

Coffee to Go | Third Sunday of Lent | 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, and I'm here with Blake Smith, and we both welcome you on this journey. So, we are in the season of Lent. Lent is the 40 days between Ash Wednesday and Easter, not counting Sundays. Sundays are exempt from the Lenten experience. So, during Lent, we center our attention on Jesus as we remember his life and ministry. And this season also provides a means for us to really focus on our own lives in relationship to Jesus, and this season encourages us to look away from whatever distracts us or challenges us in our commitment to be a disciple of Jesus. So may this season of Lent help all of us walk with Jesus as he turns his face to Jerusalem and to the cross. So, we are with Jesus this week on the journey, traveling. He teaches and preaches as he goes. We heard that last week, and to tell Herod I'm busy doing these things, and have a few more days before I head out. So, he's on the way to Jerusalem. We are with Jesus, and we are heading towards what happens in Jerusalem in Holy Week. So, where are we Blake?

Blake Smith 01:52

Well, we are still in the Gospel of Luke in the 13th Chapter, but we're going to go back to the beginning of the chapter this week. We were farther in the chapter last week, but we're going back to the first through the ninth verse.

At that very time, there were some present who told Jesus about the Galileans whose blood Pilate had mingled with their sacrifices. He asked them, "Do you think that because these Galileans suffered in this way, they were worse sinners than all other Galileans? No, I tell you, but unless you repent, you will all perish as they did. Or those 18 who were killed when the Tower of Siloam fell on them, Do you think that they were worse offenders than all the other people living in Jerusalem? No, I tell you, but unless you repent, you will all perish, just as they did." Then he told this parable. A man had a fig tree planted in his vineyard, and he came looking for fruit on it, and found none. So, he said to the man working in the vineyard, "see here, for three years, I have come looking for fruit on this fig tree, and I still find none. Cut it down. Why should it be wasting the soil?" And he replied, "sir, let it alone for one more year until I dig around it and put manure on it. If it bears fruit next year. Well and good, but if not, you can cut it down."

So why does this matter this week? Well, Jesus is really challenging a theology that we hear a lot these days, especially with, you know, the earthquakes and the mudslides and the fires and the storms and

all the other catastrophes, the wars that are going on. We hear it again and again. And he says to the do you think these people had grisly deaths because they were worse than most, worse than you? Nope, no better or worse than you. So, then he goes while we're on the subject. So, do you think you're a good person because you don't sin or you don't do bad things? And I do that in air quotes, because we all have different definitions of what bad things are, right? The things we do aren't bad. Doing nothing, doing nothing, as I talked about last week with sins of omission, doing nothing is the same as sinning. If you're not engaged in the Acts of God's healing way with restoration and wholeness and mercy, then what exactly are you doing? This is kind of, this is, there's a rhetorical question, because this is kind of what Jesus is saying underneath. You know, if you've been going merrily along with over consumption and gluttony and greed and self-centeredness and yes, dare I say it, hypocrisy, you need to get yourself some repentance. You're like a tree that produces no fruit. We can say all the things we want. We can claim all the beliefs we want. We can be really good and go to church on Sunday. But if it means nothing Monday through Saturday, then we're producing no fruit. And that is this fig tree. And so, now the gardener comes in, Jesus being the gardener in our case, and saying, you know, let's, let's, let's give it one more year. Let's, let's give it a chance. Let me dig around it a little bit. Let me put some manure on it. And for some maybe there's been a little over fertilizing, if you know what I mean, and they're need some fertilizer taken away because they're full of stuff, but kind of giving that mercy, that opportunity of grace for us. Rather than cutting us down, the garden or the tender caregiver has mercy for us and tends us carefully and gives us a chance to repent, to turn to go and grow a new way. I think one of the things that also really stood out for me in the passage is Jesus' statement a couple of times, if you don't repent, you are going to perish, just as they did. And I think that could easily be turned and maybe that's part of the reason for some of the theology about, well, if you don't do this, this is going to happen to you. I don't think Jesus is saying, Well, if you don't repent, the Romans are going to come and gut you like they did the Galileans. Or if you don't repent, a building is going to fall on you. I think Jesus is saying, if you don't turn and do what is right, if you don't take the opportunity of this moment, you may miss it, because stuff happens, right? And you're going to miss...

Karin Peter 07:06

Unexpected, the tragic, yes, yeah.

Blake Smith 07:08

And then you won't have that opportunity to go and mend that relationship that you've been toiling over and trying to decide whether you should. You're not going to get that opportunity to go and speak to the person you haven't spoken to in years. You're not going to get a chance to help your neighbor in a way that you've been urged to do in your senses, but you just haven't followed through. Stuff happens. And so ...

Karin Peter 07:36

We have that scripture in the Doctrine and Covenants, the time for hesitation has passed. [Yes] that's what this brings to mind.

Blake Smith 07:45

Absolutely. So in this passage, in this passage, it's Jesus, it's as if Jesus is looking at folks and just says, Hey guys, Quit messing around. Get with the program. The time for hesitation has passed. That's a great, great connection. So some questions we might ask ourselves are, do I ever compare myself as worse than or better than someone else? And if so, ...

Karin Peter 08:17

It's part of human nature. We do that, right? Yeah, [absolutely] yeah. But we have to go deeper than that and say, what is it that's causing me to see myself this way?

Blake Smith 08:28

Yeah, I think I might have mentioned on a previous episode before. For me, at times, it hasn't been so much, you know, why are they, Why is something happening to me that's not happening to them. It's more. Why do people seem to like that person more than they like me. [Yeah] So, you know, it kind of exposes itself in different ways. Another question we might ask is, Have I been like the fig tree? How might a turn to a new way be in order, and what fruit will come of it? That's kind of a multi-part question, but that's all together. And then finally, what kind of fertilizer will the gardener need to help me grow and flourish?

Karin Peter 09:23

Yeah, what are the areas I need to work on? So, when I received my Evangelist Blessing when I was a young early in my first marriage, I was really surprised and not happy to read when it came. I, I'm sure I had heard it when the evangelist said it, but it was like, you need to basically get yourself some compassion. You need to you need to do that because you're not, you're not showing it to the people. So, that was the that was the fertilizer, I guess was the, was the blessing.

Blake Smith 10:06

I might be on the other side of that, I think this did not come in my Evangelist Blessing, but I think sometimes and my people who love me have said I might need to get a little backbone, because I tend to just love everybody and have compassion and let people get get away with things. I need to stand up a little stronger against oppression and things like that.

Karin Peter 10:32

So basically, you and I as 70 need to go two by two and then...

Blake Smith 10:35

Yeah, exactly... for balance.

Karin Peter 10:39

So how do we experience this particular scripture this week? So, I'm old enough to remember playing pin the tail on the donkey at birthday parties. I don't know if any of our listeners remember that, but they would blindfold you, turn you around and around and around and around, and then send you off with the donkey's tail in your hand with a little thumbtack, and your job was to find the donkey that was on the wall somewhere without sticking all the other birthday party people. It's so wrong when I think about it now, but that was a standard at birthday parties. And so, this has a little bit of that vibe going on with

it. So this week a little holy imagining, if you will. So, at some point this week, close your eyes and then actually stand there, physically at turn, slowly in a circle, and in your mind, picture yourself turning from aspects of destructiveness or complacency in your life. And imagine yourself turning around as you move to a new way. And you have your eyes closed, you're physically kind of turning around, and as soon as it feels right, stop. Don't open your eyes yet. But in your mind, what new way do you see before you, and how is that new path summoning you? And where do you imagine it's leading you? So a little practice of holy imagining a year with a little pin the tail on the donkey mixed in. But I think for each of us, we need to spend a moment in that turning before we take the first step in the new way.

Blake Smith 12:25

Really like that. I really like that. I might need to stand near something I can hold on to.

Karin Peter 12:30

Yeah, well, you and me both.

Blake Smith 12:33

But yeah, that's I like that imagining practice. Our blessing today comes from Jan Richardson, one of the people we have turned to many times. And it's called, "A Blessing for the Place Between." So, we might imagine that turning and where we are and where we're turning to and the place in between.

When you come to the place between,
when you have left what you held most dear,
when you are traveling toward the life you know not,
when you arrive at the hardest ground,
may it become for you a place to rest.
May it become for you a place to dream.
May the pain that has pressed itself into you, give way to vision, to knowing.
May the morning make of it an altar, a path, a place to begin again. Amen.

Well, thanks everybody for being with 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.