

# Coffee To Go | Year B, Proper 5

## SUMMARY KEYWORDS

Crowds, Jesus, forgiveness, family, eternal life

## SPEAKERS

Karin Peter, Blake Smith

### **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 week, our question, as always is where are we with Jesus this week, and Jesus is still teaching and healing. And he's getting better and better at making religious authorities, Scribes and Pharisees, uncomfortable, so much so that they begin to hatch a plot to get rid of him. And so it's kind of in the midst of this journey of them getting angrier and angrier that we find this passage and this one is pretty chaotic. So Blake, let's, let's listen in.

### **Blake Smith** 01:15

All right, so our passage today comes from the Gospel of Mark, the third chapter, the 20th through the 35th verse, and as I read this today, pay attention to how many varying voices are kind of coming at Jesus in the midst of this and imagine yourself in a chaotic situation, and maybe me feel some of that, feel some of that pressure.

Then he went home, and the crowd came together again, so that they could not even eat. When his family heard it. They went out to restrain him, for people were saying, "He has gone out of his mind." And the scribes who came down from Jerusalem said, "he has Beelzebub and by the ruler of the demons, he casts out demons. And he called them to him and spoke to them in parables. "How can Satan cast out Satan? If a kingdom is divided against itself, that kingdom cannot stand. And if a house is divided against itself, that house will not be able to stand in a Satan has risen up against himself and is divided, he cannot stand, but his end has come. But no one can enter a strong man's house and plunder his property, without first tying up the strong man, then indeed, the house can be plundered. Truly I tell you, people will be forgiven for their sins and whatever blasphemies they utter, but whoever blaspheme against the Holy Spirit, can never have forgiveness, but as guilty of an eternal sin, for they had said, he has an unclean Spirit." Then his mother and his brothers came and standing outside, they sent to him and called him, a crowd was sitting around him. And they said to him, "your mother and your brothers are outside asking for you." And he replied, "who are my mother and my brothers?" And looking at those who sat around him, he said, "here are my mother and my brothers, whoever does the will of God is my brother and sister, and mother."

So why does this matter? Again, we turn our attention for a minute to this crowd of voices that are screaming for attention. And we know through the scriptures that crowds are following him all the time, he rarely gets quiet time unless he makes that time to go up on the mountain or out on the boat or that

kind of thing. There's, always people around. And in this passage, we've got the scribes and the religious legalists, not just leaders, hear that, legalists, because they're going by a very legalistic reading of Scripture, that are trying to denounce him and shame him as we've spoken about, I think in the last episode. It also includes his family, who have been told that he is half crazed. There are people in the crowd that will healing. There are people who want him ostracized. There are some who just want him to come home. And in fact, it appears that some are using the concern of his family against him, hoping they will take him home. And that's the context, that's the context that Jesus addresses when he's talking about this legalism. He's addressing this legalism that has turned not from a way to understand and walk with, and be with, and be in relationship with God, but it's turned into a way to justify religious hatred of the other. The leaders who are against Jesus are trying to label him and his actions as demonic, and Jesus's response is to call them out as blasphemous and, and note that they are speaking against that which is holy. Jesus teaches and heals by divine power, and to say otherwise, which these people are doing, is to speak against God. And that brings up a really important thought about this passage that we need to talk a little bit about Karin, and that is this idea of the unforgivable sin.

**Karin Peter 05:30**

Oh my goodness, Blake, I've heard that I've heard that phrase preached from fool but since I was a little kid, that there's one unforgivable sin.

**Blake Smith 05:39**

Yeah, absolutely. And it comes from this passage. That idea comes from this passage, but I would argue that it comes from a misreading of this passage. To deny the Spirit's power and presence isn't unforgivable in and of itself. But what it does is it blocks us from living a life of forgiveness and grace, we're actually living outside the life of forgiveness and grace. The eternal sin, where eternal here means spiritual, is to live outside of a healthy relationship with the Holy. So William Greenway, a commentator, writes, "it is vital not to equate eternal life with everlasting life." And he says there that, that we believe in everlasting life, and but "eternal life should be understood not in contrast to physical death, but in contrast to spiritual death," [Karin: Right] That is in contrast to living alienated from God. So he says, "eternal life is not about future reality, but about one's present living relationship to God." So if we live in denial of the Spirit, we also live in denial of the source of grace and forgiveness. When we deny the holy, we close our eyes to the holiness in our lives, and therefore we cannot receive it. That is why we cannot have forgiveness.

**Karin Peter 07:23**

That puts a whole different spin on this passage, though, [yeah.] So the unforgivable sin isn't so much that you're damned forever. But rather, that you're keeping yourself from having the blessing of the presence of the Spirit with you from walking in that kind of way. It's a very different way to look at what sin is, don't you think?

**Blake Smith 07:54**

Absolutely. In some ways, I think, maybe an analogy that, well, here's one that comes to my mind, I think with some addictive behaviors, when we are in denial that they exist, we can't begin to heal. Now, that doesn't mean that when we don't deny it, that healing is easy. But at least there is the opportunity

to receive healing. And so when we're denying the presence of the Holy Spirit, we are basically denying our ability to receive the grace and forgiveness and to live in that relationship with God. So some questions we might ask ourselves this week are, am I living within or outside of a relationship with the divine presence? What religious voices are creating a cacophony of sound in my world? What are those competing voices? And how do I sense the holy in the midst of Christian nationalism, exclusivism fundamentalism and highly politicized environment.

**Karin Peter** 09:11

That is our context of chaos in the United States, isn't it?

**Blake Smith** 09:16

It is, it is. And, you know, some of the commentators in this arena write about in terms of our current context, when we listen to one opinion, and take that as gospel fact, we close ourselves off to other perspectives, and possibly even facts. So we're not able to hear other people's perspectives, right or wrong, when we close ourselves off. Finally, the last question we might ask is, do I consider myself family or in relationship with all those who seek God's purposes?

**Karin Peter** 10:06

Once again, Jesus makes his point sitting around a table with colleagues, friends, and crowds. And he makes that kind of teaching moment at that table of fellowship.

**Blake Smith** 10:21

Yeah, I have a T shirt that reads "Family is more than blood." [Yeah, absolutely.] Reminds me of that.

**Karin Peter** 10:27

Yeah, it fits right with this passage. So I think about living in this scripture this week, and how we can kind of remember what we're learning from it. I'm thinking about spending some time turning down the noise, and sit with the Holy Spirit in my life. And maybe in your life, whatever that looks like for you to turn down the noise, it might be turning off the red notification dots that show up on the apps on your iPhone that demand your immediate attention? Or is it not using your phone or tablet for a period of time? Or is it even refraining from using any of those streaming devices that we use to entertain ourselves? And just ask yourself, What am I using that's so noisy and so chaotic in my life, that it closes myself off from the Divine? Or, am I willing to open myself to the presence of the Spirit in my life? So turn, turn down the noise at at some time this week, and see what comes to you from that question. And just rest in in that place this week.

**Blake Smith** 11:51

Right, and if you are doing that, then you can make some space for deep listening, which leads us into our blessing which comes from one of our favorites Meta Herrick Carlson. And it is "A Blessing for Deep Listening."

Deep listening, there is sacred power in your silent attention. Your full presence and patience melt agendas and comebacks. Your listening can stretch multiple dimensions, making room for stories and voices that have been restless, to bless the world with more truths.

So, thanks for joining us here 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.