

Coffee to Go | Proper 14, Year B

SUMMARY KEYWORDS

Jesus, bread, God, relationship, belief, Ordinary Time, doubt

SPEAKERS

Karin Peter, Blake Smith

Karin Peter 00:28

Welcome to Coffee to Go, where we center ourselves in the scriptures, seasons, and holy days of the Christian tradition. I'm Karin Peter, and I'm here with Blake Smith. We welcome you on the journey. Today is Sunday, Proper 14 or the 14th Sunday of Ordinary Time, the period of time that we enter into after Pentecost and live in until Advent begins again. So this week, our question, "where are we with Jesus this week?" Well, we can respond to it with Jesus has been talking with those folks who last week we talked about, they tracked him down across the lake. And he started a conversation with them. That kind of was a continuation of that feeding the 5000 story we had a few weeks ago, that's kind of each week for the next couple of weeks where you're kind of revisiting that in a way. And today he has declared himself to be the bread of life come from heaven, and he gets a reaction, Blake. So what's happening?

Blake Smith 01:42

Right? Well, as Karin said, we're picking up in the same story. You may think we're in the same place, but we're picking up at the 35th verse of the Gospel According to John in the sixth chapter, and we'll do the 35th verse and 41 through 51.

Jesus said to them, I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me will never be hungry, and whoever believes in me will never be thirsty. Then the Jews began to complain about him because he said, I am the bread that came down from heaven. They were saying, "is not this Jesus, the son of Joseph, whose father and mother we know, how can he now say, I have come down from heaven." Jesus answered them, "Do not complain among yourselves. No one can come to me unless drawn by the Father who sent me. And I will raise that person up on the last day. It is written in the prophets, and they shall be all taught by God. Everyone who has heard and learned from the father comes to me. Not that anyone has seen the Father except the one who is from God, he has seen the Father, very, Truly I tell you, whoever believes has eternal life. I am the bread of life. Your ancestors ate the manna in the wilderness and they died. This is the bread that comes down from heaven, so that one may eat of it, and not die. I am the living bread that came down from heaven. Whoever eats of this bread will live forever. And the bread that I will give for the life of the world is my flesh."

John would have been one of those poets. We talked several weeks ago about poetry about one of those poets where, oh my gosh, it is so hard to understand, right? And so but, but why this matters, he really, he really is kind of hammering this point of, I am the bread of life, that came down from heaven.

So there is the physical presence of Jesus he, and in that we see the human side of Christ, but Jesus, remember is fully human and fully divine. And so Jesus feeds the physical and the spiritual sides of it. So he's talking about the spiritual bread here, not just some manna, but the spiritual bread. And the religious leaders are taking him literally. "So what do you mean you came down from heaven? We know your mom and dad. We know where we know where you came from. You know, we watched you when you were a child, and ...

Karin Peter 04:34

I love this part, Blake. I love this part of the Scripture because, can't you just see them on the sidelines grumbling? I mean, it says complaining but you know, they're grumbling. And I made a note here that my dad if he was one of those grumblers when Jesus said I'm the bread of life come from heaven. My dad would have said, "Balderdash," because that was kind of for, "I do not believe that whatsoever. Balderdash." And I could just see that happening on the sidelines?

Blake Smith 05:03

Absolutely, I can think of a couple of words that are very similar. That's good for your father for keeping it clean. These were guys that had been following the law of Moses had been living their life all right, and, you know, they were as close to God as you could be right. And then here's this guy, who they know is not one of them, in terms of the upper echelon of the Jewish leaders. And he's saying he's from heaven. So he thinks he's better than us. So, they didn't take too well to that. But there's a contrast going on here, between this bread of life, this human physical bread, and entering into a deeper spiritual relationship with Jesus by following his teachings, words and actions. So, the bread here is not it's not just Jesus, it's all of who Jesus is. It's, it's his life, his teachings, his ministry, the way he treats people. It's, so it's really about when you eat this bread, you take this bread, you bring it in to your life, and follow and kind of integrate it if you will, it changes who you are. And it changes the way you see life and see others. And so there's also this contrast between believing in and knowing Jesus that's kind of going on in the background, because we can say we believe, but do we really know who Jesus is? So by, by being in relationship with Jesus, following his teaching His words and actions, we become closer in that relationship with God. The other piece of of the contrast here is the difference between believing in Jesus and believing things about Jesus, I think that that is really even the the deeper contrast there because I believe Jesus exists, or I can believe things about Jesus when I when I am in relationship with him when I am following, then I am more deeply connected. And we have to decide for ourselves where we fall into this.

Karin Peter 07:31

I think it's kind of the difference between an acquaintance and a friend. So I know things about my acquaintances, I might know where they work, I might know what town they live in. I might know how many kids they have. But I don't really know them until I enter in to some kind of relationship, some kind of friendship where we converse, and we spend time together and we share openly with one another. And I think, for me, that's kind of the difference between, Do I believe in or invest myself in a relationship with the divine? Or do I just believe some things about God? And we could say, "Am I just an acquaintance with God?" Or...

Blake Smith 08:16

Yeah. There's an implied intimacy, when we move to the knowing stage ... from the knowing about to the knowing stage. And, and that intimacy is where we, we are much more vulnerable, with our own thoughts and feelings and our relationship with God. So, to have a deepening spiritual life, we have to enter into a deeper relationship with God, and not just believe things about God, but truly get to know God. It's, you know, and when we, when we again study or integrate into our lives, that which Jesus teaches. It changes how we see others and it changes our life altogether.

Karin Peter 09:06

And we know, Blake, that we have some listeners who are kind of in this place where they're not sure what they believe about God or, or whether they believe in God or maybe what they believe about God or how they how they are feeling even about just religious practice. And that's part of the relationship too. All of us, wherever we are in this journey with the divine we all have doubts, we all have times you question we, we all try to figure this out at differently in different times of our life. And those are also part of the deepening of the relationship. And, don't be afraid of those. So, if your encounters with the divine are something that you're willing to spend some time in meditation and contemplation, then that's great. T that's a great place to begin your kind of journey with how you how you think you might live, the next part of your adventure with what might be God's presence with you.

Blake Smith 10:16

Yeah, I really appreciate you bringing that up Karin because I may have, may have kind of skipped over that. And I think that's so important for all of our listeners to hear and certainly those who were not as deep in their spiritual journey. But, you don't have to be at a particular place for God to want to be in relationship with you. Yeah. So So yeah, hear that. Don't be afraid to step into that, because God certainly wants to be in relationship with you. Yeah, yeah. So some questions we might ask ourselves are when have I grumbled about something I didn't fully comprehend rather than spending time trying to understand?

Karin Peter 11:01

What time is it? I can tell you. I do that on a regular basis. I hate that question.

Blake Smith 11:10

Yeah, well, yes, it's a good question to ask, it may may be uncomfortable. And for some, it may be harder to remember back that far. And for others, it might be, "Oh, yeah, that just happened." Another question would be, what do I expect from Divine encounters? And I think we might also ask in that arena, what ... I'm sorry, when and where do I expect to have divine encounters? Because I think sometimes God is present with us in ways that we don't expect, and we just kind of miss it. Or, we think it can only happen in this place, or in church, or, you know, or at this campgrounds. And yet, God shows up in some really unexpected places. So, to think about what our expectations are, and if we would open up our expectations, I think we might encounter God even more often. And finally, I would ask, Am I interested in a deepening spiritual relationship that's centered in the teachings of Jesus, or am I just okay with believing in Jesus? Because the first might require some transformation or life or might cause some transformation? Sometimes it's easier, just stay with the surface.

Karin Peter 12:41

Yeah, those will be interesting questions to kind of ponder this week. So, as we ponder those interesting questions this week, what's a way that we can kind of live into this, and I kind of wanted to stick with the literalism that we experience in this scripture. And so, I'm thinking that maybe this week, we would take a moment, and a piece of paper and a pencil, and just start to list all the literal beliefs about Jesus that you that you have within you that you've absorbed in your life, and maybe even note how you got those. So, you know, I believe, I believe Jesus was born in a manger. Well, how'd you get that? Well, my grandma told me. Whatever it is, what are your literal beliefs about Jesus and, and how you gained them. And then, list the questions and doubts you have about Jesus. And then live with those two lists this week. At the end of the week, come back and see which of those beliefs or which of those doubts resonate with you which of those you want to take out of this week? So let's live with them this week, our literal beliefs and our doubts at the end of the week, let's go back and revisit them and decide what we want to carry forward. So it's a two-part "How do we experience that this week?"

Blake Smith 14:14

All right. So a little permission, not only to believe, but to doubt. Absolutely. Nice healthy balance, nice healthy balance. Okay, our blessing today comes from Passing Ordinary Time by Enuma Okoro. I hope I pronounced that correctly. Here we go. This ordinary time is gifted in its quiet, marked passing, Christ slips about calling and baptizing, sending and affirming, pouring his Spirit like water into broken cisterns, sealing our cracks and filtering our senses, that we may savor the foolish simplicity of God Grace.

Karin Peter 15:02

So, that's a lovely ordinary time blessing.

Blake Smith 15:07

So, everybody thanks for joining us here again at Coffee to Go we invite you to be with us again at Coffee to Go for the next part of our journey through the liturgical seasons and holy days of the Christian tradition.