

Coffee to Go | Proper 20 | Year B

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SPEAKERS

Blake Smith, Karin Peter

Karin Peter 00:20

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. We are a little about halfway, I think, through ordinary time, maybe a little bit further, and we're at the point in Mark's gospel where Jesus has moved from a time of teaching and healing and preaching around Galilee, and he is now kind of herding his band of disciples with him on the road to Jerusalem. And so, his message and his teaching begins to shift in this part of Mark's gospel. So, they're on the way. They're on the journey Blake. What's going on?

Blake Smith 01:24

Alright. Well, we are in the ninth chapter of Mark today, and it is the 30th through the 37th verse.

They went on from there and passed through Galilee. He did not want anyone to know it, for he was teaching his disciples, saying to them, the son of man is to be betrayed into human hands, and they will kill him, and three days after being killed, he will rise again. But they did not understand what he was saying, and were afraid to ask him. They came to Capernaum, and when he was in the house, he asked them, "What were you arguing about on the way?" But they were silent, for on the way, they had argued with one another, who was the greatest. He sat down, called the twelve, and said to them, "whoever wants to be first must be last of all, and servant of all." Then he took a little child and put it among them, and taking it in his arms, he said to them, "whoever welcomes one such child in my name welcomes me, and whoever welcomes me welcomes not me but the one who sent me."

There's a hidden piece in here that I just love. I mean, he sits them down basically to see if they'll admit to what they've been talking about. Obviously, he knows what they were talking about. He heard it, but they think they're being sly, and they're not going to, they're not going to confess. Nobody wants to be first. I mean, we talked about this in the last episode, that this is kind of that nitty gritty time. We've passed the teaching and healing. We've been doing that, and now we're headed to Jerusalem, and Jesus is trying to teach the disciples. They've been a part of the teachings all along, and now they're getting some personal time, and it's obvious they still don't get it. I mean, we tie back again to our, to the last episode, when we were talking about, who do you say that I am? And it is clear that they are still, even though Jesus has said, it's not about the power, it's about serving. It's about cost. They're still thinking, okay, who's going to, who's going to get to take over the lead, if Jesus is really going to his

death, who, who's going to be the next in line, who's going to be the greatest? And if I'm Jesus, I'm just shaking my head, I it's like, 'oh my gosh. Are they ever going to get it?' They're just not there. He'd been talking about betrayal and suffering and the resurrection, that he's going to be killed, all the serious stuff. And they're in the background, arguing about who's going to be most important.

Karin Peter 04:19

Isn't that so human? That is just so human right there in Mark's gospel, yeah.

Blake Smith 04:27

Yeah, yeah. Well, it's like, okay, we get it, but we gotta be ready. We gotta be ready. So, let's go ahead and talk about the importance stuff here, what was important to them. And I know you and I have talked about this, but it's something that has happened in in the car for me growing up, and I have to admit, as a parent, but it's almost like that parent minivan moment when the parent stops the car, or is driving, and says, don't make me stop this car.

Karin Peter 04:55

Yes, you're going to be in such trouble if I have to stop this car. It's that kind of a moment here. Yeah. Us with Jesus and the disciples. What were you arguing about? Don't make me stop this car? Yes, yeah, right.

Blake Smith 05:07

Because as soon as he asked the question, everybody goes quiet, and it's like, you know, when dad steps on the brakes, it's like, oh, we're in trouble.

Karin Peter 05:17

They just, they do come off as kind of junior high adolescent boys at this at this juncture, yeah,

Blake Smith 05:27

Yeah. And another piece of it, I mean, obviously they don't get it, and they're worried about who's going to be... the favorite child, and that happens in families as well. But I think ultimately, and Peter is right here in the middle of this, it just doesn't want to talk about the hard things. Let's change the subject. Let's move on. Let's talk about something more pleasant, something maybe we have more control over, or, I don't know, something that just doesn't make us uncomfortable. And this is a reality that's coming, so they have to talk about it.

Karin Peter 06:05

Well, especially if they don't understand it. And it said they didn't understand and they were too afraid to ask. And one of the commentaries that you and I use, *Connections* commentary, it was like, well, haven't you done that? Well, yeah, I've been somewhere listening to a lecture, or been in a class, and something is said that I didn't understand and I didn't want to raise my hand and ask, because I don't want everybody else in the class to know that I had no clue what that was, and that, too, is just so human, right, to not understand and be afraid to ask?

Blake Smith 06:35

Yeah, yeah. That happens to me. As many times as an instructor has said, if you have a question, just ask it. Chances are somebody else has that question too. It's the fear of looking like an idiot. Yeah, like I should, I should know this, but...

Karin Peter 06:50

Well, and if they're already kind of worried about who's going to be most important, the last thing they want to do is be vulnerable and say they don't understand something.

Blake Smith 07:00

But speaking of questions, as we always do here at Coffee to Go, I want to give you some questions to think about and hopefully have the courage to ask, because these are questions that you ask yourself, so you don't have to worry about what anybody thinks about you asking the questions. But here they are. What hard questions am I afraid to ask? Top of the list. And, who is the "little child," and I say that in in air quotes, the least, the one with no voice or no power in my community, that Jesus might take and set in the middle of a circle and say, this is the one you need to welcome? And finally, how willing am I to be a servant to others? How uncomfortable am I about this image of servant?

Karin Peter 07:52

You know we talk about in Mark, Jesus, the suffering servant. Service is a big deal in the gospels, and Jesus' teaching about serving. And when I think about my own ministry and serving, it's like, Yeah, I'm pretty good up to a point. And then we get to where, oh, well, now that I don't want to do. And again, it's human and walking with Jesus and the disciples through these two passages in Mark last week and this week, it's like, okay, I'm feeling a little bit better about my humanness, because even the ones who were walking with Jesus had, you know, similar, similar kinds of issues when we're talking about putting the gospel message into practice. So, this week, here's what I'm going to do, and hopefully you'll join me in this. I'm going to go last. So when there's a line, I'm going to go last. When I'm driving, I'm going to wave the people merging on to come on in front of me. I'm going to open doors for people, take the smallest cookie, whatever it is all week, to be last, to live in that space of being okay with being last this week.

Blake Smith 09:13

Can I? Can I have permission to do just three out of four? So, taking the smallest cookie is easy for me. I'm gluten free, so I can't have a cookie anyway, so that's fine. I'm a Southern gentleman, which isn't always, always...

Karin Peter 09:30

I know where you're going with this. I know where you're going.

Blake Smith 09:33

I will open doors for people. That is what I do. I don't even mind going last in the line, but do I have to wave the mergers? Come on.

Karin Peter 09:45

So for our listeners, Blake lives in the Chicago metropolitan area, so anytime I bring up anything about driving, he gets a little crazy.

Blake Smith 09:54

So, it's the survival of the fittest where I live, if you slow down, it won't be just one.

Karin Peter 10:00

Give it a shot. Give it a shot. Blake.

Blake Smith 10:02

I'll try just, we'll try just for a week. Oh, goodness, alright. Well, our blessing today comes from John O'Donoghue. We've heard from him before, and this is one called "For a Leader."

Karin Peter 10:15

Now, before you read this, like, I think sometimes people hear leadership or, for a leader, and they think that's for somebody else, but it's really not, because when we serve as disciples of Jesus, we are leading. People watch us. People are observant on what we say and do. Leadership has all kinds of shapes and sizes and forms, and we all participate in it in some way.

Blake Smith 10:41

That's a great point, absolutely. So, this is for everyone.

May you have the grace and wisdom to act kindly, learning to distinguish between what is personal and what is not. May you be hospitable to criticism. May you never put yourself at the center of things. May you act not from arrogance but out of service. May you work on yourself, building up and refining the ways of your mind. May those who work for you know you see and respect them. May you learn to cultivate the art of presence in order to engage with those who meet you when someone fails or disappoints you, may the graciousness with which you engage be their stairway to renewal and refinement. May you treasure the gifts of the mind through reading and creative thinking, so that you continue as a servant of the frontier, where the new will draw its enrichment from the old, and you never become a functionary. May you know the wisdom of deep listening, the healing of wholesome words, the encouragement of the appreciative gaze, the decorum of held dignity, the springtime edge of the bleak question, may you have a mind that loves frontiers so that you can evoke the bright fields that lie beyond the view of the regular eye. May you have good friends to mirror your blind spots. May leadership be for you a true adventure of growth. Amen

I really like that.

So as always, listeners, we thank you for being with us here today at Coffee to Go and we invite you to join us again next time for the next part of our journey through the liturgical seasons and holy days of the Christian tradition.