

Coffee to Go | Ordinary Time | Proper 4

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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. So let's check out where we are with Jesus this week. This is what's called Proper 4, and Proper 4 means it's the fourth Sunday of Ordinary Time, or it's also called the season after Pentecost. And it's the time where we talk about people doing the work of discipleship, and doing the work of sharing the good news, and during the work of God's restorative purposes on Earth. So this is a time that's part of a long stretch of time that doesn't have any festivals or feast days. So, sometimes people think it's not very exciting, but it actually is because we get some really great passages in Ordinary Time. And this is one of them. We're in Mark, and we're with Jesus on the sabbath. And, he gets confronted by some adversaries. And we get the hint that these people are kind of threatened by him. So Blake, let's see what's going on.

Blake Smith 01:42

All right, well, our Scripture today comes from the Gospel of Mark, the second chapter, 23rd verse through the third chapter, and the 6th verse.

\One Sabbath, he was going through the grainfields. And as they made their way, his disciples began to pluck heads of grain. The Pharisees said to him, "Look, why are they doing what is not lawful on the Sabbath?" And he said to them, "Have you never read what David did when he and his companions were hungry, and in need of food, how we entered the house of God, when a biter was high priest, and ate the bread of the presence, which it is not lawful for any but the priests to eat," and he gave some to his companions. Then he said to them, "the Sabbath was made for humankind and not humankind for the Sabbath. So the Son of Man is Lord, even of the Sabbath." And he entered the synagogue and a man was there who had a withered hand. They were watching him to see whether he would cure him on the Sabbath, so that they might accuse Him. And He said to the man who had the withered hand, "come forward," then he said to them, "Is it lawful to do good or to do harm on the Sabbath, to save life or to kill?" but they were silent. He looked around at them with anger. He was grieved at their hardness of heart and said to the man, "Stretch out your hand." He stretched it out, and his hand was restored. The Pharisees went out and immediately conspired with the Herodians against him, how to destroy him. So why does this matter? This is the first, and you mentioned this was, we were going to get some opposition in this passage. This is the first of several passages in the Gospel of Mark, where the Pharisees just really get into this time of antagonizing Jesus. And so these opponents, the religious

leaders and the people of status, they, they're publicly confronting Jesus 11 times in Mark, and they're trying to shame him. And each time they are the ones who come away looking bad. Jesus kind of turns the tables on him.

Karin Peter 03:52

So Blake, as you were reading that something like this little vignette appeared in front of me, which, you know, happens, and I go on these tangents, but here's what's actually going on. Looks like I had never noticed this. Because when I read scripture, sometimes I get, you know, kind of this, this pious, you know, it's all holy, not human here, because we're talking about Jesus' perspective. But I want to talk about the human perspective. So, when you read, when you read that when the Pharisees criticize Jesus for the grain, what he basically said to them when he goes, have you not read what David did, but he basically said to them was what do you not know your Bible? I mean, that you imagine being a Pharisee and have some itinerant preacher throw that in your face? Ouch! That's horrible. Yeah. I mean, Jesus. But, he did it in a way they couldn't. You know, they can't argue with what he said.

Blake Smith 04:44

Yeah, you can't say you can't say anything back to that.

Karin Peter 04:47

Yeah. But out if I'm a Pharisee, I'm fuming by now. So yeah.

Blake Smith 04:53

So yeah, so you know, they're trying to shame him, but he turns the tables on them. Like I said, So, and Jesus responds to their challenge about the wheat with the healing, a sign of the love that God has for all of God's people, not just the leaders, not just those with status. And this really makes him mad. So you've build... they're building on this, this challenge about they know the Scriptures, and then he really makes them mad. And the question that's raised here is this idea of rest, about Sabbath. What do we do on the Sabbath? And we have to ask, you know, is rest simply not working? Or is rest, a blessing that frees our minds from that which occupies us, distracts us, or consumes us? And, by doing so then allows us to make space for divine encounter? Dr. Renata Firth, Associate Dean of Hispanic engagement suggests this about the Sabbath, she says that "Sabbath or rest is a time to create space for God, to bring wholeness and holiness into an encounter." And the thing is, is that those who were reading this passage in those days would have known that that would be the way they understand rest. And it's kind of changed for us and become the simplistic work or not work, rest are not rest. And so, it's important for us to just understand that in this passage, that this rest is more than about just taking a break and getting a glass of water, and then going back to work. It's about intentionally making space for God to enter and to have an encounter.

Karin Peter 04:54

So, if we look at it from that perspective, like that Jesus wasn't breaking the Sabbath at all, because by healing the man, that's exactly what he was doing, he was making space for that divine healing encounter. So you can actually make the case even more strongly that Jesus wasn't breaking the, the idea of sabbath.

Blake Smith 07:17

Absolutely, absolutely. kind of changes the whole idea and perspective. Yes, so some questions that we might ask ourselves, given this understanding are, have I made my "busy" ness or an idea of just doing nonstop work if I made that a virtue, or a source of pride, or even my identity? This, that question kind of smacks me in the face? Because, you know, I have just gotten back from vacation and realized that rest is okay. And it's actually good. But I'm one who, oh, I, oh, I work all these hours. And I do this. And I do that and not, not for other people. That's all going on in my head. Because that's my identity. That's ultimately what I expect for myself. So yeah, that's, I'm guilty of that. So we need to ask ourselves that question. Another one is, how can I make space in my life for Sabbath? Not just rest, but for Sabbath, space for divine encounter, and for holiness, if you will, to rest in me? And then finally, like the man with the withered hand, where in my life, am I in need for healing and wholeness? Things we might consider this week.

Karin Peter 08:53

Yeah. All good questions. So, I think about how we could expect, keep the experience of this scripture with us this week. It's all about making space. And it reminds me a little bit of Psalm 51, where it's "create in me a clean heart," only here it's created me a clean space, create in me a space for divine encounter. So look around your surroundings, your office, your desk, your cubby hole, your your home and clear out a space and go there during the week and make a point to free your mind and, and your, what's in your vision and just create a space where you can rest where you can just clear everything away and just let holiness rest in you. Or, if it's not physical space, make a space in your schedule. For the healing that comes in sacred community and do something with your family, whatever that means to you. You and go on a respite walk. Maybe we'll call it a make space-walk to simply spend time in one another's company and allow holiness to rest in you in that community way.

Blake Smith 10:17

All right. Well, you have a special blessing today is from a female Celtic saint, Saint Tegla. So, here we go...

Companion and friend, journey with us to steal point of our beings where we are one with God. We can't do it all or have it all. May we let go of the feverish pace that exhausts us. May we come to the refreshing springs of divine love and drink from abundant grace. Strengthen us to make the changes necessary so we can live a more balanced, healthy and holy life. Amen. Yeah.

Well, thank you, everybody 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.