

Coffee To Go | 4th Sunday After Epiphany | Year C

SUMMARY KEYWORDS

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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 here with Blake Smith, and we welcome you on the journey. So, we're still in the season after Epiphany. Epiphany, as a reminder, it means to reveal or to make manifest. And so, in the season after Epiphany, which runs from January 7 to Ash Wednesday in the beginning of Lent, this is a time where we learn more about the light and love of God, revealed or made revealed, made manifest in Jesus Christ. So, where are we this week with Jesus? Well, we are still in church. We were in church last week when we shared and we're still in church today, and Jesus is reading from the Isaiah scroll and has announced his mission, and now we're going to see how that story continues.

Blake Smith 01:27

Alright, our Scripture today comes from the Gospel according to Luke, and it is the fourth chapter, the 21st through the 30th verse, and it is right at the end of Jesus preaching in the synagogue, but it repeats the last verse that we had in last week's episode, and it's a part of the lectionary for both weeks, which, as one of my professors would have said, if it's repeated, it must be important. So, let's begin with the 21st verse.

Then he began to say to them, "today, the scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing." All spoke well of him and were amazed at the gracious words that came from his mouth. They said, "Is this not Joseph's son?" He said to them, "Doubtless, you will quote to me this proverb, 'doctor, cure yourself, and you will say, do here also in your hometown the things that we have heard you did at Capernaum,'" and he said, "Truly, I tell you, No prophet is accepted in his hometown. But the truth is, there were many widows in Israel in the time of Elijah, when the heaven was shut up three years and six months, and there was a severe famine over all the land. Yet Elijah was sent to none of them, except to the widow of Zarephath in Sidon. There were also many with a skin disease in Israel in the time of the prophet Elisha, and none of them was cleansed, except Naaman the Syrian." When they heard this, all in the synagogue were filled with rage. They got up, drove him out of the town and led him to the brow of the hill on which their town was built, so that they might hurl him off the cliff. But He passed through the midst of them and went on his way. So, why does this matter? Last week, the people who were gathered, the disciples, along with those who are gathered in the synagogue praised Jesus and his teachings. And they begin

in this passage that we hear today. they were, they were really happy. They were amazed at the gracious words that came from his mouth. And there's a little hint that they might be kind of setting the stage for some dissent. When they ask, 'is this not Joseph's son?' And there's kind of this, 'wait a minute, this guy is from common beginnings. Who? Who does he think he is?' But we don't really get to the anger until he talks about those who have been healed, and we look at that, and those are foreigners. And not only are they foreigners, Naaman was a leader of a foreign army, and so these were outsiders. These were those who were not part of the chosen race. And so there might be question as to, 'why would they get to receive grace? We're the holy ones. We're the ones in the synagogue. We're part of the chosen children of God.' And so they turn angry, and they want Jesus to prove his miracle, to prove his words with miracles, and they don't even say that. Jesus acknowledges it before they can even utter it. He says, surely, you're you know you're going to say, do what you did in other places. And he just knows that this is going to be their response. But they're enraged because Jesus was including the unclean, the foreigner, the poor, in God's salvation. And I think. So that kind of touches a note for us. Sometimes, I think, even if I'm being honest, you know, there are times when I think, well, gosh, what am I doing wrong that I didn't get this? Or what are they doing right? Or why are they getting forgiveness? I'm living the right way. Those things tend to boil up in us, and they didn't like the direction that Jesus was heading, this abundant grace. They didn't like where that was going, and so they wanted to kill him. It just turned very quickly on this idea that God's grace wasn't just for them. It might remind us of a time when we called ourselves the one true church and only allowed baptisms by our people and our sacraments were the only ones that were true sacraments, and it was very difficult, and continues to be difficult for some as we try to recognize and acknowledge that this abundant grace is really for all of God's children, not just for us.

Karin Peter 06:12

So that's why we have it here in the season following epiphany, where the whole point of this period of time in the Christian calendar is to acknowledge that God is revealed in Jesus Christ for everybody. That's why, right? We listen to this Scripture now during, during this season and you're right, we have trails of this in our own history, but we can also hear it in our cultures, where all kinds of trends of nationalism and exclusion are voiced in the public square, and God is drug into those conversations like a banner to wave over the righteous. So, it's very applicable today

Blake Smith 07:01

Right. It has gone far beyond even denominationalism and who has the right message of God, it's who has the right message. So, it's spread across all of our culture, like you said. So, that would lead us to ask some questions, and those questions might be, 'when have I been offended because someone excluded me due to my beliefs, because of something I believed?' 'When have I wanted to be treated as special because of my beliefs?' Maybe it's a group that you're a part of, or beliefs that you hold. And finally, 'what does it mean for me if God has a preference for the poor... If salvation comes first to the poor? And I am just reminded, even as I think about this question of a seminary class where I made the mistake of saying to a professor, well, you have to understand, we're just poor college students. And that Professor turned on me very quickly, and he said, 'Boy,' he was engaged in rural ministries. And he said, 'Boy, you may be broke, but you ain't never been poor.' And so, if salvation comes to the poor, and I'm not one of those, what does that mean for me? What does that mean for me?

Karin Peter 08:31

Yeah, that's an interesting place to leave us, Blake. Thanks for that. So how can I experience it this week? I think maybe this week we're going to go back to to something we've done several times here on coffee to go, and that is, try to go all week without taking offense. Try to put yourself in the other person's shoes. What does it mean for me if salvation comes first to the poor? How can I be supportive of that, rather than offended by it, and if you are offended or hurt because you're been excluded or because you want to be treated as special, well, try not voicing it, and not plastering it all over Facebook, and not acting on it. Just let it pass through you and go on your way in this place of, what does it mean for me if salvation comes first to someone else?

Blake Smith 09:34

That's great. I just read an article this morning written by a woman whose family, quite honestly, had been torn apart by political divisions, and she talks a little bit about how disruptive it was for her, because she was kind of the other voice, and most of her family was in one camp, and she was in the other and it was destroying her and her family, and she just made a decision that her family was more important, and worked to find ways to focus on listening and just really determined to listen and to not judge and not to voice and not to act, and the family found a place of healing. So, I really like that, that practice for us this week, I think that's really hard, but really important.

So, our blessing today comes from Laura Jean Truman, and it is called, "Prayer for the Tired, Angry Ones."

God, we're so tired.

We want to do justice, but the work feels endless and the results look so small in our exhausted hands. We want to love mercy, but our enemies are relentless, and it feels like foolishness to prioritize gentleness in this unbelievably cruel world.

We want to walk humbly, but self-promotion is seductive, and we are afraid that if we don't look after ourselves, no one else will.

We want to be kind, but our anger feels insatiable.

Jesus, in this never-ending wilderness, come to us and grant us grace.

Grant us the courage to keep showing up to impossible battles, trusting that it is our commitment to faithfulness and not our obsession with results that will bring in your peace.

Grant us the vulnerability to risk loving our difficult and complicated neighbor, rejecting the lie that some people are made more in the image of God than others.

Grant us the humility of a decentered but beloved self as we continue to take the single step that is in front of us.

Jesus, keep us from becoming what we are called to transform.

Protect us from using the Empire's violence in our words, in our theology, in our activism and in our politics for your kingdom of peace.

Keep our anger from becoming meanness.

Keep our sorrow from collapsing into self pity.

Keep our hearts soft enough to keep breaking.

Keep our outrage turned towards justice, not cruelty.

Remind us that all of this, every bit of it is for love.

Keep us fiercely kind. Amen. [Amen.]

Thanks for joining us here today at coffee to go. 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.