

Coffee To Go | Proper 15B

SUMMARY KEYWORDS

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SPEAKERS

Blake Smith, Karin Peter

Karin Peter 00:00

Karin, 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, we are your hosts, and we welcome you on the journey. We are still in the Gospel of John. We're in Ordinary Time about the middle of the way through, I think, and we are still in a portion of John's gospel where Jesus is still confounding the folks as he talks about his body as bread and his life force as that we drink his life for us, we eat his body. And it is confusing. So when we think about where we are with Jesus this week, we're confused. So Blake, let's go through the Scripture and see where we go with that.

Blake Smith 01:15

Yeah, not only does he continue in this, as you said, it's confounding to begin with. And you know, we think about having conversations about things that, Well, maybe if we explain it a little more, it'll get easier to understand. That's not the case here. It just gets more and more muddled. But let's give it a shot anyway.

Here we are in the sixth chapter of the Gospel According to John, and it is the 51st through the 58th verse,

"I am the living bread that came down from heaven. Whoever eats of bread will live forever. And the bread that I will give for the life of the world is my flesh." The Jews then disputed among themselves, saying, "How can this man give us his flesh to eat?" So Jesus said to them, "Very truly, I tell you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you have no life in you. Those who eat my flesh and drink my blood have eternal life, and I will raise them up on the last day, for my flesh is true, food and my blood is true drink. Those who eat my flesh and drink my blood abide in me and I in them, just as the living Father sent me, and I live because of the Father. So whoever eats me will live because of me. This is the bread that came down from heaven, not like that which your ancestors ate and they died, but the one who eats this bread will live forever.

So why does this matter? There's a key word in the passage, and we hear it many times in the Gospel of John, and that is the word "abide." And if we pay close attention to this, John has characters, a variety of characters, throughout the Gospel of John, asking questions that are important. So it's really important for John to think critically about why we believe, how we believe, and what really matters. And, again, abiding continues to come into that. We overhear the answer, and it doesn't seem to make

sense, and they ask other questions, and Jesus asks a few of his own. But ultimately, what's important is asking the questions. It doesn't always matter. Now, we can get into long debates about what are the true answers to the questions, but part of this is the importance of asking the questions and critically thinking about the answers for ourselves, because what matters is how we connect with God and with Christ, and why we do that. So, the body and the blood here, it's a very natural question for them to ask, how, how can we eat his flesh and drink his blood? I mean, he's standing right here before us. That's strange. It is perhaps easier if we simply understand the blood as the source of life, and the bread being our sustenance, that which keeps us alive and well and healthy and able to engage in Christ's mission and engage as disciples of Jesus. So, John moves from this question of, how do we do it? Why do we do it? Why do we drink the blood and eat the bread or eat the flesh, and why is it that we connect with or abide with the divine for our lives? And so what's important for John is that we are called to live in life with God, and we have to decide if we want to do that or if we want to walk away and live a life devoid of that divine presence. So...

Karin Peter 05:34

Blake, as you were reading the Scripture and then began to talk about it, one thing that really came to mind, and I'm wondering how many of our listeners had the same experience, it would have been much easier had John said, And then Jesus went, Well, guys, it's kind of like this. Then we know Jesus is talking in metaphor, right? Then we know he's trying to make a point and all of that. But that's not how it's written. And so that critical thinking becomes essential for us to begin to be able to really unpack this in a way that can help us in our discipleship. I just want to, just want to put it out there. John could have done a better job in kind of prefacing this for us with some information that would help us understand.

Blake Smith 06:25

I have, I have to completely agree with that. I think either John thought that the people receiving were in that culture, were deep thinkers or and needed that kind of in depth confusion, I guess, to really think deeply. Who knows, who knows? But it yes, it could have been written in in a way that would have been a little bit more easy for us 2000 years later.

Karin Peter 06:55

Well, yeah, because I see myself in the camp with the Jews who went, "what?" And, you know, I see myself standing there in this passage.

Blake Smith 07:04

Absolutely. And you know, if you're standing there and you're taking that literally, you're going, "I just...No, I can't, and no wonder people walked away, right? So some questions that would be helpful for us I think, this week, as we get just completely muddled in this very confusing passage is, what are the questions that matter today? What really matters in our journey, in our journey with God, in our journey with Christ, and not allow ourselves to get too caught up in the minutia, but really ask the important questions.

Karin Peter 07:46

Well, and that's kind of where things are, isn't it? It's that we're supposed to really make the decision... Am I willing to really consider Jesus my life sustenance and life source, or not?

Blake Smith 07:57

Right? Yeah, right. And so we have to ask ourselves, what are the questions about living as a disciple that we have, individually and corporately? But I think individually is a very important place for us to start, and then once we have kind of gotten an idea of what those questions are for us, and those questions may change every day, depending on where we are in our life, right? But do the questions I have, lead towards a life in the Divine Presence, a life serving as Jesus served, and there's an important, so let me repeat that, a life serving as Jesus served, and a life of renewal and hope. I think it's important, so we ask those questions, and if they don't, if the answer is no, there's some deeper questions to ask. Just, you know, why are we doing this? So anyway...

Karin Peter 09:01

Yeah, and I find myself in that same kind of place when, when we do ask the questions about our discipleship, because sometimes they don't seem to be ones that lead towards renewal and hope. They become, they become enmeshed in conflict or sorrow, or whatever it might be, and that critical thinking is the way through that model as you described it. So when I think about what matters today, what the question is, as you kind of challenged us, I think that's probably how we can live in this scripture this week, is just ask a question every day, what's the question that matters to me today, and then live in that question, and the end of the day ask yourself, why did this matter? And where does this question take me? You might want to ask the same question every day, all week, or you might want to, you might want to move on to a new one as you work through the the first one that you have. But either way, I. I think it's good for disciples to do that, to ask ourselves the question, what really does matter today?

Blake Smith 10:08

Absolutely, well, our blessing today comes from the Doctrine and Covenants the 163rd section, verse 11 B:

God is calling for a prophetic community to emerge, drawn from the nations of the world that is characterized by uncommon devotion to the compassion and peace of God revealed in Jesus Christ. May uncommon devotion be yours to share. Through divine grace and wisdom, this faith community has been given abundant gifts, resources and opportunities to equip it to become such a people. May abundance or grace be yours to share. Chief among these is the power of community in Christ expressed locally in distinctive fashions while upholding a unity of vision foundational beliefs and mission throughout the world. May unity and purpose be yours to share. There are many issues that could easily consume the time and energy of the church. However, the challenge before a prophetic people is to discern and pursue what matters most for the journey ahead. May a journey in Christ be yours to share. Amen.

Karin Peter 11:41

Amen

Blake Smith 11:41

Thank you everyone for being with us here this week at Coffee to Go. Hope you get to ask some really good questions this week. And then, join us next week for Coffee to Go and the next part of our journey through the liturgical seasons and holy days of the Christian tradition.