

Coffee to Go | Proper 26 | Year B

SUMMARY KEYWORDS

Jesus, Scribes, Pharisees, Sadducees, God, neighbor

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, and I'm here with Blake Smith, and we welcome you on the journey. So where are we this week, with Jesus? And Blake, we are nearing Jerusalem. So, we've been on this journey from where Jesus began his ministry, up in the area of Galilee, and we have been taking this long journey, meandering in some places towards Jerusalem, where the climactic events of Holy Week and Easter take place. So here again is a question posed to Jesus, and this time it's from a scribe. And Blake, I don't know if we ever talked about the difference between scribes, Pharisees and Sadducees, someday, someday, on this podcast we will, not today, someday after that, could be a long conversation. We will, but it's a scribe, and keeping a person who would normally ask questions and try to you know, hold on to the answer for further discussion. So, keep in mind, not everybody who questioned Jesus was harboring animosity towards him, or were or was trying to trick him, not all the scribes, not all his Sadducees, not all the Pharisees, only some. So, this seems to be an honest question, and the process of questioning someone and then arguing or debating the answer, It was very much within the normal way scholars and rabbis would discuss scripture and the law, and I would add how Community of Christ tends to discuss scripture and the law. So, questions, arguing and debating, all normal in the course of scriptural exploration. So, let's hear what happened Blake.

Blake Smith 02:24

Alright, we are in the Gospel of Mark, and it is the 12th Chapter, the 28th through the 34th verse.

One of the scribes came near and heard them disputing with one another, and seeing that he answered them well, he asked them, "which commandment is the first of all?" Jesus answered, "the first is 'hear, oh, Israel, the LORD our God. The Lord is one. You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.' The second is this, you shall love your neighbor as yourself. There is no other commandment greater than these." Then the scribe said to him, "you are right teacher, you have truly said that he is one, and besides him, there is no other. And to love Him with all the heart and with all the understanding and with all the strength and to love one's neighbor as oneself. This is much more important than all whole burnt offerings and sacrifices." When Jesus saw that he answered wisely, he said to him, "You are not far from the kingdom of God." After that, no one dared to ask him any question.

So why does this matter? Well, as you've mentioned, Karin, there's a demonstration here. It seems like when the passage begins, that here you've got another person that's going to challenge Jesus. He's

trying to get him to answer incorrectly. But as you go through the dialog, you realize that it's an honest question, a dialog between colleagues, if you will, just trying...

Karin Peter 04:09

It does feel like that, doesn't it?

Blake Smith 04:10

Yeah, it does. It does. And so, there's kind of this mutual affirmation and just clarifying, understanding and the Scribe, I'm sure, is just wanting to deepen his encounter and confirm, not to test Jesus, but to confirm for himself that here is a man that understands what I understand. Biblical scholar, Gilberto Ruiz, notes that the Scribe is navigating this encounter with Jesus, and it was certainly, he was certainly somewhat familiar with Jesus' teachings, but he's trying to figure out where that fits in within Judaism. So, he's really trying to make that bridge between the two for himself and, just as that's similar to the process that those people to whom Mark was writing, or to whom this gospel was written, they were trying to discern which parts of Judaism to leave behind and which to carry forward as they followed Jesus and formed Christian communities. So, they were asking the question that we in Community of Christ have been asking, and that's what matters most? Right? And it comes down to those two things. And so, Jesus continues the encounter, and the scribe affirms that Jesus' words are correct and shows that he also knows and understands them, that being, that to love God is to love neighbor, something that we can easily forget. That's kind of the core that the Scribe is trying to get at and that Jesus confirms. And Jesus tells him that he's almost ready for the kingdom. So, we might ask ourselves, and go, "What is this almost?"

Karin Peter 06:03

That's a nervous word, isn't it? Oh yeah, the kingdom has come. You've come near to the kingdom. Near? I don't understand, yeah.

Blake Smith 06:12

Wait a minute. We just agreed that we understood the same thing. What do you mean? I'm near the kingdom, [right, right] but I, what's important here, and Jesus, I think, is touching at, is that it's one thing to know that the love of God equals the love of neighbor. Those are words that we hear again and again. We can say them. It's so easy. But it's another thing entirely to act on it, to make it a part of our everyday life, and to act in ways that bring about God's justice and shalom for everyone. So, some questions that we might ask ourselves about this this week are, when have I made incorrect assumptions about what someone believes based on their ethnicity, gender, social status, or geographic location? We'll just, I'll just remind our listeners that, Karin, you have said that, and I would affirm that we typically lump all Pharisees and Sadducees and Scribes into this category of people who were just against Jesus and were trying to correct him or catch him doing something wrong, or saying something wrong. And so sometimes we kind of lump people in those types of groups. And so, [right] So to consider when we might have made incorrect assumptions about them. It's an important task for us. Another question, what beliefs or teachings from when I was young, have I carried with me into my current faith journey, and which have I left behind? I just recently wrote a blog called, "Let Them Go," and it was about, kind of about me cleaning out some clothes that didn't fit anymore. And I think

sometimes we have to do that with our beliefs and what we've held strong to that they just don't fit with what we know about the world anymore. So

Karin Peter 08:21

Absolutely, and that's a really good point, I think, for our Community of Christ listeners to understand, because we recognize our faith tradition is a journey, and we use that language a lot, whether it's path of disciple or journey of a people. We do understand that, and just because I have certain beliefs that I was taught, they've changed so much, just as they changed for the people before me and the people before them and the people who will come after, right? A journey, a journey means change. That's just how it is. Yeah,

Blake Smith 08:56

Yeah. So, the final question, and this is kind of the tough one. In what ways do I put love of God and love of others into action, the fact that one equals the other, that they are the same, how do I put that into action?

Karin Peter 09:16

All good questions to think about this week. In thinking about how we can experience that, all I can say from from this perspective is, it's a good week to love your neighbor, right? It just really is a good week to love your neighbor just because. Don't do it for any other reason than just because, and decide what that looks like for you. Whether it's bringing in the trash can for your neighbors, like my spouse does faithfully every Thursday, sweeping the sidewalk, inviting someone for tea, you know, taking cookies to somebody just stopping to chat, or helping with the chore. Just love your neighbor this week.

Blake Smith 10:03

Sounds good. I've got several pounds of zucchini. We grew zucchini this year, and what I've learned about zucchini is that if you don't pull it pretty quickly, in a matter of two days, it can go from about a one pound to about a five pound zucchini.

Karin Peter 10:21

Oh, you're going to be loving your neighbors a bit with some produce.

Blake Smith 10:25

Yes, I I took the first one and made two full recipes and had enough to make a third out of one zucchini. And it requires three cups of shredded zucchini. That's how big they are. Anyway, our blessing today comes from "Life Prayers from Around the World," by Marge Piercy.

It goes on one at a time. It starts when you care to act. It starts when you do it again after they said no. It starts when you say "we" and know who you mean, and each day you mean one more.

That's going to wrap it up for another episode of Coffee to Go, but we invite you to enjoy us. We invite you to enjoy us. We do invite you to enjoy us, but we also invite you to join us for the next part of our journey through the liturgical seasons and holy days of the Christian tradition.