

Smell the Coffee

Today's post is written by Karen Kroll, a missionary wife who enjoys the smell of good coffee. She recently taught English to students enrolled in a school in Dukem, Ethiopia. The Lutheran Church of Ethiopia oversees the operation of this school and has plans to open others.

I've never met a coffee I didn't like. But until recently, I had never met a coffee like Ethiopian coffee. It takes coffee to another level. I was blessed with the opportunity to accompany my husband, Dan to Ethiopia as he met with a group of believers interested in pursuing fellowship with WELS. As the men met, I spent the week teaching English to children Grades K-5 at Maor Lutheran School in Dukem. This is a ministry of our sister synod, the Lutheran Church of Ethiopia.

Pleasing Smells

While in Ethiopia, I learned there is no such thing as grabbing a "quick cup of coffee". It really is a process - not an event. And every morning before I began my day of teaching, I would watch the process. Lighting the charcoal, roasting the beans, (which would then be brought to our table so we could fully enjoy the experience), and then grinding them. As the coffee simmers, they light incense which fills the air with a lovely aroma. And then, finally, they bring you the coffee. The flavor of the coffee mixed with the pleasing smell of the incense left me with a smile of contentment on my face. Enjoying those pleasant smells reminded me of the evening vesper liturgy in Christian Worship where Psalm 141 is put to music, "Let my prayer rise before you like incense, the lifting up of my hands as the evening sacrifice."



Coffee is an integral part of Sunday morning fellowship in Ethiopia

In my mind, it conjures up an image of long ago: a priest in the middle of the desert, offering a sacrifice in the Tabernacle. I realize that the image is overly romanticized in my mind. The reality is that these sacrifices produced anything but a pleasing aroma. The slaughter of the animals and the blood mixed with the heat from the desert is not a pleasing smell at all! But to God, it was a whole different matter. The smell drifted to the heavens and our God smiled because it was the smell of his people worshipping him.

Sacrifices to God

I can relate to the slaughtered animal. It should be me! I know the depth of my sin and like the animal...it stinks! But I know the blood that was shed on Calvary took my sin away and by the power of the Spirit, even my acts of worship smell pleasing to the Lord. Yours do too!

My trip to Ethiopia wasn't about coffee, it was about serving God's people. I'm not sure how helpful I was in teaching English to the children in Dukem, but I do know I was able to show them the love that God shows me...a pleasing smell to the Lord.



Students at Maor Lutheran School in Dukem, Ethiopia

A few rooms down from where I was teaching sat six men, intently studying the scriptures with the desire to share the intimacy of Church Fellowship...a pleasing smell to the Lord.

Pleasing smells drift to the Lord wherever God's people are found.

Every nose that a parent wipes or every meal they cook...a pleasing smell to the Lord.

Patently caring for an elderly parent.... a pleasing smell to the Lord.

A repentant heart...a pleasing smell to the Lord.

My husband and I returned home with incense and a burner. We really love the smell of the traditional incense but it's also a reminder of how we as God's people are living sacrifices...a pleasing smell to the Lord.

Karen Kroll lives in Malawi with her husband Missionary Dan Kroll.

Please pray for those working in fields that are ripe for harvest. Share their story, engage with future news, and receive updates. Learn more about our mission fields in Africa and how the Holy Spirit is working faith in people's hearts at <https://wels.net/serving-others/missions/africa>