

Coffee to Go | Fourth Week of Lent

SUMMARY KEYWORDS

blind, sin, man, week, jesus, scripture, traditions, blindness, perspective, wash, authentic relationships, spiritual blindness, sinner, mud, eyes, confirmation bias, answered, kinds, story, today

SPEAKERS

Josh Mangelson, Blake Smith, Karin Peter

Josh Mangelson 00:16

Welcome to the Project Zion Podcast. This podcast explores the unique spiritual and theological gifts Community of Christ offers for today's world.

Karin Peter 00:33

Welcome to Coffee to Go where we center ourselves in the scriptures, seasons and holy days of the Christian tradition. I'm Karen Peter, and I'm here with Blake Smith. And we welcome you on this journey. So, our question we asked each week is where are we with Jesus this week? Well, this is the fourth week of Lent of the Lenten season. And today we're with Jesus as he encounters a blind man, heals the blind man, and causes a dialogue about sin, and who is a sinner. Jesus heals the blind man on the Sabbath day, which makes Jesus the sinner in this particular scenario. So, this will be an interesting exploration. Sin is one of those words in Scripture that when we read it, it brings up all kinds of messages, all kinds of images, all kinds of issues, all kinds of judgments and beliefs, and much of it is unfounded and misinterpreted. So we have to pay attention. What are we listening for? As we stand here with Jesus listening to the conversation, what do we hear? So, Blake what's the Scripture?

Blake Smith 01:50

Our scripture comes from John chapter nine. And the story itself goes from verse 1 to 41, but we're going to focus on verses 1 through 25 today. As he walked along, he saw a man blind from birth. His disciples asked Him, Rabbi who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind? Jesus answered, neither this man nor his parents sinned, he was born blind, so that God's works might be revealed in Him. We must work the works of Him who sent Me, while it is day, night is coming, when no one can work. As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world. When he had said this, he spat on the ground and made mud with the saliva and spread the mud on the man's eyes, saying to him, Go, wash in the pool of Siloam, which means sent. Then he went and washed and came back able to see the neighbors and those who had seen him before as a beggar began to ask, Is this not the man who used to sit and beg? Some were saying, It is He? Others were saying? No, but it is someone like him. He kept saying, I am he. But they kept asking him, then how were your eyes opened? He answered. The man called Jesus made mud, spread it on my eyes and said to me, go to Siloam and wash. Then I went and washed and received my sight. They said to him, Where is he? He said, I do not know. They brought to the Pharisees, the man who had formerly been blind. Now it was a Sabbath day when Jesus made the mud and opened his eyes. Then the Pharisees also began to ask him how he had received his sight. He said to them, he put mud on my eyes, then I washed, and now I see. Some

of the Pharisees said, This man is not from God, for he does not observe the Sabbath. Other said, How can a man who is a sinner performed such signs? And they were divided. So they said again to the blind man, what do you say about him? It was your eyes, he opened. He said, he is a prophet. The Jews did not believe that he had been blind and it received his sight until they called the parents of the man who had received his sight and asked them is this your son, who you say was born blind? How then does he now see, his parents answered? We know that this is our son, and that he was born blind, but we do not know how it is that he now sees, nor do we know who opened his eyes. Ask him, he is of age, he will speak for himself. His parents said this because they were afraid of the Jews, for the Jews had already agreed that anyone who confessed Jesus to be the Messiah would be put out of the synagogue. Therefore, his parents said he is of age, ask him. So for the second time they called the man who had been blind. And they said to him, give glory to God, we know that this man is a sinner. He answered, I do not know whether he is a sinner. One thing I do know that though I was blind, now I see. It's interesting. You mentioned that Jesus was a slnner. And they make that pretty clear. I mean, he was...

Karin Peter 05:27

He wasn't supposed to heal people on the Sabbath.

Blake Smith 05:29

And I grew up in that tradition, I well remember, we didn't wash the car, we didn't cut the grass. We didn't do anything on Sunday. We follow that in my family growing up. But you know, what that points to is blindness that we all have, because of biases because of traditions because of things that we've been taught that we know, I think one of the things have been helpful for me in my working with others in ministry over, especially the last, oh, 10 to 15 years, is recognizing the things that I have just accepted as truth, because of tradition, or because mama said so. So, you know, this part of the story gives us an opportunity to look at spiritual blindness, it's something that we all experience, participate in. So, I was on a trip with youth, we had gone to a theme park, for a Christian concert, and I remember this young man, we were walking down the line to get in our place in line and we pass this person who was covered head to toe in tattoos. And he turned to me and he said, "What's that guy doing at a Christian concert?", because of the stories he'd heard, because of the things that had been placed in his life or the way he understood people this blindness had been created. And there are so many things that can serve to create that blindness for us. So, for instance, the blindness of literalism, not leaving place for God to be God. We're blinded from our tradition. That happens not only from family traditions that we have, but traditions in the church. We pick and choose, I think, maybe because of the power of the influences that are in our life, what we want to be blind to, or what we're willing to be blind to. We're blinded by confirmation bias.

Karin Peter 07:28

I think with confirmation bias, I see it, I see it a lot in places where there's a lot of division politically, and socially, you see this where, if I have a certain political perspective, I only look for information from sources that share my political perspective. So, and I see it on sides from all sides of discussions. So, I'm blind to any truth or relevance of anything coming to me from a source that I don't already agree with, which is not healthy at all. And yet, I see it over and over again.

Blake Smith 08:09

That's a great example. And I just recently heard a story, saying that there are people now, a trend, especially with people being able to work from home and live anywhere, that geographic areas are becoming more places of creating that confirmation bias in the way that you know, that you're talking about. To go and live by people who think like us. And that's, that's so dangerous. It's only when we live in those kinds of communities and expose ourselves to those things that we can avoid. That type of blindness and bias, we're learning. We're learning that we need to sit down and be in discussion with one another. And that's often difficult and painful, even. But it's the only way we're going to avoid the bias. We're blind because of our fear, fear of what we might lose. What is this going to mean for me if I give up privilege to someone else...to give them equal privilege? Well, what if they use privilege, like I've used privilege, and then I'm not going to like that so much. And so we become blind to what we do and how we interact with others. There are just so many, so many ways that the scripture is relevant, as we're talking about honest self-reflection. So how can we experience all this this week?

Karin Peter 09:32

So, I think one of the ways that we can experience healing from that kind of spiritual blindness, to experience that this week is to think about an issue that has conflicting perspectives in which you have some interest. So not something that bores you, but something you have invested interest in and spend some time exploring that issue from a perspective that is different from your own. So, if it's a cultural issue that that is divisive, perhaps your state is looking to legalize marijuana, and that's a cultural, a divisive cultural issue. So, spend some time exploring that issue from the perspective that's opposite from your own perspective. And just see how this practice of looking at things from various perspectives informs your conversations about the topic. Not saying it will change your mind, I'm saying it in conversation. And, it's a really good practice to get into to explore the perspectives rather than discount, other perspectives. The other thing that might be helpful for this is to set aside some time this week, to acknowledge your own engagement with sin. However, that looks to you. When I was growing up, I thought sin were like the Big Five things you weren't supposed to do if you wanted to be good, you couldn't smoke, you couldn't drink, and there were several others but that's not how I understand sin. Now. So, however sin looks to you, set aside some time this week to acknowledge your own engagement with it, and spend some time in repentance, in prayerful repentance, and accept the divine forgiveness and healing that comes, and allow that to rest with you this week.

Blake Smith 11:27

Thanks Karin, I really appreciate that permission, if you will, to consider sin, however that looks to you. We might tend to think that we have to think of sin in a particular way, but having the permission to think about sin and engage with our own sin, however that looks to us, I really appreciate you lifting that up. So, a couple of questions come to mind, I think that we might utilize as we go through this week, and put these experiences into practice and make this real for us. And so, one of those is what aspects of my faith am I bound to by traditions that I may need to reevaluate. I can't tell you how many times along the way, I thought I had all the answers. But, even on particular issues, and I just continue to learn, and even with my faith, but I find myself asking questions, if I'm being honest, you know, how important is this? In the overall picture of faith? For me, I guess I would say there are always things that I am reevaluating and thinking, you know would this really matter to Jesus? If it's keeping me from acting in a more inclusive, loving way? Another one is, how are my own ideas and beliefs about sin, limiting my willingness to be in authentic relationship with others? You know, I think that we see things that others and we just avoid them. And we miss out on incredible, authentic relationships when we do

that, absolutely want to finish us with a blessing that comes from the 23rd Psalm ... very familiar to us. But it's the blessing of forgiveness and God's enveloping love. The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want. He makes me lie down in green pastures. He leads me beside still waters. He restores my soul. He leads me in right paths for his namesake. Even though I walk through the darkest valley, I fear no evil, for You are with me, your rod and your staff, they comfort me. You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies. You anoint my head with oil My cup overflows. Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life. And I shall dwell in the house of the Lord, my whole life long. May this blessing carry you through the week. And we hope to see you again when you join us for Coffee to Go for the next part of our journey through the liturgical seasons and holy days of the Christian tradition.

Josh Mangelson 14:17

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