

# Coffee to Go | 2<sup>nd</sup> Sunday of Advent | Year C

## SUMMARY KEYWORDS

Advent, spiritual retreat, John the Baptist, wilderness, Gospel of Luke, Isaiah prophecy, thin places, faith and repentance, justice and mercy

## SPEAKERS

Karin Peter, Blake Smith

### **Karin Peter** 00:26

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 Advent. And Advent is a season of waiting and expectation for the coming of light into a darkened world, into the form, in the form of the infant Jesus. So, Advent is the time we spend anticipating, and the time we spend spiritually preparing for the arrival of the Christ child. So put aside some of the frenzy that happens in the build up to Christmas, and take a little time today in this Advent experience. So, this week, we are with John the Baptist in the wilderness, and the wilderness has a lot of connotations in Scripture that refer to wandering and waiting and being shaped and formed by God into a chosen people, being sustained by God, fed by God, all those things that happened in the Exodus story of Israelites wandering in the wilderness. But also, just the idea of you go into this wilderness, this quiet place to reflect and find your center, if you will, and what it means to be a person of faith. So, it's what we might call a spiritual retreat, although we work each other to death at retreats. But if you're taking a true spiritual retreat, that's what you're doing. You're somewhere different than your home, and you're reflecting and spending time on your own spiritual formation. And folks went out into the wilderness because John the Baptist was out there. That's where he preached and taught and did all of the things that John did out in the wilderness. So let's go there. Blake.

### **Blake Smith** 02:23

Alright, our Scripture today is again in the Gospel of Luke, and it is the beginning of the third chapter, the first through the sixth verse:

In the 15th year of the reign of Tiberius Caesar, when Pontius Pilate was governor of Judea and Herod was ruler of Galilee and his brother, Philip, ruler of the region of Ituraea and Trachonitis and Lysanius, ruler of Abilene, during the high priesthood of Annas and Caiaphas, the word of God came to John, son of Zechariah in the wilderness. He went into all the region around the Jordan proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. As it is written in the book of the words of the prophet Isaiah, "The voice of one crying out in the wilderness, 'Prepare the way of the Lord, make his paths straight. Every valley shall be filled, and every mountain and hill shall be made low, and the crooked shall be made straight, and the rough ways made smooth, and all flesh shall see the salvation of God.'" So just give a minute for all of those who have heard Handel's Messiah and went immediately and heard all the music playing. That's [...]. Just let that go. Let that go. We're going to we're going to spend

some time in the passage. But I know that when I read the Scripture, I always hear Handel's Messiah in the background, and I see Jack Ergo in front, directing. And,

**Karin Peter** 04:00

Oh, that's funny because, because I see that the 1970,s play, Godspell, and the "Prepare Ye the Way of the Lord" song, yeah, I won't sing it for you listeners. But still, that's what, that's what sits in my brain.

**Blake Smith** 04:16

So why does this matter? As Karin has already given us a little note to, there are multiple ways that we can understand wilderness. One is, of course, that wilderness is the opposite of urban, typically seen as the places of power. And I think that there is probably a little bit of that going on with Luke here, as he gives this, who is in power, and lists the high priests. But there's also a Celtic understanding of what we might call "thin places" where the boundary between human and sacred, or the created and creator dissolve, and that has something that, that's centuries old. But in Celtic Christianity, there's, there's a connection to that. Still, there's this understanding of the wilderness as sacred and full of energy, a place where divinity is close at hand. I love that. Yeah, that's, I really like that, and for a tradition who believes in the sacredness of creation, this is a really good connection for us to make. And because we're here at, in the season of Advent, awaiting the birth of Jesus, God with us, God close at hand, this idea of thin spaces is even more fitting, I think. And John's mission is to prepare the way, to be made clean. We might think of it, and I immediately can go to the image of all the construction and road work that goes on in the Chicago area. It used to be that there were two seasons, winter and construction. Now, winter is fading away. It's pretty much construction, seems like year-round. [KP: Construction all the time, yeah]. Yeah. But with that image, we see John coming to do the road work, to remove the obstructions to being a follower of Christ, to get rid of the steep grades and the potholes and the sharp turns, and to remove them, not only for his self and for others, but for us as well. There's this message of repenting to turn, not, and that also has lots of connotations, but ultimately, what we mean by that is to turn and go a new way. And so, we have this baptism by John, which is religious and spiritual, but it's also got an ethical component. And in that ethical component of turning a new way, it demands us to turn and go a way of justice, goodness and mercy. So, questions... yeah?

**Karin Peter** 07:04

Before we get to questions, Blake, I think this is a really good place to insert for maybe some of our folks who love Christmas, and celebrate Christmas, and listen to the podcast and are, consider themselves maybe more spiritual and not so much religious, and Christmas is a hard time to be that, because it all kind of centers around the birth of Jesus, but this is a really good place for us to sit, and say we're supposed to be spiritual. We're supposed to be in this realm. We're supposed to be living in this in in this manner that allows us to open ourselves to be shaped and formed for the purpose of justice making, and carrying peace in the world. And so, if you're one of those folks, this is a really good week to celebrate where you are in your own spiritual journey.

**Blake Smith** 07:57

That's really helpful. Karin, I think sometimes we often think of we need to get spiritual or whatever, so that as Jesus comes, we can connect with Jesus and make our way to heaven. But connecting with

Jesus is so much more than that, especially for us, because as we are seeking to build the kingdom of God on earth, this idea of justice and goodness and mercy ought to be the goal of our spirituality. So, thanks for that. Yeah, great, great connection. So, the questions that we might ask are, where are my thin places? Where are those places where God seems to be a little closer? Where that border between the earthly and the Divine is thin? Another is, what are the steep grades and the potholes and the sharp turns that I need to work on in my life? What do I need to make straight? And, what new way might I need to go? Those are some, some questions, I think, as we prepare for the coming of Christ, and to focus on this spiritual and ethical component that is part of this connection with Christ.

**Karin Peter 09:17**

So as we look to experiencing this week, last week, we set up our Advent wreath, the four candles and circle, and they have multiple meanings in Community of Christ, they symbolize joy, love, open, peace, that are found in the story of the birth of Jesus and are part of our statement of mission in Community of Christ, but they're also found in the life and ministry of Jesus, and the everlasting presence of Jesus in the world. When we live in that presence, then we promote joy, hope, love and peace. So, this week, light the first candle from last week, and then light the second candle for this week and spend a moment in just quiet reflection. Sit a moment in God's presence, and feel God's presence close to you, and just kind of let go of the things of this season that worry you or anger you, or that you fear or maybe even hinder your sense of joy and hope, and as the candles burn, allow yourself a couple of minutes to simply rest in divine grace in that thinness of space this week.

**Blake Smith 10:35**

Alright, well, we're going to kind of "book end" here, because we started with a passage that, at least for me, reminded me of some sacred music. And we're going to we're going to end with a blessing that perhaps I'm just going to guess, that maybe some of our younger listeners might not be familiar with, but would encourage you to go listen to.

**Karin Peter 10:57**

But hey, people, Rod Stewart is sacred music. Get with it.

**Blake Smith 11:02**

This is also sacred music for those of us who remember it. It's called, "People Get Ready." And it's written by Jeff Beck and Rod Stewart, performed by Rod Stewart in 1965 so here are the words to that which is our blessing for today.

People get ready. There's a train coming. You don't need no baggage. You just get on board. All you need is faith to hear the diesels humming. Don't need no ticket. You just thank the Lord. People, get ready for the train to Jordan picking up passengers from coast to coast. Faith is the key. Open the doors and board them. There's room for all among the loved the most. There ain't no room for the hopeless sinner who would hurt all mankind just to save his own. Have pity on those whose chances are thinner because there's no hiding place from the kingdom's throne. So people get ready, for the train a comin'. You don't need no baggage. You just get on board. All you need is faith to hear the diesels humming. Don't need no ticket. You just, thank... You just thank the Lord.

Amen. Go Rod Stewart. All right. Well, thanks everybody for joining us here at Coffee to Go. We invite you to we 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.