

Coffee To Go | Proper 11, Year B

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 Scripture, seasons and holy days of the Christian tradition. I'm Karin Peter here with Blake Smith, and we welcome you on the journey. So, our question, as always is, "Where are we with Jesus this week?" And this week, we are still an Ordinary Time. And so, we're listening to Jesus' teaching and preaching. We're with him and his disciples and are a moment of review, Blake, disciples, as we know, are the followers of Jesus or students of Jesus might be a word that we would use ... learning from Jesus. And as we are with Jesus, we are experiencing a bit of a chaotic scene. So, I'll just set the stage a bit for Blake to share our Scripture, the disciples are clamoring for Jesus' attention. It makes me think of toddlers in a preschool, when I read this, everybody wants the teacher's attention. So, the disciples are trying to get Jesus' attention to tell him excitedly about what they've been up to. And crowds form wherever Jesus goes, and here they have been following, begging for healing, trailing him from place to place. So, the scene is loud and crazy. And Bible scholar. Max Lee. writes that it is both exciting and exhausting, all at the same time. So, that's where we are with Jesus. What's happening, Blake?

Blake Smith 02:03

All right, well, first, I want to clarify, thanks for making that updated description of disciples. I know sometimes when I'm reading and just reading through quickly, I get disciples and apostles mixed up, and kind of have to go back and think about okay, now who is Jesus talking to? So, apostles are disciples, but disciples are not necessarily apostles, they are the followers.

So, our Scripture today comes from Mark chapter 6, it is the 30th through the 34th verse, and then skips to the 53rd through the 56th verse, I'll just say that to you our listeners, would encourage you to read the in between, but the lectionary passage, skips those and has these verses.

The apostles gathered around Jesus and told him all that they had done and taught. He said to them, "Come away to a deserted place all by yourself and rest a while," for many were coming and going, and they had no leisure even to eat. And they went away in the boat to a deserted place by themselves. Now, many saw them going and recognize them. And they hurried there on foot from all the towns and arrived ahead of them. As he went ashore, he saw a great crowd, and he had compassion for them, because they were like sheep without a shepherd. And he began to teach them many things. When they had crossed over, they came to land at Gennesaret and moored the boat. When they got out of the boat, people at once recognized him and rushed about the whole region and began to bring the sick

on mats to wherever they heard he was. And wherever he went into villages or cities or farms, they laid the sick in the marketplace, and begged him that they might touch even the fringe of his cloak, and all who touched it were healed.

So again, we've got two pieces of the Scripture, we skip the in between. So, what's really happening is two approaches to two different places. And in both of those places, the crowds anticipate his arrival, and are there waiting for him? So even though the passage begins with Jesus acknowledging the disciples' weariness that they've been doing a lot, I mean, and if you just to take a minute, you know, they come in, they're telling him if we remember, we go back up just a little bit in Mark where Jesus sends them out and says, don't take anything with you, go into a house, if they receive you stay there, if they don't, you know, all that. So they're coming back and they're relating, and there seems to be this excitement, even though there's weariness there. They're telling them all that he's done, and he recognizes their need for rest. And so, he invites them to a deserted place. But what happens then, is he gets there and, to the location, and he sees the people, and he's moved with compassion, and it's a gut-wrenching compassion, because he's seeing the depth of poverty and need and brokenness of these people. And so, he sets aside, the official rest, I mean, they're not going to go and hide in a place and say, "No, we can't talk to you now, we're gonna go." He creates opportunities for rest in the midst of ministry. But ultimately, Jesus is going to respond to the immediate need that's before him. And when I read this passage, and I can, I can just imagine doing a dwelling on the word on this passage and saying to folks, all right, think about the phrase that captures your attention. And I would imagine that many would stop on the part that says, "for many were coming and going, and they had no leisure even to eat." We certainly understand in our culture today, with all of the calls on our attention, especially those with children, who are probably playing in multiple sports, and they're not even just playing in sports locally, they're on traveling teams. And there are schedules that are crazy. And, you know, parents, both working full time and coming home, and then taking care of family, and all of that. And in the midst of this, there's still this call, to serve the people of God, to live out our lives as disciples. And so, with the ministry and travel and teaching and expectations of the people in the passage, rest was needed. And we also need rest. And so it's difficult for us as disciples to look at this passage and say, Well, Jesus' model was, well, even when Jesus needed rest, he turned his attention to the people for care. And, some days, I just can't do that. So how do I? How do I find the balance between discipleship and the ministry to which I'm called, and finding that time for self-care, and I think that it's important that we do find that time for self-care.

Karin Peter 07:17

That whole part like about, he had compassion on them. And so, they were like sheep without a shepherd. We talked earlier that, what that means to when he saw them as sheep without a shepherd. And, and I've always thought that meant that they were people that were kind of lost, maybe and didn't have a spiritual home. But as I read to prepare for this, that's not so much what it was referring to. It was referring to something different. It was referring to being a sheep without a shepherd, it was referring to people that you said there's poverty and sickness and fear and brokenness and desperation, people who had been abandoned by the social and religious and political institutions, if you will, or structure that was supposed to care for them. So, caring for widows and orphans was important. And yet, Here were people sick and in need, so to be a sheep without a shepherd is to be lost. Because what was supposed to protect or, or sustain you has abandoned you. So, what does that

mean, in the context of Jesus having compassion? Because that starts to get a little bit social justice-y, and I know that makes some people uncomfortable when Jesus does that. But how do you see that?

Blake Smith 08:41

Yeah, well, I think one of the important pieces here in the passage that is kind of veiled, if you will, you this reference to sheep without a shepherd. There are two connections being made here, again, in a bit of a veiled way, but the political and social and religious leaders of the people for generations had abandoned them. And really, in the history of Israel, there were two prophets or two leaders, not prophets, leaders that were faithful in the midst of that, that did live out that and that was David. So, you have reference to David there, and also Moses. So, we'll see pieces of that throughout Mark. But Jesus is that one who is going to be the faithful leader. And I think that that includes providing for the needs of these in a social justice way, to create systems to feed the poor, and to feed those who are in need, to heal sickness, to eliminate fear, and that's fear not just, some of it is fear of the empire that is lording over them, but you think about families or even individuals, the fear of where's my next meal gonna come from? How am I going to pay my taxes? How am I going to get crop to be successful in the midst of a drought? All of these things are fears. We're not talking about people that had a lower class and middle class and an upper class. There was no middle class, this, these were people who were destitute and desperate, because of the systems and functions around. Yeah.

Karin Peter 10:37

Yeah. And Jesus challenges that with, with compassion.

Blake Smith 10:41

Yeah, yeah. So, you know, the rest comes by sitting in the grass, and waiting for the food to be dispersed and, and the rest also comes from the time of taking to listen to the people. I mean, he is providing rest, for the people in the midst of this as well, by taking the time to sit with them, to companion with them, to listen to them. It didn't take a lot of extra energy on Jesus's part, but did a tremendous amount of healing for the people, did great things for the people. And it wasn't convenient. I mean, it was really clear that they needed rest. It seldom is convenient. It's not convenient for us today, either. And I've kind of been focusing on the things that we need to stand against. But it's also standing against doctrines and policies and language, and movements, which are, in our culture, so prevalent, and it takes a lot of courage to do that. And we're talking about things like white Christian nationalism, and racism and policies that reduce or eliminate the rights of trans people. That's a big thing going on right now. And of course, there's climate crisis denial, while those who are suffering from the results and consequences of those things, are like sheep without a shepherd. And that's where our role as disciples come in.

Karin Peter 12:16

that's where it becomes super inconvenient. I mean, let's be honest, we're, we're pretty okay to follow Jesus when it doesn't hurt very much. But taking a stand that might upset family members, or neighbors or friends who think differently. Taking a stand against some of these exclusionary activities, policies and groups, that's uncomfortable for us to do. And yet, it seems to me, that's kind of what Mark is calling us to do.

Blake Smith 12:46

Yeah, this passage really brings out a word that another word that folks really hate, and that's privilege. And there weren't privileged in this passage. But in our culture, there are many of us whether we like to admit it or not, who have the daily experience of privilege. And the privilege comes sometimes in just the fact that we have the decision whether to help or not help, whether to stand up or not stand up. Some people don't have a choice.

Karin Peter 13:17

Amazing, amazing how deep that can go in just a short, short passage.

Blake Smith 13:22

Yeah. So I think that's part of that gut wrenching compassion that Jesus has for the people. He's aware of all of these things that, I mean, he's a carpenter from Nazareth, he, he understands. He looks at it from a different perspective than we often have to look at it. So. So, some questions that we could probably go on all day with questions,

Karin Peter 13:45

We always have questions in Coffee to Go, don't we?

Blake Smith 13:49

I'll just pick a few. One of the things that I think is important, and it may be hard for those who are privileged to connect with, but perhaps not, and that is, when have I felt abandoned? When have I abandoned someone else because to do otherwise was inconvenient? So, we might think, in terms of this passage, when we metaphorically rowed to the other side of the lake to get away.

Karin Peter 14:17

Okay, now you're getting back at me for my comment about putting my earphones in my ears as soon as I get on a plane, abandoning my, my fellow seatmates who might want to be chattering away.

Blake Smith 14:31

I mean, those are the ways in which we sometimes do that, but... Finally, a question that I would ask though, is, when was the last time I felt excited about someone else feeling whole, healed or cared for? Now, I was just talking with someone the other day and there are folks that look at the world with, "I've worked hard for this," and they seem to get a little testy when someone else is successful, as if that means they're going to be less successful. And in this context of compassion and abundance, I think it's good for us to try to find those times when we felt excited about someone else, feeling whole, being made whole, being cared for, getting their needs met.

Karin Peter 15:23

Well, that's one way to take the focus off self, isn't it and by putting it on, on the blessings of others, [yeah] So, I was thinking about how we could experience this this week, and I'm going to give us two options, I'm going to give us the introvert option and the extrovert option. So, for introverts this week, at

the end of the day review each day, kind of a, kind of a mini prayer of examine. And you can Google that if you're not familiar with that spiritual practice. But just review the day in your head and in, in that review, find the most chaotic, exhausted moment of your day. And then in your mind, bless everyone who was in that moment. So, if my most chaotic exhausted moment, was getting all the kids off to school on time, and getting myself in the car and off to work on time, then my blessing as I went, as I went through that would be to bless all the kids, that I got ready the bus driver who picked them up that you know, the people that didn't cut in front of me, that allowed me on the freeway, everybody involved in that chaotic moment, bless those involved. And then for the extroverts among us, you might want to do that in a group setting. So, with friends on a zoom call or around the table, or wherever you might find yourself, have a conversation and share with each other, that most chaotic, exhausting moment of your day, and light a candle, and in the silence, by the light of the candle, quietly bless everyone involved in that chaotic moment. So that will be our experience this week, to see if each day we can can bless those involved in the chaos in our lives.

Blake Smith 17:16

Those are great ways to experience that. Thanks, Karin. ,

Our blessing today is called, "What must I do?" And it's from Bishop Barbara Clementine Harris.

God know my situation. I am one, but I am one. I cannot do everything. But I can do something.

So, thanks for joining us this week at Coffee to Go and we invite you to join us of course next time for the next part of our journey through the liturgical seasons and holy days of the Christian tradition.