

Coffee to Go | Christmas 1

SUMMARY KEYWORDS

offering, Anna, Simeon, rituals, scripture, temple, Jesus, Joseph, honor, Mary, right of passage

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. We welcome you on the journey. Today as we record this episode of Coffee to Go, it is New Year's Eve Day. So tomorrow begins the new secular calendar. We know that the Christian calendar began on the first Sunday of Advent, but tomorrow is the recognized first day of the new year in the Western world. So in honor of that, we will move right into our Scripture and ask the question, "Where are we with Jesus?" And this week, as we close out this year, and begin the next, well, we are at the temple in Jerusalem. And, this Sunday is what is referred to as the presentation of Jesus at the temple, a little bit like in the Community of Christ tradition, like a baby blessing, or maybe in some Protestant traditions and Catholic traditions, the baptism of a baby or the dedication of a baby. So, it was required that the newborn be taken to the temple and certain offerings be given. And, this was the firstborn son. And so there were specific offerings that needed to be given. And, Mary needed to go to make an offering that was required to be made after a woman gave birth, that participated or facilitated the cleansing and purification rituals after giving birth. And Joseph needed to make an offering too, and this is where it gets complicated, Blake, and I'm not even going to begin to say I understand temple offerings of you know, of the ancient world, but to somehow redeem Jesus, the idea being that in the tradition of, of Jesus, that is the Jewish tradition that firstborn males would have been dedicated to God. So dad, in this case Joseph, had to go to the temple, and make an offering, so that he could like, redeem Jesus and get him back and take him home again. So I don't quite understand it, feel free to google it and find out how that all works. But basically, firstborn males belong to God. And if you want to keep him, you have to make a little payment offering in order to take him back home. And I'm sure it has much lovely tradition and religious value to go along with it. It's just so foreign, to ask that I have a hard time kind of navigating how that works. However, I'm sure you'll make it all clear as we go through the Scripture today, so let's go with our Scripture. We're still in Luke as I see.

Blake Smith 03:33

Yes, we are again in the second chapter of Luke this week, with the 22nd through the 40th verse, and I'm just gonna go right into the Scripture and not try to answer your questions. Anyway, all right.

When the time came for their purification, according to the law of Moses, they brought him up to Jerusalem to present him to the Lord, as it is written in the law of the Lord, every firstborn male shall be designated as holy to the Lord. And they offered a sacrifice according to what is stated in the law of the

Lord, a pair of turtledoves, or two pigeons. Now there was a man in Jerusalem whose name was Simeon. This man was righteous and devout, looking forward to the consolation of Israel and the Holy Spirit rested on him. It had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not see death before he had seen the Lord's Messiah. Guided by the Spirit, Simeon came into the temple. And when the parents brought in the child, Jesus to do for him what was customary under the law, Simeon took him in his arms and praise God saying, "Master, now you are dismissing your servant in peace according to your word. For my eyes have seen your salvation, which you have prepared in the presence of all peoples, a light for revelation to the Gentiles and for glory to your people Israel." And the child's father and mother were amazed at what was being said about him. Then Simeon blessed them and said to his mother, Mary, "this child is destined for the falling, and the rising of many in Israel, and to be a sign that will be opposed, so that the inner thoughts of many will be revealed, and a sword will pierce your own soul too." There was also a prophet Anna, the daughter of Phanuel and the tribe of Asher. She was of a great age, having lived with her husband seven years after her marriage, then as a widow, to the age of 84. She never left the temple, but worshiped there with fasting and prayer night and day. At that moment, she came and began to praise God and to speak about the child to all who were looking for the redemption of Jerusalem. When they had finished everything required by the law of the Lord, they returned to Galilee, to their own town of Nazareth, the child grew and became strong, filled with wisdom, and the favor of God was upon him.

I've always found it interesting that Jesus becomes "the child" in this passage, that there's no significance particularly for me, I just wanted to note that that's always been interesting for me that he just becomes "the child." I mean, he is.

Karin Peter 06:34

I haven't thought about that, Blake. But you're right. There's no, there's nothing about how this is recorded in this gospel that gives weight to who Jesus is. Jesus is a it's not the focus of what is happening here. Right. Parents doing what was required, and the prophets acknowledging who Jesus is. Jesus is almost like, not even important to the passage.

Blake Smith 07:03

Right.

Karin Peter 07:04

The secondary character.

Blake Smith 07:05

Yeah, and I think you've captured something there. I mean, I, obviously, the faithful fulfillment of the ritual practices is important here. And it's not an answer to your question, per se, because I don't think I can answer why a, the father had to be the one to present the child for, for redemption. One might ask the question, Why would Jesus need to be redeemed? Jesus is the Son of God. But there is the sense that Mary and Joseph are doing what is practice and tradition and ritual. They're being faithful from day one, to go through the practices that are required by the law, whether or not that is out of some sense of obligation, because of what they know, what they've been told by the angels about who this is. But we don't get that piece because Jesus hasn't been mentioned. He's just the child.

Karin Peter 08:04

I want to go back to something you said last week, though, we've talked about and that was that Mary and Joseph are doing the best they can in this really tough situation. And they're looking for those glimmers of hope. Right. And here's another one, because you just said they've been told by angelic visions who this is. And yet, when Simeon and Anna talk about the baby, it says the parents were amazed at what was being said. (Yeah) So, it's like, yeah, they've been told, but it's not really our reality. Right? So they still kind of get this reinforcement through others that yes, what you've been told is what's going to happen? And they're still getting these glimmers of hope.

Blake Smith 08:49

Yeah, yeah. And they're gonna get it twice here in this passage, which is kind of the next piece that I want to bring up, because, and I'm just going to come clean on this, and I've mentioned to you, Karin, when I read this passage, again, in preparation for today, I was like, oh, yeah, there was a Prophet Anna. I mean, I am very familiar with Simeon. And I think, in our tradition, as is often with the male characters in the Scripture, we, that it's all centered around them. I mean, we don't have the name of Jesus, we have Mary and Joseph and Simeon. And quite a number of the verses are actually even given to Simeon and his revelation of who this child is, and will be but there's this important piece that here is also the Prophet Anna, who the Scriptures tell us she worshiped there with fasting and prayer night and day. And she came up and began to praise God and to speak about the child. So yet another affirmation and glimmer of hope, as you mentioned there for Mary and Joseph and I think that's important for us to see, I think. I mean, we kind of live in a world where we dismiss, if you will, those voices of wisdom that are there for us. And in this case, the old lady, and perhaps the old man, we don't know exactly how old Simeon is. But he said he wouldn't die until he'd seen the Messiah and there's great wisdom to be shared, we need to be including those members of our community as we try to understand the story and to find those glimmers of hope.

Karin Peter 10:38

Well, I want to call it out Blake, though, and now just be a little more blunt than that surprise, surprise. This is an opportunity where we get to see the value of an old lady. So a lot of times in our culture, and others old ladies are just dismissed as not having value, right. So their past childbearing years, they don't have anything useful. Useful to say. It's kind of the crone mentality. So you reach a certain point, as women, and all of a sudden you just don't have the same value you had before. And even in scriptures, a lot of times the value of the older women is based on that, oh, suddenly, they got to have a baby. It's like, wait a minute, where's just the value of being old lady that's equivalent to the value of being an old, wise man. And this is a scripture where we get to see that value and see it in an equitable way.

Blake Smith 11:29

I appreciate you bring that up. Great. It's an important piece, that I, I guess, maybe I have never been in that case. My grandmother was such a influential person in my life. And so I've never taken for granted that, but I certainly hear that that is often the case in our culture. So, thank you for standing up for not (for old ladies everywhere). But for old ladies everywhere, right? Oh, goodness, another piece about

this, that kind of also, you mentioned, again, that Joseph and Mary, we talked about it last week, but were not of great means. And so you know, we hear about this sacrifice that they were made to bring, and the turtle doves or the pigeons. That would be I mean, there were, there was this, I guess, spectrum of things people could bring for sacrifice. And there was allowance for anybody, for everybody, regardless of class or status or (...) to have be able to bring something. So these were small offerings, that were made possible for someone without means to still be able to make that sacrifice, to be a part of that ritual. But it is for us a signal again, a reminder that these were just humble, poor people coming to the temple. And these weren't extravagant gifts, in the spectrum of things, but they were extravagant for Mary and Joseph. I think, again, because the importance of participating in the ritual. And we have that. An example for us would be our sacrament of communion, where we talk about, it's not enough to just take the bread and wine, but to be part of the whole of the sacrament. To be able to hear the prayers of blessing, and to receive. And so when if you were to take a part of that away, it's not the same. And so here this ritual, not only is something they're participating in faithfully, but it is made available in all of its wonder and holiness to everyone. (Yeah.) So some questions that I might ask regarding this, are what are the rituals that are important to you? Are they rituals of faith, rituals of spiritual practice, rituals of daily life and ordinary moments? And why are they important to you? We're not just talking again, about rituals that are part of our religious practice. Think outside the box, what are the rituals that are important to you? And how do you intentionally attend to those? And how do you honor the Ancient Ones? The folks that are much older than you who have wisdom to share, especially the old ladies?

Karin Peter 14:34

Absolutely. You know, I think about that, how do how do we honor the Ancient Ones and I was, I had just gotten the Herald the church magazine the other day, and in the back there were a whole bunch of anniversaries and birthdays. And it's a very small thing, but it's a way in our tradition in our community that we can honor those with us who have had long lives, and in some cases, very long partnerships and marriages. So yeah, a little bit of honor out to them in a community.

Blake Smith 15:11

So how might we experience that this week?

Karin Peter 15:14

Well, I think we got to go with Joseph and Mary and the and bringing offerings and trying to fulfill the requirements and expectations of their, of their life of faith, and, and, and to be faithful people. And we can look this week at our own bringing of offerings and we can do it in a very churchy kind of way and say, Do you financially support a church or charity on an ongoing basis? And if so, why is that important? Or maybe it could be do you contribute to the care of creation? Is the environmental justice aspect of your life? An offering that you make? Do you bike instead of drive? Do you plant trees to offset your carbon footprint? Those kinds of things? Is that your offering? Or do you regularly give up your time or your service or your presence, even in relationship with others? Have you made that an offering of your life whatever it is, this week, make a point to give or to do those things that are acts of giving sacred offering and to consecrate that act to God's purposes of restoration, and wholeness. So as we're doing whatever those offering practices are, keep in mind that we're doing them as part of God's purposes of restoration and wholeness in the world.

Blake Smith 16:55

That's great. Well, I want to offer a blessing today and do this in honor of the Prophet Anna and all the old ladies who are listeners, or those who are in our in the lives of our listeners. so important for us. It's a prophecy of an Asian woman from the *Asian Woman's Theological Journal*.

All the broken hearts shall rejoice. All those who are heavy laden, whose eyes are red and tired, and who do not see shall be lifted up to meet with the motherly healer. The battered souls and bodies shall be healed, the hungry shall be fed, the imprisoned shall be free, all earthly children shall regain joy in the reign of the just and loving one coming for you, coming for me, in this time, in this world. Amen.

So, thanks for joining us again here at Coffee to Go. We invite you to join us next week as we continue on our journey through the liturgical seasons and holy days of the Christian tradition.