

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

## SPEAKERS

Karin Peter, Blake Smith

### **Karin Peter** 00:20

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. So, we are in the season of Advent. Advent begins the new Christian year, and it is a time of waiting and expectation for the coming of light into the darkened world, and that light is in the form of the infant Jesus. During Advent, we spend time anticipating and preparing spiritually for the arrival of the Christ child. And in Advent, we find scriptures and symbols and music that help make Advent a time of expectation for Christ's birth, rather than just a list of holiday tasks to accomplish. So, the Advent season begins four Sundays before Christmas. And if you've been with us for the past few weeks, you know that that is observed until Christmas Day, and an Advent wreath with four candles, and often one candle in the center to indicate the Christ in the center of our faith is often used to observe the weeks of Advent, and we've been doing that as we've gone along, and one candle is lit each week until they all burn brightly on Christmas Day. So now that we have that prologue out of the way, let's look. Where are we with Jesus this week? Well, we are still in the wilderness with John, and folks are starting to ask some questions. So Blake, what are they?

### **Blake Smith** 02:07

Well, we are in the third chapter, still the Gospel of Luke, and we're picking up, if you didn't happen to be able to be with us last week, we ended with the passage from Isaiah about making the rough places plain. And so, John gets right to it. It's the seventh through the 18th verse of Luke, chapter three.

John said to the crowds coming out to be baptized by him, "You brood of vipers Who warned you to flee from the coming wrath? Therefore bear fruits worthy of repentance, and do not begin to say to yourselves, 'We have Abraham as our ancestor.' For I tell you, God is able, from these stones to raise up children of Abraham. Even now the axe is lying at the foot of the trees. Therefore every tree that does not bear good fruit will be cut down and thrown into the fire." And the crowds asked him, "What then should we do?" In reply, he said to them, "whoever has two coats must share with anyone who has none, and whoever has food must do likewise." Even tax collectors came to be baptized, and they asked him, "Teacher, what should we do?" He said to them, "collect no more than the amount prescribed for you." Soldiers also asked him, "And we, what should we do?" He said to them, "Do not extort money from anyone by threats or false accusation, and be satisfied with your wages." As the people were filled with expectation, and all were questioning in their hearts concerning John, whether he might be the Messiah, John answered all of them by saying, "I baptize you with water. But one who is more powerful than I is coming. I am not worthy to untie the strap of his sandals, He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire. His winnowing fork is in His hand to clear his threshing floor and to gather the wheat into his granary, and the chaff will be burned with unquenchable fire." So, with many other exhortations, he proclaimed the good news to the people.

So, like I said, we finish that first section through verse six with these words from Isaiah and John does not waste any time getting down to the business of doing the road work that we talked about last time.

**Karin Peter 04:36**

But when you were reading the Blake in my brain, I'm going, Oh, this is John the Baptist, basically saying to the people, "Hey, I've warned you. And now, now it's time to get your you know what together.

**Blake Smith 04:48**

It is, yeah, we're not playing here. They're not playing here. We're going to make the mountains and the hills low. We're going to make the crooked path straight, and the rough way smooth. So either get on board, or get out.

**Karin Peter 05:01**

Exactly, people get ready. Here we go.

**Blake Smith 05:07**

Yeah, one of the things that's important here is that each group of people, the crowds, the tax collectors, the soldiers, they all turn to John and they say, okay, so what do we do? In other words, you know, now that we've repented, which way is the way we go. And John challenges all of them with a way that turns their previous behavior on its head. I mean, they Okay, so what you've been doing, that's not it. So, the crowds who thought all they had to do is have the right ancestry. We are the descendants of Abraham. They need to act in mercy. They need to share their abundance with those who don't have enough, and the tax collectors, you know, stop cheating the people and taking advantage of the vulnerable. Do your job with honor and integrity. So, you know, you're given an amount. Be happy with that amount. Don't get more so that you have something to fill your coffers. And, to the soldiers. Stop bullying, stop threatening, stop harassing people to give you what's not yours. Again, live within your means. I don't know about you, Karin, but when I hear John saying these words, I kind of hear him repeating, with a little bit more detail the words that we hear in Micah 6:8, and words that the people, the Jewish folks, at least, in the audience, would have recognized, and that is to do justice, love mercy and walk humbly with your God, [KP: absolutely] pretty detailed but, but that's ultimately what He's saying to them.

**Karin Peter 06:41**

Yeah, exactly when we hear that. I mean, that's a beautiful passage out of Micah, and we hear that, and we love it, but this is John going, here's what that looks like. Yes, yeah, yeah,

**Blake Smith 06:50**

I'm not here to be pretty. Let's, let's get real. So, some questions we might ask ourselves are, when you consider the world around you, think about the things that are, that are happening to people, especially, but how would John respond to you if you asked, okay, John, what do I do? And Willie James Jennings says these new ways of repentance draw us toward divine life. It's another way of saying, when we repent and go in a new way, we live into the nearness of God's peaceable reign, the Kingdom, the way of God comes near. And so, the question is, When have I felt drawn toward divine life?

**Karin Peter** 07:47

Yeah, do we want...? That's uncomfortable when it's put that way, isn't it? It's like, oh, how, how near do I want to get? Yeah, oh, that's very, that's very profound for this third week of Advent. So, as we live into this, this experience of Advent in the third week, we remember that we have the four candles set in the Advent wreath, and they have multiple meanings. We talked about this last week in Community of Christ. They symbolize joy, love, hope and peace of God's peaceable reign, what we might call God's community. So, look around your home this week and find an item that helps you feel closer to God, or maybe represents your desire to feel closer to God or to experience God's divine presence. Find an item that symbolizes that for you, or represents that for you in some way, and then come to the Advent wreath, and as you light the third Advent candle, share the item with your family or friends or whoever you're with, write it in your journal if you're by yourself, about why that item is meaningful to you. How? How does it symbolize for you drawing near to Divine Presence. So, that's our place to find ourselves in this third week of Advent.

**Blake Smith** 09:27

That's great. And I already have an item in mind. I have a bookmark that I use that was given to me by a mentor, who was not only a mentor, but a spiritual guide for me, and when I was in his presence and talking with him, I felt the presence of the Spirit. So, I'm going to pull that bookmark out. I haven't used it in a while. I'm going to pull that out and use it.

**Karin Peter** 09:53

Excellent. I haven't decided on what my item is. I better figure that out before it's time to light the candle.

**Blake Smith** 10:02

Alright. Well, our blessing today comes from Jan Richardson, and it is called, "Drawing Near."

It is difficult to see it from here, I know, but trust me when I say this blessing is inscribed on the horizon. Is written on that far point you can hardly see. It is etched into a landscape whose contours you cannot know from here. All you know is that it calls you, draws you, pulls you toward what you have perceived only in pieces, in fragments that came to you in dreaming or in prayer. I cannot account for how, as you draw near, the blessing embedded in the horizon begins to blossom upon the soles of your feet, shimmers in your two hands. It is one of the mysteries of the road, how the blessing you have traveled toward, waited for, ached for, suddenly appears as if it had been with you all this time, as if it simply needed to know how far you were willing to walk to find the lines that were traced upon you before the day that you were born.

I love that.

So, as we anticipate the coming of Christ in this Advent season, anticipate that blessing, and as always, we thank you for joining us here at Coffee to Go and invite you to join us next time for the next part of our journey through the liturgical seasons and the holy days of the Christian tradition.