William Greenway, who I have quoted before, is a theologian from the Presbyterian tradition. And he compares deciphering parables to learning about poetry. Now, for those of you who love poetry, you'll connect with us right away. And for those who don't. I understand. I'm with you, but here's what we can do with the poem. You can learn about meter and alliteration and syntax and allegory, and the like to rather dissect the parts of the poem and understand it. Well, that's where I break loose. I like poetry for the sake of poetry, and the beauty of it. But that is something that we can do with with poetry. And that is, but that isn't the purpose of the poetry. So then here, I do get to connect because to fully experience a poem, you need to live in its

embrace, understanding that ... understanding it as a head project, but experiencing it as a Heart Project. And that can inform the way we look at parables.

**Karin Peter** 04:20

Absolutely, absolutely. It also helps in trying to look at some of this, like, I know people who are really factually based and they'll say the mustard seed isn't the smallest seed in the world and the mustard, you know, bush isn't the biggest as like, Well, no, but if you take smallest and greatest from a poetic sense, it makes sense what Jesus is saying he's not trying to be legalistic about the tiniest seed or the greatest bush. It's a it's more poetic license or even if we want to really stretch it, maybe a little hyperbole in there.

**Blake Smith** 04:56

Yeah. Well, what's important is the difference from the beginning to end and the potential they're in, right? So again, that's, I appreciate that permission there that is given by saying it's not just about understanding it as a head project, because that's where I may falter, but being able to experience it as a heart project is where I can find interest and joy in poetry. So with parables, we can dissect it to try to figure out what exactly was Jesus saying about the coming reign of God. But we can also experience the parable and live in its space for a while. So we need to probably do a little bit of both. Again, from Greenway, "parables push us with ears that can hear, towards hearing that brings transformation and forgiveness." If we get, try to get too caught up in the words, we may miss the experience and truly understand the heart of what Jesus is getting to there with as regards the reign of God. So in these parables, we hear about gardening and growth in God's coming reign, just as we ourselves grow and are transformed when we allow ourself to live in God's presence. So some questions we might ask ourselves are, Do I more often think of myself as the gardener? Or the growing plant? And what does that say to me? Or about me? In what ways do I sense or measure my own spiritual growth? So when we talked about smallest and greatest or smallest and largest.

**Karin Peter** 06:54

Or even the grain when he talked about the planting the grain and that it's the stock and the head and then the, the grain and then the full ripe grain. Those stages. Yeah. Yeah.

**Blake Smith** 07:09

Finally, you know, God's reign is like a mustard plant. It's, it's an invasive weed, some might say. And so we might ask ourselves, when have we felt invaded by God's redemptive presence? We don't think of weeds in positive ways. But here's a good way to look at this. How do we feel invaded by God's redemptive presence? Or when have we felt that? And did we respond with resistance? Or welcome? And again, why? Either way.

**Karin Peter** 07:46

Holy invasion, not in a, not militaristic sense of ancient Christian history, but rather in spiritual sense.

**Blake Smith** 07:55

Exactly. Exactly. And don't go out and get your Weed Be Gone to try to keep God away.

**Karin Peter 08:00**

Really, really. Oh, that's, that's fascinating. So I'm thinking a way to kind of live in this this week. And since William Greenway kind of provided us, I think, a spiritual practice without knowing it, or maybe he did in his remarks. But, but this experience is specifically for our friend, and yours, perhaps, Bishop Carla Long. So Carla, if you're listening, this is for you. But it'll be good for all of us, as well. So this week, find a poem that you like, or even perhaps one, you don't like. Find a poem. And when I say that, I do not mean a limerick, and I'm sending that to you, Tony Chvala-Smith, that we're not talking limericks. We're talking poems, and find a poem and read it several times this week, just to experience it, don't try to figure it all out, or figure out how it, you know, speaks to your life or anything like that. Just read it and rest in it. And then let your brain kind of process. What do you like about it? What is this time of rest and resting with it saying to you, and how is your Spirit responding to it? How is it invading you? And what feelings does it invoke? You could even do this as a family, reading a poem and then together as you hear it, resting in it for a few moments and then sharing reflections about how it's invading your space. A good place to start if you don't have a bookshelf of poetry, like I've got in my living room is Google. And I can recommend Billy Collins who is a US Poet Laureate. He has a Beautiful conversational poem called "Today." So you can google Billy Collins "Today," or William Shakespeare, "Sonnet 94" is particularly lovely and would be a good pondering poem. If you're a book person, I would recommend a couple of books. And I'm a book person, there's a book called A Poem for Every Day of the Year. And it's a great way to use the beautiful language of others as a spiritual practice every day. Or if you're around kids, or have kids in your family, there's poems, to learn by heart, a collection put together by Caroline Kennedy, that I can recommend for you. So with that, Blake I'll end my sharing my love affair with poetry and turn it back to you for blessing.

**Blake Smith 11:01**

We all need balance in our life. So I appreciate that love the poetry that you have. Our blessing today comes it's a stanza from a much longer Hobbit type poem ("Instructions") by Neil Gaiman and I say Hobbit type poem, just the poem as a whole kind of has a Lord of the Rings feel to it. But this is a particular passage that is so connected to where we are in our journey with Jesus. So,

When you reach the little house, the place your journey started, you will recognize it, although it will seem much smaller than you remember. Walk up the path and through the garden gate you never saw before, but once and then go home, or make a home and rest.

So just a note to our listeners, we'll put those book titles in our show notes so that you can refer back and find some poems. Maybe that will help you connect.

Thanks, everybody for joining us here this week 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.