

Coffee to Go | Candelmas

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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 here with Blake Smith, and we welcome you on the journey. Today is a special bonus episode because it is February 2, which is the observance of Candelmas, which is a day of renewal, and hope. It's not officially observed in Community of Christ lectionary of holy days. But we do kind of unofficially look at Candelmas and the observance of candles in the life of the church. So in the Christian church, February 2 became like the day that candles that were used both for the altar at church and candles that were used at home, were blessed in a special service. And in some parts of the world, Candelmas falls in late summer and kind of captures the idea of light, and the joy of the Divine made real in God's good creation. The scripture from Ephesians, "Walk as children of light, where the fruit of the light is found, and all that is good and right and true." In northern climates where Candelmas was originally observed, it's a reminder during these remaining kind of dark days of winter, that there's always hope ahead, or as John says, as John's Gospel says, in the first chapter, "a light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it." So the traditional scripture for Candelmas is Luke 2: 22-40, which is the presentation of Jesus at the temple. And we just heard this. We hear this the first Sunday after Christmas, but we're going to listen to a portion of it again today, because it reminds us that Jesus is the light of the world revealed on this day of the prophets, Simeon and Anna, so Blake, let's hear that kind of Groundhog Day rerun of the Scripture.

Blake Smith 02:36

So we are going to do just a portion of that passage that we heard recently, and we're going to do it. What we're going to hear today is from the Gospel of Luke, the second chapter, beginning with the 27th verse, and going through the 38th verse.

When the parents brought in the child Jesus to do for him what the custom of the law required, Simeon took him in his arms and praised God saying, "Sovereign Lord, as you have promised, you may now dismiss your servant in peace. For my eyes have seen your salvation, which you have prepared in the sight of all nations. A light of revelation to the Gentiles, and the glory of your people Israel." There was also a prophet Anna, the daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Asher. And she was very old. She had lived with her husband seven years after her marriage, and then was a widow until she was 84. She never left the temple, but worshiped night and day fasting and praying. Coming up to them at that very moment, she gave thanks to God, and spoke about the child to all who were looking forward to the

redemption of Jerusalem. So again, we want to focus in on the light out of this passage today that 32nd verse, a light for revelation to the Gentiles, and the glory of your people, Israel.

So on this day of Candlemas why does that matter? Well, it matters because candles have long played an important role in celebrations and observances both in the secular and religious cultures. And I don't know about you, but we light candles in our house all the time. I like to have one on my desk lit during the day. It's just for me, part of it is just utilizing multiple senses. It keeps me connected and aware, but also because of its significance of raising up our thoughts and prayers to heaven. But, lots and lots of different religions and cultures use candles from the religious perspective. For instance, the Festival of Lights in the Jewish tradition commemorates the miracle of light in a community under siege, Hindus and Buddhists light candles to respect ancestors, departed loved ones, and to make offerings to deities. Candlelight vigils are powerful ways of bringing people together in mourning and remembrance. We see that quite often actually. Couples light unity candles in marriage ceremonies, and families like candles on birthday cakes. Again, candles are just almost an everyday occurrence somewhere. In US colonial times a candle in the window signaled to weary travelers, that the home where the candle was lit as a place of welcome and respite. When the Community of Christ Temple was built, or being built, church members purchased small candles from the Herald House and placed them in a window. And they represented the fulfillment of the long hope for Temple being built in Independence. Those who are engaged in spiritual practices might be aware of the practice of holding in the light. And often that is done in the imagination. But sometimes that is done by holding lighting a candle and holding it and visualizing that light surrounding those for whom we are praying. And finally, in Community of Christ, of course, the peace candle is lit every day in the temple. And a prayer is offered for peace in the world. Congregations, many of them at least, include this tradition in our weekly worship services around the church. So again, candles, and the presence of light is so important, not only to our religious and spiritual life, but in our daily lives, as we celebrate in community and we also struggle together in community.

Karin Peter 06:44

There's something really comforting Blake and maybe transformational when you actually light that candle, when you light the wick. I sense it all the time. I'm around lighting candles, when I actually touch either the match or my electric candle lighter to the wick, and it sparks and catches flame. There's a little part of me that does the same thing. Right? That just opens myself to the light.

Blake Smith 07:13

Yeah, I love having a candle lit. And sometimes I'm just mesmerized as I watch the flickering flame and realizing that there are parts of that I can't see also, which is kind of kind of neat. So. Well some questions we might ask ourselves on this special day of Candlemas are, when have we felt that we were walking in darkness? So whenever you felt you're walking in darkness, and just yearned for a comforting light, something to bring that warmth and that sense of spark that you're talking about Karin, as you light the candle. We might also think about what are the occasions when we light candles? And why do we do that? And what does it add to the experience? Again, for me it activates another sense, you know, and really strengthens the whole experience, but what do they add to your experience? And finally, How would a ritual of lighting a weekly peace candle at work or at home center you in the peace and light of God's Shalom?

Karin Peter 08:32

Yeah, absolutely. I think that that really does and the practice of holding in the light as part of that. I think when you center your thoughts and take that centering feeling outside of yourself for the blessing and care of others, there's something about that that's very missional and very inviting and welcoming. So I think about continuing the feeling of Candlemas and this idea of kind of blessing the candles in my own home. This is something that you might want to do is gather your candles, your real candles, your battery-operated candles, whatever kind of candles that you use, your LED rechargeable C drive candles, which is something I've got in my house now. But gather them or bring just a couple together to symbolize them and offer a blessing on them for the coming year that each time you light one, you enter into the revelatory light of the Divine One who yearns to walk with you that moment when the candle actually comes to life, that you enter into the light of the Divine One. And here's a traditional blessing of the candles before Blake closes us out with our blessing for our episode. The traditional blessing of the candles that you would offer is this, "God our Creator, Source of all light, you reveal to Simeon and Anna, your light of revelation to the nations. Bless these candles as a sacred promise of your light. May we who carry them, walk in the path of goodness, and come to the light that shines forever. Grant this through Jesus Christ our Lord, Amen. So if you want to do that traditional, there you go. If not, you can do your own blessing on the candles in your life today on Candlemas. Blake?"

Blake Smith 10:32

I really appreciate that. You know, I was thinking as you were talking about the things to do this week here, and I realized that I often I light the candle every day in my office, I just like having it. But I gotta be honest and say I don't offer a prayer or blessing. And I think for me this week, that's what I want to do is light that candle and offer that blessing every day just as part of my practice. So thanks for that.

Karin Peter 11:01

So, maybe the editors of PCP can cut and paste that traditional blessing, throw it up on the website underneath the episode and it posts. That'd

Blake Smith 11:10

That'd be great. That'd be great. So our blessing today to close this episode,..

May the glow of a flickering flame, renew our compassion in times of difficulty, illuminate our joy in times of celebration, and guide us to safety in the storms of life. May the light of these candles serve as symbol of the divine presence with us for now and evermore. Amen.

Thanks for joining us today on this special edition of Coffee to Go, Candlemas. We invite you to join us again next time here for the next part of our journey through the liturgical seasons and holy days of the Christian tradition.