

# Coffee to Go | Proper 23 | Year B

## SUMMARY KEYWORDS

Jesus. wealth and poverty, eternal life, commandments, idolatry, discipleship, community, generosity

## SPEAKERS

Blake Smith, Karin Peter

### **Karin Peter** 00:27

Welcome to Coffee to Go where we center ourselves in the scriptures and seasons and holy days of the Christian tradition. I'm Karin Peter, and I'm here with Blake Smith, and we welcome you on the journey. So where are we with Jesus this week? We had talked a few weeks ago that we are in the part of the story, part of the Gospel story, where Jesus has kind of made this pivot, and he is heading toward Jerusalem, and everything that will take place once he arrives, and as we get closer to Jerusalem on that journey, the topics that he's teaching about get pretty serious pretty fast. So last week was about marriage and divorce laws. This week it's money, or perhaps we should say wealth and the dichotomy of wealth and poverty. So just like in our time now, sex and money tend to be things that get people riled up. So Jesus was talking about marriage and adultery and wealth and poverty. So let's, let's see what we might hear that will enlighten our own conversations.

### **Blake Smith** 01:36

So, who knew that Coffee to Go might need to move over to the No Filter series in Project Zion? So, we're picking up where we left off last week, as Karin said, and this is the 17th through the 31st verse of the 10th chapter of Mark.

As he was setting out on a journey, a man ran up and knelt before him and asked him, "Good Teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?" Jesus said to him, "why do you call me good? No one is good, but God alone. You know the commandments. You shall not murder, You shall not commit adultery, You shall not steal, you shall not bear false witness. You shall not defraud. Honor your father and mother." He said to him, "Teacher, I have kept all these since my youth." Jesus, looking at him, loved him and said...

I'm sorry. I'm going to stop there for just a second. Jesus looked at him, said, "Oh, you poor child."

### **Karin Peter** 02:42

Bless your heart.

### **Blake Smith** 02:43

Bless your little heart.

Jesus, looking at him, loved him and said, "You lack one thing. Go sell what you own and give the money to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come follow me." When he heard this, he was shocked and went away grieving for he had many possessions. Then Jesus looked around and said to his disciples, "how hard will it be for those who have wealth to enter the kingdom of God?" And the disciples were perplexed at these words, but Jesus said to them again, "children, how hard is it to enter the kingdom of God? It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for someone who is rich to enter the kingdom of God." They were greatly astounded and said to one another, "then, who can be saved?" Jesus looked at them and said, "for mortals, it is impossible, but not for God. For God, all things are possible." Peter began to say to him, "Look, we have left everything and followed you." Jesus said, "Truly, I tell you, there is no one who has left house or brothers or sisters or mother or father or children or fields, for my sake and for the sake of the good news who will not receive a hundredfold now in this age, houses, brothers and sisters, mothers and children and fields, with persecutions and in the age to come, Eternal life, but many who are first will be last, and the last will be first."

So why does this matter? Well, last week, we mentioned the pattern that appears many times in the conversations between Jesus and those who would ask questions, and that is in this term, in this round, the young man says, What must I do to inherit eternal life? And Jesus replies, Well, what is the law? What do the commandments say? When the man replies that he has kept them all, Jesus says, Well, okay, then the next thing you need to do is to give away all your money to the poor, and you can just imagine [What?!]. It causes us to ask the question, as has been asked in many circles and possibly debates, does this mean that rich people aren't welcome that only the poor get into heaven or get into God's kingdom. And the answer, like it or not, could only be, "well... maybe."

**Karin Peter** 05:33

Yeah

**Blake Smith** 05:33

Let me. Let me just say that I I don't believe it's necessarily wealth in and of itself, however you define that, because wealth isn't just money, it's whatever becomes an idol to us, I think, in in the place of discipleship. Money, success, status, power, those are all types of wealth.

**Karin Peter** 05:56

Anything we want to hoard rather than share with others.

**Blake Smith** 06:00

Right. right. So, it's not the thing in and of itself that keeps one out of heaven, but it's the idolatry associated with it. It's the fact that oftentimes our possessions become our highest priority. We want to scrimp and save I mean. And I think, you know, we sometimes hold on to I know I was brought up hearing things about persons who'd been through the Depression saying, Oh, they have a depression mentality. They want to hold on to what they have, because they never know how long it will last or that it might be taken away. And I've heard people talk about folks who live in poverty about that. They're hoarding because they don't know where their next meal is coming from. That's not the type of idolatry, really. I'm talking I'm talking about who have like myself, and I'll just point to myself in that, who have so

much more than they need to live a very happy life, and when I am more protective of that, so much to the point of neglecting those things around me that I could help make a difference in. And so, it's not just, you know, I think another place that we go sometimes is like, well, if I give \$20 to the guy on the corner, then I'm not hoarding my wealth. Well, I would say that that too is, can be. I mean, I don't want to pass judgment on on giving what you can, but it's easier to give a \$20 bill and drive away than it is to work to do something about it. So there's so much, I think, wrapped up in here. And liberation theologians would say that God does have a preference for the poor, the vulnerable and the powerless. And I think we continue to hear that even in Community of Christ in recent divine counsel, and for us, how that translates into discipleship is that means that those with wealth, again, however you define that, must also have a preference for the poor and engage in compassion and action, using our resources in just and meaningful ways that respond. If we think about all of this, we I mean, we can focus on this idea of wealth and what's enough, what's not enough, that kind of thing. Ultimately, if we go back to the greatest two commandments, love the Lord your God, and love your neighbor as yourself. What is it and how is it that you would like to be treated and to live? And, doesn't your neighbor deserve the same?

**Karin Peter** 08:57

Yeah, it gets complicated in the Western world, where Christianity well, and probably in other places, it preaches prosperity gospel and some other things for you know, God blesses and loves those who honor God and wants them to be prosperous. And that's not exactly the story that the Gospels tell. So as we head with Jesus toward Jerusalem and everything that's going to happen, we need to, we need to really be careful about how we understand our responsibility in community.

**Blake Smith** 09:34

Yeah, I think it's, I think it's interesting how Peter responds here, and I think it might be how we respond. Peter goes on the defense. Well, wait a minute, we gave up everything. I don't know if he was fishing for a compliment or say, Well, okay, I'm not talking about you, Peter. You've already done this. I mean, he's talking about general principles that aren't a one-time thing in life either. They're a way of life., And Jesus, so Jesus ends with, Hey, you all get in just, just don't expect privilege. It that prosperity gospel that you're talking about. Okay, well, you're in good with God, so you're going to get all the blessings, and you're going to get all the riches and all the wealth that you desire. With God, the last go first. And he might say to the disciples, he might say to us, we have wealth. We have, in different ways, status, power, success, even those who are first in discipleship go last. That's the way it is in the kingdom of God. So some questions we might ask are, what aspects of health ... or wealth? What aspects of wealth do I cling to or yearn for? And maybe that includes health. Another is, how do I feel about sharing wealth, whether that be money power, status, success, how do I feel about sharing that wealth with others?

**Karin Peter** 11:09

You know, Blake, when we ask that question, we need to get past the kind of shallow surface that we go with these questions, because I think we can all go, Oh no, I'm okay with that, until it gets prickly and uncomfortable, and then we back away. So these are, these are questions to go a little bit deeper with.

**Blake Smith** 11:27

yeah, yeah. Thanks for that clarification. I agree it would be easy to just say, Yeah, fine, I'm fine. So, encourage you to think deeply about that, about maybe even if you say, Yeah, I feel comfortable with that. At what point might that change? What? What is the point where it would get uncomfortable, and then how do you feel? So, finally, I would ask, Am I willing to go last? Am I willing to go last?

**Karin Peter 11:35**

So I'm sorry, Blake, but I'm going to bring up, bring this up because you've said it many times on Project Zion, that when you are merging on the freeway, or when you are on the freeway and someone else is merging your worst self comes out. And I think, am I willing to go last when, when I'm on the freeway and someone is merging, most of the time, I intentionally try to say, just let them in. Karen, just slow down and let them in. And yet, invariably, there will be a time when I'm driving and someone wants to merge and I'm like, go away. And I'm not. I'm my worst self at that moment, because I don't, I don't want to simply back off and let someone go ahead of me. So I'm just pointing out that in our best times, yes, we're willing to go last, but [darn it], but what we're called to do as disciples is think you know, bigger than that, am I willing to go last when it comes to how I spend my money, and how I cast my vote, and how I do other things that really influence the betterment or the detriment of the lives of others, so.

**Blake Smith 13:18**

Well, let me just say thanks for going there. I was about ready to say yes, and then you had to bring up the merging thing.

**Karin Peter 13:27**

Yeah, I know I'm I'm sorry, but you have joked about it before. On

**Blake Smith 13:32**

It is, I know, and it is something that I have to continually consider so.

**Karin Peter 13:37**

But we are considering, you know, more complicated things, absolutely to go last and we're both Americans. What does it mean to be an American? We're America first. What does that mean when we're counseled to go last and we have to, we have to give this some serious thought. So this week, as we live with this, I think maybe we can simply practice sharing the wealth, and by that, if your wealth is money, then maybe it's really seriously looking at what you give to to church or to your local community center or Outreach International, or however else you share your wealth. If it's an abundance of food, then, then maybe it's working at a food pantry, or establishing one, or simply giving to one. Maybe sharing the wealth at this time of year, might be shopping early to get those gifts, for toys, for tots and some of the other programs, Angel trees and such that provide holiday gifts for families in need, or even as the harvest in the northern hemisphere approaches, maybe it's pet food to a shelter or volunteer some time in children's or senior community organizations, whatever your wealth is, be it money, time, belongings, see if you can share it this week.

**Blake Smith 15:11**

Great things to consider. So our blessing today comes from Cathy Key, and it is called "Big Hearts."

Give us big hearts, dear God, big enough to embrace all our sisters and brothers, especially those in trouble, whether of their own making or because of wrongs done to them. Give us big hearts, dear God, big enough to acknowledge our own weakness before pointing the finger at others big enough to be humble when blessed with your good gifts denied to so many. Give us big hearts, dear God, to reach out again and again to those who cannot help themselves, until hope is restored to them and we, thorn-beaten and bloodied, allow our loving to become more like yours. Amen.

As always, we thank you for joining us here at Coffee to Go this week, and we invite you to join us next time for our journey through the liturgical seasons and holy days of the Christian tradition. You