

# Coffee to Go | First Sunday of Advent | Year C

## SUMMARY KEYWORDS

Advent, Gospel of Luke, divine presence, hospitality, justice and mercy, God's peaceable reign, hope and trust

## SPEAKERS

Karin Peter, Blake Smith

### **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, and we welcome you on the journey. We are beginning a new liturgical year, and we begin each year with Advent. Advent is a season of waiting, and we wait expectantly for the coming of light into a darkened world in the form of the infant Jesus. So light is, has often been used as an allegorical kind of description of Jesus presence in the world. And so here in Advent, we're waiting in darkness for that light. And so, scriptures and symbols and hymns help make Advent a time of expectation for Christ's birth, rather than kind of the frenzy of holiday tasks that often we experience as we prepare to celebrate the Christmas holiday. So, in doing that, Blake and I are going to walk through the Advent season with you on Sunday mornings, and this year we are in Year C of the lectionary, and so we're going to hear today from Luke's Gospel, some scripture that prepares us for the coming of Jesus. Blake?

### **Blake Smith** 01:54

Yeah, thanks, Karin. It's great to be starting a new year. We did a half a year the first [KP: of "A"], because we did half a year of A. We started at Easter, and we did a whole year B, and now we get to start year C, which is kind of exciting. And as you said, we start in the Gospel of Luke. It is the 21st chapter, the 25th through the 36th verse.

There will be signs in the sun, the moon and the stars, and on the earth, distress among nations, confused by the roaring of the sea and the waves. People will faint from fear and foreboding of what is coming upon the world. For the powers of the heavens will be shaken. Then they will see the Son of Man coming in a cloud with power and great glory. Now, when these things begin to take place, stand up and raise your heads, because your redemption is drawing near. Then he told them a parable. "Look at the fig tree and all the trees. As soon as they sprout leaves, you can see for yourselves and know that summer is already near. So also, when you see these things taking place, you know that the kingdom of God is near. Truly I tell you, this generation will not pass away until all things have taken place. Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away. Be on guard so that your hearts are not weighed down with dissipation and drunkenness and the worries of this life and that day catch you unexpectedly like a trap, for it will come upon all who live on the face of the whole earth. Be alert at all times, praying that you may have the strength to escape all these things that will take place and to stand before the Son of Man."

Well, this is very appropriate scripture when we think about all the things that are going on in the world. And so, we find ourselves today asking a major question of, how do we respond to the crises and calamities that shake us to the core? I mean, those are the things that are kind of mentioned here as Jesus is talking. And so, as followers of Jesus, we know that these things will happen. As a matter of fact, they have happened, they are happening, and they will continue to happen. So, one of the questions that comes up in this passage is this idea of this generation will not pass, and it's debated highly, because, okay, that generation passed. So what? What might that have meant? And I think, for our consideration, and it is a viable understanding of this use of generation by Luke, is that Jesus is more talking about a generation of folks, meaning people who think in a particular way, or who behave in a particular way, this generation, this way of being. And he's referring it to a faithless generation that is what we've heard in the in the passages. So, we kind of think about a faithless group of people who wander, and they are not shaped by the hospitality of God's graciousness. When we understand it that way, we see that kind of people throughout history, and so that's not going to go away. That way of thinking, that way of behaving, is going to be with us until these things come about and Christ returns.

**Karin Peter** 05:31

That's really important to remember Blake, because some people read this and they're like, Oh, this is prophecy for what's happening now. It's like, No, this is human nature, and those things were happening then, and they're happening now, and they will happen again until,

**Blake Smith** 05:47

Right, [yeah,] right. And think about how many literal generations have passed in 2000 years, and each one has probably said, Well, this generation will pass, and yet it has. So, we have to think deeper about what might Jesus really have been saying [KP: exactly] because we're living in the middle of it. The difference for us is that because we are faithful, we face difficulties, assured that the Divine Presence is work, is at work in the world, and God is with us. He's... God. God is with us. God is journeying with us. And we don't have to live in fear. We can stand tall and we can face what comes. It doesn't mean things won't be difficult. They things will remain hard at times, but we can face that and be prepared to withstand the crises and to help and encourage others and continue to speak hope and trust in God's promises. That's our place in all of this. That's the thing...

**Karin Peter** 06:48

That's a good message for now Blake, because we've talked earlier about people who are going to get engaged in bitter dialog and angry, hateful speech, and it's like, no, no, no. Our job is to speak hope and trust in God's promises. That's, that's our job as Christians,

**Blake Smith** 07:08

Yeah. And as a, as a faith movement, we've heard the words to be in the forefront of, this is one of the places we really need to be in the forefront of now is, is being that voice of hope. Another piece about the calamities, though, and we think about, for instance, hurricanes that continue to ravage too that just hit the southeast in recent days, and tsunamis and earthquakes and the fires on the West Coast, and things that are happening in wars around the world. But there's another kind of calamity that, some days, goes unspoken, that is just as important for us to remember, and that's the calamities of injustice

and oppression and racism and harassment of all different kinds that are also so deeply interwoven in our daily lives. And we have to stand tall and face those as well, especially this time of year, we not only live out our practices of hospitality in celebrating, giving and eating with others, we are also invited into God's hospitality, which is the way of mercy and justice. So, some questions we might ask ourselves, given this understanding is, and the idea of God's hospitality is, how do we practice hospitality? How do I practice hospitality, and how will I include justice and mercy in my Advent preparations this year.

**Karin Peter** 08:45

Yeah. Hospitality, not just in welcoming family and friends, but hospitality as in inviting people to a new way of understanding. [BS: Exactly.] Yeah! Well, those are good, really good questions to think about in this first week of Advent. So, Advent is going to last four weeks, and so we have four Sundays before Christmas, and each week we'll talk a little bit about our preparation, and then it concludes, of course, on Christmas Day. And as our experience for this week, it might be a good time to make or purchase an Advent wreath, which is simply four candles in a circle. Or you can put them in a line on an Advent log, if you will, four candles in a row. And this is used to observe the weeks of Advent, and one candle is lit each week until all the candles are burning brightly by Christmas. So take an opportunity this week to set that up and light your first candle this week for the first week of Advent, and let's dig a little deeper into the scriptures as they challenge us to look for signs as we wait for the coming of God's peaceable reign. On Earth, it might ask yourself as you light your first candle, what is one sign, one indication, one thing that captured your attention that tells you God's peaceful Kingdom is near. Think about that. See what you come up with this week.

**Blake Smith** 10:28

And speaking of candles, our blessing today comes from Meta Herrick Carlson...

Set this blessing, slender and sturdy, like a candle in the window, watching and waiting, shining so someone will see and believe that little things can matter a lot, and miracles can look like love that's paying attention.

Thanks for joining us here at Coffee to Go. As we start this new year, we're glad to have you with us. We invite you to join us next time for the next part of our journey through the liturgical seasons and holy days of the Christian tradition.