

Coffee To Go | Proper 12, Year B

SUMMARY KEYWORDS

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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 where are we with Jesus this week? We are still in Ordinary Time. And this is the time to grow in understanding and practice of what Jesus following means or what it means to be a Jesus follower. And so we're spending the day with Jesus. And it's a pretty exciting day, as it turns out, because we get a miracle today, we get a day of miracles. And I'll tell you, Blake, I was in a congregation recently, and with all the sharing that happened, what went through my brain was, "Wow, this, the people here, like every moment is a miracle. And it was just this really interesting kind of experience to see things through their perspective. So let's hear it through the perspective of this scripture.

Blake Smith 01:25

All right. Well, our passage today we're going to jump over to the Gospel according to John, and it's the sixth chapter, the first through the 21st verse.

After this Jesus, after this, Jesus as opposed to that Jesus. [laugh ... excuse me.]

After this, Jesus went to the other side of the Sea of Galilee, also called the Sea of Tiberius. A large crowd kept following him, because they saw the signs that he was doing for the sick. Jesus went up the mountain and sat down there with His disciples. Now the Passover, the Festival of the Jews was near. When he looked up and saw a large crowd coming toward him, Jesus said to Philip, "Where are we to buy bread are these people to eat?" He said this to test him, for he himself knew what he was going to do. Philip answered him, "six months wages would not buy enough bread for each of them to get a little." One of his disciples, Andrew, Simon Peter's brother said to him, "there is a boy here who has five barley loaves and two fish. But what are they among so many people?" Jesus said, "make the people sit down." Now there was a great deal of grass in the place. So they sat down about 5000 in all. Then Jesus took the loaves. And when He had given thanks, he distributed them to those who were seated, so also the fish as much as they wanted. When they were satisfied, he told his disciples, "gather up the fragments leftover so that nothing may be lost." So they gathered them up. And from the fragments of the five barley loaves left by those who had eaten, they filled 12 baskets. When the people saw the sign that he had done, they began to say, this is indeed the prophet who was to come into the world. When Jesus realized that they were about to come and take him by force to make Him king, he withdrew again to the mountain by himself. When evening came, his disciples went down to the sea, got into a

boat, and started across the sea to Capernaum. It was now dark, and Jesus had not yet come to them. The sea became rough because a strong wind was blowing. When they had rowed about three or four miles, they saw Jesus walking on the sea, and coming near the boat, and they were terrified. But he said to them, "it is I do not be afraid." Then they wanted to take him into the boat, and immediately the boat reached the land toward which they were going. So why does this matter? Let's take a minute to talk about what matters and what might not matter. We can have a long discussion about whether this was a story of literal miracles, the feeding the 5000, the leftovers, the walking on the water, were these literal miracles. And I think, and it might upset some of our listeners, but I would say, I don't know that it really matters if it was a literal miracle. These are examples of signs that point to something else, and it's what it points to that really matters. And so we kind of have this discussion this thing before us about whether it was a miracle of divinity or if what really is important here is the miracle of generosity and that God sustains. That in our times of need, there is plenty. Either way, and this is another piece that that we might want to discuss, either way, we might say that it is in the blessing, that the abundance calm. And I say that we might discuss that, because we might also say it is in the abundance that blessing comes. So what do you think about that, Karin?

Karin Peter 05:29

So this is really interesting, I fall into the, it doesn't really matter if it was a literal miracle, or a miracle of changed lives. But I do know that people get caught up in that, and try to prove, you know, it has to be proved that it can happen, or we have to believe that it happened in this kind of mystical way. But, when we do that, we do forget what's being said here. And that is that God sustains. So, for me, it's, what I read into this, was that when we allow ourselves to recognize that blessing is happening in us and around us, through God's presence and God's interaction with us, that we begin to understand the abundance that that brings in our, in our lives. So, my example would be a small congregation of seniors who really, they don't have younger members, and they're in a place where that's not anticipated. And they would not see themselves as blessing, as blessed, as God blessing them. But they forget that they have money in a bank account that could provide blessing. So, in that sense, it's out of their abundance that blessing comes. However, if they saw God's interaction with them in their daily life, and they're sharing together as a small worshiping community, that is a blessing. And out of that blessing, this abundance has come. So I'm going to add a third way that we can actually see how out of this blessing of God's presence in our lives, abundance comes, but we can also then say, Out of the abundance and how we use it, blessing comes. So I guess it's both to me, which is not how I started this morning, when we began,

Blake Smith 07:21

And here I am the exact opposite. I look at the story. And I think that it's okay for these folks sitting on the side of the mountain especially and, and being fed, it is out of the abundance that they are blessed. And as we've talked about it a little bit before we started today, but also just now just hearing you say it again, I'm leaning now toward the other direction, I mean, I still see both and it's kind of a cycle where when we recognize how God sustains and liberates in the midst of whatever our context is, whether it is abundance, or lack of abundance, or lack of perceived abundance, even, that's where we are filled. And so the abundance comes because of acknowledging the blessing that God offers. Of course, there is, especially for the destitute, and those who are needy that when that abundance comes, or that's a blessing, so, so I did, but I gotta say that I, I find it in both, but I'm leaning now the other direction. So,

we both kind of shifted, but yeah, that's it's so important here, that for me, I guess I should say, and it sounds like for you a little bit as well, that, that whether or not it's a literal miracle is not the important piece, what really matters is the message in the midst of it, that God sustains, and God liberates because, you know, there's a need for liberation, for from oppression and from poverty, and for all of these things. Fear we talked about that a little bit in the last episode. So in this God sustains, we've got the feeding of the 5000. And again, comes down to this miracle of divinity versus a miracle of generosity. But either way, blessing comes, and these are markers of God's sustenance, divine sustenance. There are markers in the story, they sat in the grass, it's beside the water, but grass would be a sign of abundance. And then also we have the abundance of these 12 baskets of leftovers. So we might spend, you know, we could, there's this spectrum, so if you if it's literal miracle, that's where the abundance comes from. God takes these five loaves and two fish and expands it and it's in that that it comes. It might also be that in the presence of blessing in this being in the presence of the Divine, that people who we might not have recognized had food to share all the sudden want to give because of what they have received. And it is in the midst of that, and that in itself is a miracle. It's a different kind of miracle. But, and, you know, it's just, there's so many ways to look at that. And I think that is what's important with regards to God's sustaining of us. And then there's the god liberate part and [Christ] goes up on the mountain to commune with God, just like Moses did. We talked about that a little bit in the last episode, this references to previous leaders who are well known and respected among the Israelites. And this miracle of feeding the hungry people, tied with Jesus, walking on the turbulent sea, evokes this liberating journey across the Red Sea, and God feeding people in the wilderness. So we're taken back to the Exodus and things that are deeply ingrained in the minds and thoughts and beliefs of these people. So these connections, again, bring that recognition of blessing and abundance.

Karin Peter 11:19

So that's something to keep in mind, I think, whenever we look at this is that the writers are trying to make those connections for us, just as Moses. I won't say walked on water, but just as Moses was able to deal with the impediment of water, let's put it that way. Right. And God, and God provided in the wilderness, Jesus is doing the same thing.

Blake Smith 11:43

So yeah, we often talk a lot about the things the use of contextual pieces like agricultural analogies, and that kind of thing that people connected with. But there was also are, there is also this long history of salvation and God's interaction with the people. And that is also an important piece to look at here. So some questions we might ask ourselves are, in what ways am I hungry? Whether that spiritually physically. Whether that's for friendship, or relationship, or just a sense or feeling of worth? In what ways? Am I hungry? Another is, in what ways am I afraid? How might the Divine Presence liberate me? How might God's presence in my life liberate me? And do I want to be liberated? That's another piece of it. Because sometimes, you know, I'm not sure we, we want to be liberated. We like the status quo, what we know. And finally, when have I experienced divine abundance? And that might look completely different for everyone. So you might, if if you're one who struggles with a lack of abundance, I would even encourage you to think about how, how have you experienced divine abundance, which looks quite different.

Karin Peter 13:05

And I think also when we talk about divine abundance, in our daily life, not simply in a religious context of at church or, or with people in a faith community, but just in our simple daily existence in life. So I think for this week for how we might experience this, I think, maybe a hunger prayer, if you will, since this has to do with feeding the 5000 and talking about sustenance and liberation. So a short prayer, this week that we can offer and complete as a spiritual practice would be each day to ask Holy one today, I was hungry when and then finish that sentence. And then state today I was fed, when and finish that sentence to the hunger prayer would sound as this holy one today. I was hungry. When people around me were complimented on their work, and I was not. Today I was fed when I picked up my child from school and received a huge hug at the school door. Those are simple things. But each day, try to offer that prayer... today I was hungry when ... , and today I was fed when ..., to keep us in that mind of blessing that abundance in any order we wish.

Blake Smith 14:49

I'm gonna give that, I'm gonna give that a try. I think that's a great practice to do to do daily.

All right, well, our blessing today is "Harvest" by Ray Simpson and it's part of Celtic Blessings for Everyday Life.

May God who clothes the flowers and feeds the birds of the sky, who leads lambs to pasture and deer to water, who multiplied loaves and fishes and changed water to wine, lead us, feed us, multiply us, and change us until we reflect the glory of our Creator through all eternity. Amen.

Now, we've never done this, but I want to just throw this out to our listeners, because we put these practices, Karin always gives us some great ideas of ways to experience things during the week. If you've had something that's worked really well for you, and you've experienced, we'd love for you to share that with us in the comment sections on the projectzionpodcast.org page so we can maybe share that with others. We hope it's helpful to you. We'd love to hear your comments.

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