

Coffee to Go | Proper 9

SUMMARY KEYWORDS

Jesus, Nazareth, hometown prophet, tall poppy, kindness, blessing, God

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. We're still in Ordinary Time and during this period of time in the Christian calendar is when we hear stories that help us understand what it means to follow Jesus to, to kind of live into the message that Jesus gave and the ministry that he offered. So the question we ask each week is, well, where are we with Jesus this week in his travels and teaching? Well, today, we are in Nazareth, and that's where Jesus grew up. That may not mean a whole lot to people who haven't kind of dug into Bible research, but Nazareth was not like a real urban environment now, but Nazareth was a village. And it was about I think, about 1000 people, I read, at this period of time. And that gives you kind of an understanding. Those of you that live near or in small towns understand that and that's a good mindset to have in mind as we hear the Scripture today, because Jesus is in his hometown, and he's getting some flack. He's getting a little bit of a negative reception. And let's, let's hear what happens here in Nazareth, which is kind of a backwater place.

Blake Smith 01:57

All right, well, our Scripture today comes from the Gospel of Mark, the sixth chapter, and it's the 1st through the 13th verse,

He left that place and came to his hometown, and his disciples followed Him. On the Sabbath, he began to teach in the synagogue, and many who heard him were astounded. They said, Where did this man get all this? What is this wisdom that has been given to him? What deeds of power are being done by his hands? Is not this the carpenter, the son of Mary, the brother of James and Joses, and Judas and Simon, and are not his sisters here with us. And they took offense at him. Then Jesus said to them, "prophets are not without honor, except in their hometown, and among their own kin, and in their own house." And he could do no deed of power there, except that he laid his hands on a few sick people and cured them. And he was amazed at their unbelief. Then he went about among the villages teaching. He called the Twelve, and began to send them out two by two and gave them authority over the unclean spirits. He ordered them to take nothing for their journey, except a staff. No bread, no bag, no money in their belts, but to wear sandals, and not to put on two tunics. He said to them, wherever you enter a house, stay there until you leave the place. If any place will not welcome you, and they refuse to hear you, as you leave, shake off the dust that is on your feet as a testimony against them. So, they went out and proclaimed that all should repent. They cast out many demons and anointed with oil many who were sick, and cured them.

So, when I read this, I am reminded of my own situation. I really, really connect with this, because for a long time growing up in the area where I grew up, I grew up in the southeast, as we've talked about before. And so, this idea of honoring your elders is really important. And so I was probably in my mid 30s before... And I remember because the church has this email that it sends out when for prayer requests for employees of the church, and my father had a health issue going on. And I remember seeing the announcement when it said, Frank Smith, Blake Smith's father, and it was like, Finally, it was, you know, associated with me not I had always been Frank Smith's son, and probably will always be that in my hometown. And not too long after that there was a need for a mission center president in that area, and my mother very excitedly got on the phone and called me and said, Oh, Blake, you need to ask for this position you need to apply for this position. And I told her I said, Mom, I, I don't think that would work. I don't think that they would accept me there. And she says, Oh, but they love you. And I said, Yeah, well, they love the little boy who grew up there. Yeah. And, you know, and I think that's kind of where Jesus is, is he was there, they, they acknowledged that he's the son of Mary. So he's just one of the boys off the block. And they're amazed, but they're amazed that where did he get all this? He didn't get this from his hometown. So who does..., there's almost kind of a "Who does he think he is?" implied behind some of this. So

Karin Peter 05:45

That's what I heard, too. I heard that whole, "what an upstart who does... He's ... in Arkansas, they would say, "he's just showing out," he's just, he's just way, you know, he's way above himself. And it reminded me of something that my, our colleague, Adam Wade, has told me many times, Adam is Australian, and he talks about the tall poppies. And he, he says that, you know, we're all part of the poppy field. And in Australia, if one poppy grows too tall, or one person kind of gets gets a little, my mom would say "too big for their britches," You cut that tall poppy off. You say something that brings that person back into alignment with the community, if you will. And he calls it the tall poppy. And I think that I see that here. We don't understand it as Americans, because we all want to strive to be the best. But in a lot of cultures and communities, the best means you are in alignment with the rest of the community and you don't try to stand out. Right community. So I hear some of that in here, too. I'm not saying Jesus was Australian Adam. I'm just saying I understand now what he meant about the tall poppy.

Blake Smith 07:03

Yeah. And so I absolutely understand this. I mean, not only was Jesus from there, but now Jesus has been out. He's traveled, he's seen. He has a mission, obviously. But he's also seen things and been with people and heard stories and sees the world from a different perspective than he might have as a little boy in Nazareth. And that's exactly the kinds of things that I ran into. It wasn't that I was better than the people or that I am better than the people where I grew up. I am who I am, because of them. I mean, but there is this human natural resistance, I think. And so this is the kind of thing that Jesus is dealing with here. And they kind of treat him nasty. And so I think one of the things that we can pick up from this is that we're always, no matter what we do, whether we're doing good or not, we're always going to run into obstacles, there's always going to be naysayers, there's always going to be people who are going to talk about us or don't like us for some reason, which we may know, or we may never know. But we have to be faithful. And in this passage, in the midst of all of this flack that Jesus is getting, he says to His disciples, we've got to keep going, so here's how we're going to do it. You know,

we're going to send you out two buy two, to show that you're part of a community. You're not going to take a whole bunch of stuff because we believe that God will provide. And if you're not received, you can't let that deter you from the mission, you need to shake that off and stay true to the calling. Yeah. So you know, our perspective is limited. These villagers are limiting Jesus, in their unbelief and in their naysaying. And so he's not able to do the things that he might do in other places where there is belief.

Karin Peter 09:09

I just caught that for the very first time, Blake, when you were reading the Scripture, I don't know how many times I've read this scripture. But this was the first time that it really stood out. He couldn't do any right acts of power or acts of healing. He couldn't. And you think about that, he couldn't because the people would not allow that to take place just emotionally, psychologically, spiritually. They just weren't there. It wasn't gonna happen.

Blake Smith 09:39

Oh, yeah. So their perspective is limited. But what we need to remember is that God's perspective is not limited, and God chooses whom God will use. And so we need to kind of hold on to that. I've always told my daughters that they can't determine how other people will treat them. All they can do is choose how they will respond. Yeah. And so we need to respond by, as hard as it may be, shaking off that negativity, and staying the course.

Karin Peter 10:14

That's such a good lesson at a time when people are so quick to take offense. [Yes.] Really good lesson.

Blake Smith 10:21

So some questions we might ask ourselves are, how do I react when people are disrespectful or unkind? Do I lash out? Do I feel diminished? And how might I react in a similar way to Jesus... the way he did? Another one is, have I looked at people with a limited view, and maybe wondering how could God possibly use that person? Based on something in our own thinking? And finally, how do I see myself? What I look like through God's unlimiting perspective, it's good for us to, to pause, occasionally, and remember how we are viewed by God.

Karin Peter 11:09

I think that's the way we can continue to experience the scripture this week, Blake, is to focus on God's unlimited or unlimiting view of us. So perhaps this week, we can start each day with, with just a question to ourselves like, how can God use me today? Or how can this Spirit use me today? Those are good questions for church, folks, for people who kind of live in that space. Maybe that's not you. Maybe you're not a real church attending kind of person, maybe you want to ask, How can I simply be a blessing today? Whether it's to someone else or to the earth? How can I be a blessing today? And if you're, if you're of the spiritual but not religious realm, or if you're not in a real churchy mode, you might just want to ask, How can I send kindness out into the cosmos today? I'm from the West Coast. That's a very spiritual kind of way of looking at it out here. So you know, just out into the universe, how do I send some kindness out there today? So whatever works for you start each day with that kind of a

question that allows you to be yourself in a completely unlimiting way, for the benefit and blessing of just creation.

Blake Smith 12:34

All right. Those are some great ways to think about that. So our blessing today comes from Jane Austen...

“Incline us, oh God, to think humbly of ourselves, to be saved only in the examination of our own conduct, to consider our fellow creatures with kindness and to judge of all they say and do with the charity, which we would desire from them ourselves.”

Well, everybody, thanks for being with us again here today 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.