

21T20d Christmas Out Takes – Christmas Tree

Hello everyone. Thank you for joining me today @ the PUNLA Coffee Table. I hope everyone is doing well.

I love the Christmas season with all the traditions and gatherings of family and friends. It is truly a beautiful time of year. I love to see all the lights and decorations. But often we forget there is a reason for the season. That reason is Jesus. The birth of Jesus to be exact. For Christians we have lots of traditions about Christmas; the Nativity, the Star, the Wisemen. But I'd like to have some fun and look at some parts of Christmas traditions and where did they come from.

Today I'd like to ask you Why a Christmas Tree? I asked this question. Why do we decorate a tree in our homes for Christmas? What does a tree have to do with Christmas? In fact, the Christmas tree has nothing to do with the original Christmas story in the Bible, but the history around the Christmas tree is an amazing story. But before I start there are some competing stories about the Christmas tree but this is the one, I believe and based on my research is most likely the origin of the Christmas tree.

This story begins with an English Christian evangelist Boniface, who was born in England around 680AD. In the year 723, Boniface and a small party traveled into the lower Hesse region in Germany. Boniface was wanting to stop the pagan practice of human sacrifices at or around the winter solstice. In this region, people sacrificed children at the base of the "Thunder Oak" to make believe god THOR. Legend was that Thor would strike anyone down with thunder bolts who interfered with the sacrifices or tried to harm the Thunder Oak.

The story goes, that Boniface and his party arrived at Thunder Oak on Christmas Eve, just as they were about to sacrifice a child. The executioner raised his hammer and, on the downswing, Boniface extended his crozier or (which was hooked staff). Miraculously the great stone hammer broke saving the child. Afterward, Boniface is said to have proclaimed to the people:

"Hearken, sons of the forest! No blood shall flow this night save that which pity has drawn from a mother's breast. For this is the birth-night of the Christ, the son of the Almighty, the Savior of mankind. Fairer is He than Baldur the Beautiful, greater than Odin the Wise, kinder than Freya the Good. Since He has come sacrifice is ended. The dark, Thor, on whom you have vainly called, is dead. Deep in the shades of Niffelheim he is lost forever. And now on this Christ-night you shall begin to live. This blood-tree shall darken your land no more. In the name of the Lord, I will destroy it."

The legend goes on to tell that, Boniface picked up an axe nearby and took one mighty swing at the oak when a great gust of wind arose through the forest and felled the tree, roots and all. It lies on the forest floor, broken in four pieces. Though afterwards Boniface had a chapel built from the wood, our story takes us to what stood immediately beyond the ruins of the mighty tree.

Boniface continued to preach to the astounded Germanic peoples, who were in disbelief that this slayer of Thor's Thunder Oak had not been struck down by their god. Boniface looked beyond where the oak lay, pointing to a small, unassuming fir tree, saying:

“This little tree, a young child of the forest, shall be your holy tree tonight. It is the wood of peace... It is the sign of an endless life, for its leaves are ever green. See how it points upward to heaven. Let this be called the tree of the Christ-child; gather about it, not in the wild wood, but in your own homes; there it will shelter no deeds of blood, but loving gifts and rites of kindness.”

So, the Germans began a new tradition that night, one that stretches to the present day. By bringing a fir tree into their homes, decorating it with candles and ornaments, and celebrating the birth of a Savior. What we now know as the Christmas tree.

Another interesting thing about this is the original Christmas trees were small fir tree hung from the roof. It wasn't until later that our modern tradition of the Christmas tree in a floor stand was introduced.

Now there are many variation on this story from the ancient Egyptians to Martin Luther being the originators.

This reminds me of an old poem which many of us know as a song titled “O Christmas Tree”

O Christmas Tree, o Christmas Tree
How steadfast are your branches!
Your boughs are green in summer's clime
And through the snows of wintertime
O Christmas Tree, o Christmas Tree
How steadfast are your branches!

O Christmas Tree, o Christmas Tree
What happiness befalls me
When oft at joyous Christmas-time
Your form inspires my song and rhyme
O Christmas Tree, o Christmas Tree
What happiness befalls me

O Christmas Tree, o Christmas Tree
Your boughs can teach a lesson
That constant faith and hope sublime
Lend strength and comfort through all time
O Christmas Tree, o Christmas Tree
Your boughs can teach a lesson

Let's pray. Dear heavenly father, thank you for this legend of the Christmas tree. We can learn a lot from this story. Your faithfulness and your miraculous ways. Constant faith in you is our hope, strength and comfort. Help us to stay focused on you during this Christmas season and every day of the year. I pray this in your name Lord Jesus. Amen.

I hope you are enjoying the Christmas Out Takes. Our Christmas traditions are so rich with history and amazing faithful people. I think it is important for us to understand the origins of these beautiful traditions so we can fully understand their importance to us as followers of Jesus. Christmas is about the story of Jesus my Lord and Savior.

Thank you for joining me @ the PUNLA Coffee Table. If you liked the message, please select like. And Please Subscribe to our channel. Leave comments here, or our website or mail me at kip@punla.org. I appreciate your feedback. Until next time @ the PUNLA Coffee Table. God bless.