

Coffee to Go | Easter

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SPEAKERS

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Josh Mangelson 00:17

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 00:34

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. We are your hosts, and we welcome you on the journey. So our question each week is, "Where are we with Jesus this week?" Well, today is Easter. And on Easter morning, we are at the empty tomb. Looking, waiting, standing, wondering. So Easter is the most important of the Christian holy days. And for a lot of people, that's a surprise. A lot of folks think Christmas is the most important of the Christian holy days. And maybe it's because that's the most popular of the Christian holy days. But Easter is the most important. It is the day we recognize the presence of the risen Lord, where the promises of life eternal become real. And the joy of sharing the good news really becomes ours. This is where that happens. So let's hear our Scripture today, Blake.

Blake Smith 01:41

All right. Well, our scripture comes from the 20th chapter of John the 1st through the 18th verse. Early on the first day of the week, while it was still dark, Mary Magdalene came to the tomb and saw that the stone had been removed from the tomb. So she ran and went to Simon Peter and the other disciple, the one whom Jesus loved, and said to them, "They have taken the Lord out of the tomb, and we do not know where they have laid him." And then Peter and the other disciple set out and went toward the tomb. The two were running together, but the other disciple outran Peter and reached the tomb first. He bent down to look in and saw the linen wrappings lying there. But he did not go in. Then Simon Peter came following him, and went into the tomb. He saw the linen wrappings lying there, and the cloth that had been on Jesus head, not lying with the linen wrappings but rolled up in a place by itself. Then the other disciple who reached the tomb first also went in, and he saw and believed, for as yet they did not understand the Scripture, that he must rise from the dead. Then the disciples returned to their homes. But Mary stood weeping outside the tomb. As she wept, she bent over to look into the tomb. And she saw two angels in white, sitting where the body of Jesus had been lying, one at the head and the other

at the feet. They said to her, "Woman, why are you weeping?" She said to them, "They have taken away my Lord, and I do not know where they have laid him." When she had said this, she turned around and saw Jesus standing there. But she didn't know that it was Jesus. Jesus said to her, "Woman, why are you weeping? Whom are you looking for?" Supposing him to be the gardener, she said to him, "Sir, if you have carried him away, tell me where you have laid him, and I will take him away." Jesus said to her, "Mary!" She turned and said to him in the Hebrew Rabbouni!, which means teacher, Jesus said to her, "Do not hold on to me, because I have not yet ascended to the Father. But go to my brothers and say to them, I am ascending to My Father and your Father, to my God and your God." Mary Magdalene, with that announced to the disciples, "I have seen the Lord," that she told them that he had said these things to her.

Karin Peter 04:21

So, Blake, before you begin to talk about how these scriptures are relevant today, I just wanted to bring up a question that is, it kind of lies in the in the middle of the floor when we talk about Easter, and nobody wants to really address it. And here it is. The the whole idea of resurrection is a really complicated one for people to wrap their heads around. And it can be really divisive for folks who have different understandings about what resurrection means. And so as we talk about it today, regardless of what you or I or listener might think about the resurrection of Jesus, how do we make space for everyone to find themselves find place in the Easter story.

Blake Smith 05:14

You know, I've said so many times in so many places that one of the blessings or the curses, depending on how you look at it, of the Community of Christ is that we have such a broad playing field, if you will, and an open theology. We are encouraged to be a prophetic people to get to know God and understand God through Christ, through Jesus, through whatever means, in a way that connects with us. I think probably one of the most important things that I've learned over my years of ministry, and I don't mean to belittle "belief in" but I think it's more important that we know Jesus not know about Jesus. What I mean here is we can argue about the virgin birth, and whether it was a bodily resurrection or not. Those things we won't really know for absolute sure, maybe ever, but certainly not until later before God, right. And that's okay. It's okay to live in the mystery. And it's okay to be in community with those who are living in the mystery. at different places. We really come to believe from a variety of perspectives. Easter, and the joy it brings is in such stark contrast to the fear and dismay of Good Friday. In Easter, we discover God's presence with us, even though we don't anticipate it. We don't understand it. We may not recognize it, like Mary did not recognize Jesus. We don't know what to do with it. We just know that it is. And even that is at different levels. So sometimes it's enough to just hold the belief. Sometimes it's enough to hold the belief. Belief can bring comfort that strengthens us in our faith journey. There's so much unknown in this world. So, to have something you can hold on to can be very healing and helpful. But then there are those of us who have our Peter moments, if we're being honest, where we struggle, we go off in a huff, because we don't understand or we simply need time to process.

Karin Peter 07:44

I'm just gonna, I'm just going to own up Blake, that's where I reside.

Blake Smith 07:51

Right. So, you know, we need to be able to live in that and understand that it's okay to doubt into question. And that's a part of growth. So it's okay to struggle, but we do struggle with that there are things that just don't make sense. That is, that's an okay place to be. Then on the other end of the spectrum, from the "just hold on to a belief, no matter what" is Mary. Mary was a person who felt the immediacy of her relationship with the divine. And we can do that. We can feel the immediacy of our relationship with the divine as God reveals God's self to us in personal, intimate ways. Again, a beauty of the Community of Christ allows us to find God in personal intimate ways, and yet still live in community because Jesus is that centering factor. What we believe about Jesus can vary. That we are getting to know Jesus and through Jesus know God, that's what's important. Each of us responds differently to how, when, and to what degree we sense the Spirit, calling, nudging, or at times, yelling our name. Whatever way God reaches out in your life. Easter helps make sense of it. If the disciples responded so differently, which they did, just in that passage that we read today. If they can respond differently than ought we not also to be able to find space for our struggles, or our belief, our misunderstandings, or our response.

Karin Peter 09:33

So as we as we think about Easter, we think about it as what happens on Easter morning, but Easter is a season. So Easter Day is the beginning of the Easter season that lasts for 50 days. So we will be in the Easter season for a while. So for this week, there are some ways we can experience this first day of the Easter season, Easter Sunday. So on Easter morning, it brings the end to the season of Lent. And if you remember when we talked about Ash Wednesday, we talked a little bit about Mardi Gras and Fat Tuesday and how you would use up all your eggs and milk and butter and make pancakes, because we were going too fast during Lent. Well, Easter morning, Easter Eggs are a big part of the celebration. And that's one of the reasons Lent is over. And you can have eggs again. And so you can enjoy easter eggs this Easter morning. And as you enjoy them, let it serve as a reminder of the gift of abundant life in God's peaceable kingdom. On Easter, it's also a tradition to say, "He is risen" as the response from others. So for example, I would say to you, "Oh, happy Easter, Blake, he is risen." And you would say back to me, "He is risen indeed." Let's practice... Hey, Blake, happy Easter, he is risen.

Blake Smith 11:05

He is risen indeed.

Karin Peter 11:08

So at your Easter dinner table or another time during the day, instead of a traditional blessing on the meal you're about to have, ask each person to take a turn, announcing "He has risen," and everybody else respond with, "He is risen indeed," and go around your table in that manner. And finally, Mary, saw Jesus or recognized Jesus when He called her name. And this week as people use your name in conversation, how can you see or recognize God's presence in your interaction with them ... with that other person? And as you respond to them, and people call your name, how do you see God's presence in them this week?

Blake Smith 11:56

You know, Karin, as you were talking about those ways to experience it, I was thinking, your first example with the Easter eggs. So, really simple, not a critical, debatable thing. But often we hear about Easter eggs. They represent new birth. You know, this is the coming of spring. It is new life. I had

never, I'm just going to admit it here. I'd never thought about eating eggs, because I haven't been able to eat them for 40 days. You know, through the Lenten season, yeah. All about Fat Tuesday and using it all up. And then we have easter eggs, I've never made the connection. I'm just going to claim that. Looking at the practical reasons why things are part of our tradition, and what are those traditions? And why are they tradition? And why do we do them? Sometimes we make things more than they need to be, when they came out of just a common practice of necessity and survival. And in this case, religious practice.

Karin Peter 13:00

That's part of the Blessings of Community, right?

Blake Smith 13:02

Yeah. Yeah. So some questions we might ask ourselves this week... What beliefs continue to bring me comfort? What beliefs have I discarded as I have traveled my journey of faith? So what brings comfort? And what along the way have you discarded? When have I reacted poorly to an idea, study or class that offered perspectives in contrast to my own beliefs?

Karin Peter

Ouch! You're going to make us look at that?

Blake Smith

Yep. And finally, in what ways do I sense a personal, intimate relationship with God? How am I getting to know God? How does God call my name in a way that I acknowledge that it is certainly God? So our blessing today comes from Community of Christ Sings number 636, "I Have Called You By Your Name." I have called you by your name, you are mine. I have gifted you and ask you now to shine. I will not abandon you. All my promises are true. You are gifted, called and chosen. You are mine. That's a blessing for everybody. No matter where you are on the spectrum of belief or perspectives on any of the things, God welcomes you. God calls you God has gifted you and chosen you. And so with that we say Happy Easter. And we invite you to join us here at Coffee to Go for the next part of our journey through the liturgical seasons and holy days of the Christian tradition. Have a blessed day.

Josh Mangelson 14:56

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