

Coffee to Go | First Sunday of Lent | Year C

SUMMARY KEYWORDS

Lent, spiritual formation, prayer, fasting, Jesus, wilderness, Holy Spirit, discipleship, introspection, self-evaluation.

SPEAKERS

Karin Peter, Blake Smith

Karin Peter 00:28

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, this is the first Sunday of Lent. And Lent is the 40 days between Ash Wednesday and Easter, not counting Sundays. So, the Lenten practices of spiritual formation and prayer and fasting don't count on Sunday so you get a little reprieve. It's like ollie ollie in come free on Sundays. So, we always celebrate, hallelujah, the victory of God's purposes on those days. But during Lent, the other 40 days, we center ourselves on Jesus as we remember his life and ministry. And this time provides a means for us also to kind of sharpen our focus into our, into our own lives and how, how we are in relationship to God's presence. And the Lenten season encourages us to turn away from those things that distract us or block our commitment to discipleship. And that's kind of a churchy word, so maybe to simply following the message of Jesus. So, may this season of Lent help us walk with Jesus, even though we know the path leads to the cross. So, here we are with Jesus, and we are heading into the wilderness, where, if this was a Dun, dun, dun dun, it would be where Jesus has a visitor.

Blake Smith 02:08

And it is the Gospel of Luke, the fourth chapter, the first through the 13th verse...

Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, returned from the Jordan and was led by the Spirit in the wilderness, where for 40 days he was tested by the devil. He ate nothing at all during those days, and when they were over, he was famished. The devil said to him, "if you are the Son of God, command this stone to become a loaf of bread." Jesus answered him, "it is written, one does not live by bread alone." Then the devil led him up and showed him in an instant all kingdoms of the world. And the devil said to him, "to you, I will give all this authority and their glory, for it has been given over to me, and I give it to anyone I please. If you then will worship me, it will all be yours." And Jesus answered him, "it is written, worship the Lord your God and serve only him." Then the devil led him to Jerusalem and placed him on the pinnacle of the temple and said to him, "if you are the Son of God, throw yourself down from here. For it is written, He will command his angels concerning you and protect you, and on their hands, they will bear you up so that you will not dash your foot against the stone." Jesus answered him, "It is said, do not put the Lord your God to the test." When the devil had finished every test, he departed from him until an opportune time.

So why does this matter? Well, I think one of the important things here, and we focused before on this general passage, and spoke a lot about the devil, but I want to focus a little bit more on the wilderness piece here and specifically at the beginning, the fact that we see the Spirit leading Jesus in the wilderness, and we assume, and I would say, safely assume, that the spirit attended Jesus through this as well. When we read this in Matthew, It's the Spirit pushed him into the wilderness, led him to the wilderness. But this doesn't just say the Spirit led him into the wilderness. It says the Spirit led him in the wilderness. Yes, so I think that's important for all of us to hear as we enter this time of Lent and representative of the days in the wilderness. And wilderness, of course, is an important part in the Scripture. The Israelites spent a lot of time in the wilderness. Jesus goes to the wilderness for quiet as well as this preparation period here near the beginning, but in the midst of those times, the Spirit is with us, not just leads us or pushes us into temptations. We hear conversations about, 'oh, God tempted me, or the devil tempted me,' or this or that, but the Spirit is leading us in the midst of these things, not to these things.

Karin Peter 05:21

However, it doesn't mean we always behave in in the way that we hope we would, in the wilderness, in spiritual formation or shaping and forming ourselves. That doesn't always happen.

Blake Smith 05:33

No? Well, we don't. We really only need the Spirit when we get on the backside of the bad stuff, right? So, that's when it's important that we remember that the Spirit is with us, certainly. And we might say that all of our days. I remember my mom reminding me as a child, 'remember, Jesus sees everything you do.' Well. And if the Spirit is with us in the wilderness, the spirit is also aware of us. But like you said, Karin, and it was certainly true with the Israelites, they weren't on their best behavior when they were in the wilderness. They were engaged in a lot of bad behaviors, worshiping gold and idols and all those kinds of things.

Karin Peter 06:19

And whining and complaining and not trusting the, not just leadership, but God. I mean, they were really poorly behaved. [Yeah.] I mean, if we believe Cecil B DeMille, I know we talked about this, and it's on here, so I don't know if our listeners know who Cecil B DeMille was, but [yeah,] 10 Commandments movie, just people just go watch that the Israelites were poorly behaved.

Blake Smith 06:42

Yes, and that wasn't just in the movie. I think that was really, that was really the real thing. But if we think back about some of the conversations we've had about the wilderness, you know, the wilderness is that place where we attend to God's presence, but it's also a place where the temptations and the difficulties of living happen, where we're trying to create an authentic life of following Jesus, we also run into the want to turn around and run the other way. All of this is happening in the wilderness, but that's kind of, for me, I guess the reason why it's important to be in the wilderness, because if we don't get in the wilderness, we don't, we don't question, we don't have introspection, we don't self-evaluate, and all of that is necessary in the midst of all that's happening in our world. So, it's important for us to go in to the wilderness. It's important for us to remember that the Spirit is with us in the wilderness, and we probably ought not to beat ourselves up too much when we act badly in the wilderness, as long as

we're willing to engage in that self-evaluation and introspection. That's kind of what that journey for me is about. So, some questions we might ask ourselves then are, Where am I in the wilderness? Am I in the process of formation or in the process of escaping? Another...

Karin Peter 08:20

Mmm... hard question, yeah, yeah,

Blake Smith 08:21

Yeah, yeah, and maybe we're a little bit of both. The important thing is to kind of be honest about that with ourselves. I mean, what does lying to ourselves do for us? Nothing, right? Another thing, because we like to blame things on personified evil. I mean the devil. This image of a devil is really helpful for us, because if the devil made me do it, then I'm not responsible. But we do need to think about our own participation. So the question might be, what bedevils me? If the devil is in the details, then, what are the details of my life that are in the way of my full encounter with the Spirit? And then finally, what might I be looking for in the wilderness? What is it that we need to find or or acknowledge in this time? So...

Karin Peter 09:22

Interesting way to think about some of these things. Yeah, because it pushes these questions, push it back on us, we don't get to just blame it on some other entity. So that makes it so much harder. So how can we experience this this week? So, my spouse and I like to hike, and we both have hiking sticks that we use. We use the cool aluminum ones now, which are awesome. Ray's has a compass in the handle. But I'm going to suggest that make something that represents a hiking stick for you. Maybe you have one that you could bring out of the garage, wherever you keep it and put it in your, your hallway where you can see it, or maybe you want to just take a small stick as a symbol of a hiking stick. But whatever it is, put it where you see it, and spend some time reflecting on where are you going this week. If you take this stick on your hike into the wilderness, where are you going, and how is the spirit, the Divine Presence, with you? And what challenges or devils we could say lower case d, what are you facing, and how are you shaping yourself in new ways this first week of Lent?

Blake Smith 10:37

Well, our blessing today is, "Lost in the Cosmos." And it's by Walker Hersey.

Karin Peter 10:43

And it's my new favorite Lenten blessing. I love this. It's like a stream of consciousness. Yes, we'll see.

Blake Smith 10:54

So hold on. Repeat.

Do you read?

Do you read?

Are you in trouble?

How did you get in trouble?

If you're in trouble, have you sought help?

If you did, did help come?

If it did, did you accept it?
Are you out of trouble?
What is the character of your consciousness?
Are you conscious?
Do you have a self?
Do you know who you are?
Do you know what you're doing?
Do you love?
Do you know how to love?
Are you loved?
Do you hate?
Do you read me?
Come back. Repeat, come back.
Come back. Come back.

So, there you have it.

Well, all of our listeners, thanks so much for joining us here at coffee to go. We love spending this time with you, and we invite you to join us next time at coffee to go for the next part of our journey through the liturgical seasons and holy days of the Christian tradition.