

# Coffee to Go | Fifth Sunday of Lent | Year C

## SUMMARY KEYWORDS

Lent, Jesus, Mary, Martha

## SPEAKERS

Karin Peter, Blake Smith

### **Karin Peter** 00:29

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 still in Lent. This is the last week of Lent, which is the 40 days between Ash Wednesday and Easter, not counting Sundays. And during Lent, we center our attention on Jesus as we remember his life and ministry. And during Lent, we sharpen our focus on our own lives in relationship to following Jesus, and the Lenten season encourages us to turn away from those things which distract us or block our commitment to discipleship. And so, may this last week of the season of Lent help us walk with Jesus more fully as he turns his face toward Jerusalem, and the events of Jerusalem and Holy Week eventually to the cross. So this week, we're pausing on our road trip with Jesus, because we are in Bethany, which I think we learned last year, is about 12 miles from Jerusalem. Isn't that what we came up with last year in this time of year?

### **Blake Smith** 01:44

It is indeed,

### **Karin Peter** 01:45

And we are at the house of Lazarus and his sisters, Mary and Martha. Some of you who are friendly with Bible scriptures will recognize those names. And at this portion of Scripture, they are taking time for their evening meal, and Jesus and the disciples have joined Lazarus and his household.

### **Blake Smith** 02:09

So, our passage is in the Gospel According to John, the 12th chapter, and it is the first through the eighth verse.

Six days before the Passover, Jesus came to Bethany, the home of Lazarus, whom he had raised from the dead. There they gave a dinner for him. Martha served and Lazarus was one of those reclining with him. Mary took a pound of costly perfume made of pure nard, anointed Jesus's feet and wiped them with her hair. The house was filled with the fragrance of the perfume, but Judas Iscariot, one of his disciples, the one who was about to betray him, said, "Why was this perfume not sold for 300 denarii and the money given to the poor?" He said this not because he cared about the poor, but because he was a thief. He kept the common purse and used to steal what was put into it. Jesus said, "Leave her

alone. She bought it so that she might keep it for the day of my burial. You always have the poor with you, but you do not always have me."

So why does this matter? For such a passage, for such a short passage, this has a lot of content in it. One of the things that I want to start with is that last line, because it is used negatively to give us, I guess, a comfort in why we don't care for the poor. I remember when Community of Christ picked up the Mission Initiatives, and one of them being Abolish Poverty, End Suffering. And it, I can't tell you how many times I heard somebody say, 'well, we can't abolish poverty. Jesus said...'

**Karin Peter** 03:55

Yeah, misuse, I totally misuse one little phrase from scripture, absolutely

**Blake Smith** 04:00

Right, right. So, Jesus is highlighting this moment, and it's, it's actually quite a moment in terms of what's happening in this movement toward Jerusalem. First of all, this passage is one that is filled with engaging the senses. So, we've got passion and anger, we've got intimacy, we've got deceit. There's food being served, the smell of the fragrance, and they go so far as to say, it filled the room. It was a large amount of this perfume, and so it fully encompassed the room. There's the sense of Mary's hair touching Jesus' feet. So, there's all of these senses being engaged in this. And it's lavish. It's, it's lush. It's kind of over the top, if you will. It's, it's not at all what we might expect in a Jesus story. It's. Because it's kind of everything together, and it leaves us unsettled. It would leave those like Judas who are concerned about waste unsettled, although, as the scripture tells us, Judas' concern with waste is not, does not have anything to do with the poor, but his desire to have more in the treasury that he might steal from. But whether it's this intimacy of Mary's action, so here's, here's this woman sitting in the midst of the disciples, these, the the man club that's, that's, she's, she's with them, and she brings in this perfume and anoints Jesus's feet, which, when I talk to people about the possibility of doing a foot washing in a worship, there's a lot of cringing that goes on. That's a that's a very intimate act.

**Karin Peter** 05:55

Okay, so now, now to stick up for the for the non-intimate act people, because I don't want to do a foot washing either, for that very reason. And yeah, it is unsettling.

**Blake Smith** 06:06

It is, it is. And I'm, I'm not a big one for it, but I just when it comes up, you know, we do hand washings because that's a that's a little more acceptable, but that's a very intimate action. And we also have this, the dismissiveness of Judas' comments. So, he jumps right in there, and, you know, he's got criticism of why this shouldn't happen that might make us uncomfortable, I think, especially, not only the comments itself, but who they're directed at. And I'll say about a little bit more about that in a minute. The lavishness of Mary's gift. I mean, she could have taken a small bottle of perfume and anointed his feet or whatever, but it is a large amount. Again, the scripture is really careful to emphasize that so we get uncomfortable with a passage. Maybe it's even the presence of the phrase about the poor always being with us, whatever it is, but it's okay. We need to walk with that uncomfortableness. So, I said I'd say another thing or two about the object of Judas' criticism. And I want to say this because I think it's really

important for our listeners to hear Karin. You know, we try really hard to look at these passages as we go through them from a very human perspective, to give them, so that it's relevant for us, right?

**Karin Peter** 07:42

So it comes alive. Yeah,

**Blake Smith** 07:43

Right, right? And so, when I read this passage, I think, well, Judas is kind of a jerk. He's obviously greedy, he's concerned about this. And that's all that I see in a reading of it. And yet, as you and I talked and you shared this sense that we need to pick up on, that here is Mary, who has no voice of her own, who is doing a very risky thing, a very prophetic thing, in anointing Jesus' feet, which is foretelling of his future death and resurrection. Judas, even though Judas doesn't directly speak to Mary or criticize Mary, Jesus stands up for her. He responds in that and says, 'leave her alone.' So here Jesus is taking the place of being a voice for Mary where she does not have voice. I think that's important for us to see here. It was important for me to hear you tell me some of that, and help me to see that, because often we read through these passages and we don't understand the possible impact that this could have on others. So, we need to be in conversations where we hear these perspectives, and I'm really grateful for that. So, I think it's important for us to hear, not only did Jesus stand up for Mary, but Mary was taking a huge risk in a place where she had no standing, and no voice because she knew that's what she needed to do.

**Karin Peter** 09:25

I think the other thing Blake is that our listeners, I don't know if they'd be surprised, maybe not, if they know both of us, but, it's good for listeners to know that you and I don't always agree. [Yeah.] I mean, there are times we go through these and we go, Okay, we just won't say that. Or, you know, one of us has an idea, and we go, No, that's too out there. What we're really trying to do is put ourselves in the room, or in the field, or under the tree, with what's happening in the in the scripture. And the fact that we don't always agree is good, right? It means that we're both exploring and learning and doing that. The caution always is that we don't only look at this through our own lens. And so, we both scour the commentaries and try to figure out what's happening here, and we noted, before we started recording today, that because we record these a couple at a time, week by week, we get to, we get to see how things are building up in the story and in this Lenten season, we get to see these scriptures where Jesus is getting more and more frustrated, and so that, to me, is also playing out in this. When Judas gets all snipey about the money, Jesus is just, it's not just that he's standing up for Mary. He's also like, I can just see his face going, 'Oh my God, they still don't understand,' and just being so frustrated. Yeah, so I don't know. It's just I have appreciated doing this series, Coffee to Go series, because we get to explore these in a little more human way than we would normally do in Bible study. So...

**Blake Smith** 11:21

Yeah, yeah, maybe our listeners will be encouraged if, if they don't agree on something, talk about it. [Yeah] listen to each other, because your explanation and thoughts, for me is, is very helpful. So...

**Karin Peter** 11:33

Well, I feel the same way, and it's really interesting, because that's what it means to be a student of Scripture, right? [Yes] That's the Hebrew tradition, is to talk about it and share your perspectives and, and, and then find out you might all come out at a different place at the end. So, [yeah] yeah.

**Blake Smith 11:56**

Alright, so how about some questions? I have a couple of questions that we might ask ourselves this week. And the first is, 'when have I been dismissive of someone else's gift?' And the second would be, 'am I uncomfortable with the intimacy of this scripture?' And remember that it's okay to be uncomfortable. As a matter of fact, if you're not uncomfortable, maybe you're not reading, you're not taking the time to hear what's really happening. So, are you uncomfortable with the intimacy? Why? What's bringing up those feelings for you? So, some things to think about.

**Karin Peter 12:35**

So, as we kind of live in this scripture this week, I'm really drawn to the lavish nature of the scripture, the wording that's used to talk about the fragrance, the idea that they're sitting and or reclining around a table where they've had a meal and they're being waited on by Mary. And the implication is that Martha's off in the kitchen, cooking. There's just all of this stuff going on with people in a contained space, and the food and the scent and the actions, and so I think maybe this week, it might be helpful for us to experience some of that. So, my suggestion would be to find some kind of perfume or really super smelly soap or some other really fragrant thing, and to place it where you can smell that fragrance every day this week, whether it's by where you get ready in the morning or where you get your keys before you leave the door. But then each day, when you smell that fragrance, ask yourself, How do I sense the divine prompting me into prophetic risk? What is it I'm called to do or give or be this week? What is, what is kind of my gift to offer, as Mary offered hers this week?

**Blake Smith 13:59**

Okay, well, our blessing this week comes from Donna Ashworth in Wild Hope, and it's called, "Come Sit With Me."

If you are too much, too emotional, too sensitive, too loud, too honest, too deep, too loving, come sit with me and we can pool our too muchness and send it up to the moon to scatter amongst the stars, let our too muchness find solace in their brilliance, expand a million times more and shower the world with that light of too much person for one person and. If you are too much, come sit with me, my friend. I like too much. You can be too much and more with me.

Thanks 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.