

Coffee to Go | All Saints Day

SUMMARY KEYWORDS

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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 episode, because today is All Saints Day. All Saints is observed as a day in which we remember disciples of old, people who make contributions to the Christian community and church members, maybe in our own faith community, who lived lives of faithfulness and service. It's also a time to remember friends, family and community members who have died during the past year. In this way, we honor those who have gone before and reaffirm our belief in eternal life. So here on All Saints Day, we are still hanging out with Jesus. We're in John's gospel, and Jesus has just received word that a dear friend has died.

Blake Smith 01:37

Yes, and our Scripture today, as you have said, comes from the Gospel of John. It is the 11th chapter, the 32nd through the 44th verse.

When Mary came where Jesus was and saw him, she knelt at His feet and said to him, "Lord, if you had been there, my brother would not have died." When Jesus saw her weeping, and the Jews who came with her also weeping, he was greatly disturbed in spirit and deeply moved. He said, "Where have you laid him?" They said to Him, "Lord, come and see." Jesus began to weep. So the Jews said, "See how he loved him." But some of them said, "could not he who opened the eyes of the blind man have kept this man from dying?" Then Jesus, again, greatly disturbed, came to the tomb. It was a cave and a stone was lying against it. Jesus said, "Take away the stone." Martha, the sister of the dead man said to him, "Lord, already there is a stench because he has been dead four days." Jesus said to her, "Did I not tell you that if you believed you would see the glory of God?" So, they took away the stone, and Jesus looked upward and said, "Father, I thank you for having heard me. I knew that you always hear me, but I have said this for the sake of the crowd standing here, so that they may believe that You sent me." When he had said this, he cried out with a loud voice, "Lazarus come out." The dead man came out. His hands and feet bound with strips of cloth and his face wrapped in a cloth, Jesus said to them, "unbind him and let him go."

So why does this matter? Well, there's a couple of reasons, I think. Because of being on All Saints Day when we read this passage, we see the human emotions that accompany the death of a loved one. Anyone who has lost someone close to them knows that it's not just about grief and sorrow. You hear in

the words of Martha and Mary, I would imagine, that the anger and the recriminations, "Lord, if you had just been here, you you could have saved him." So, we go through a lot of emotions in the midst of loss, and the raising of Lazarus, it's out of Jesus' deep friendship and love that God demonstrates, a continued love and presence with us. God's power over death, even as death remains part of our earthly experience. And right here at the end, Jesus says, "unbind him and let him go." And this is kind of what we need to do. This is really what we need to do on an All Saints Day. We remember those who have come before us, and we name those from our life journey who have died this past year, and we release them to the communion of the saints, God's eternal community. I was just sitting with someone yesterday that had lost her son recently to an overdose, and I sat with, I sat with her, and she had a bear that her daughter had given her, that she had taken a voicemail recording and put that, put his voice on that so mom could hear his voice every day, and his urn is there, and there are pictures, the wall boards that they created for that they're all around. And she's really, really struggling, which is certainly understandable. So, it's her young son, her baby, who was in his 30s, and there's just this really need. She says, "I don't know what to do. I'm lost." And I sat with her and shared and I understand that loss, but part of my talking to her was this, she needed to unbind him and let him go. She has these great memories. She has these beautiful pictures. She has some less than good pictures from right after his death, and it is binding her as much as it is binding him. So on this All Saints Day is a way to celebrate the saints that have gone before us, and I use that term saints lightly, you might say, because there are people in our lives that we might not consider traditional saints, but who have touched our lives in ways that have transformed us and changed us forever and have an impact in positive ways, some way, sometimes ways that we don't even recognize. And so, this time is a time for us to really reflect on those who have gone before and been a part of our lives and made a difference. And so, the questions we need to ask ourselves are, who are the names of the people in my life story that had a great impact on my faith, and I would add, on my life? Who are my saints? And second, I would say, who from your journey, or my journey, or the journey of our community, or your community has died this past year, and how will you remember them?

Karin Peter 07:27

So, all good questions. So how can we experience All Saints? Maybe not all this week, but at least today. And kind of a mini All Saints observance would be to light a candle and say the names aloud of those in your community or your family that have died in the past year and offer a statement of thanksgiving for, have had in for have had offer a statement of thanksgiving for their presence in your life. From Nadia Bolz Weber's book, *Accidental Saints*, she talks about making people share cookies. And you can do that with your kids or your friends, and name each one in honor of someone important on your faith journey, and then share them. You can get out a photo album or phone or computer and look at the faces from your story and name them your own communion of saints. So, lots of different ways to observe, remembering, which is a big part of discipleship in Community of Christ.

Blake Smith 08:37

I really like that you mentioned the Nadia Bolz Weber book. I think Nadia does such a tremendous job with helping us in this, specifically with All Saints Day, some of the things that she has done with her community in recognizing that and helping to unbind and let go, but again, also helping, I think, to unbind those who are caught in that grief and don't know how to move any move forward, she just does

a wonderful job. So, I would add my recommendation for that, anyone who is struggling with the loss and trying to find their saints, Nadia Bolz Weber just does a great job with that.

So, our blessing today comes from "For All Saints Day by Arianne Brathwaite Lehn.

God of welcome and warmth. I'm a bit melancholy, or maybe it's pensive in approaching this All Saints Day. It's a beautiful day, this time to remember and give thanks for the saints who have graced my life, these angels, raw, real and devoted in their humanity, who have encouraged me, emboldened me, taught me what I needed to know to survive. I think of parents, grandparents, partners, wives, husbands, sisters, brothers, teachers, colleagues, neighbors, friends, some of them did seem pretty unlikely characters to be your saints, but the more I live, the more I realize that's pretty typical of you and your choosing. I am grateful for these quirky, lovely individuals who have gone before me, but whose light still shines, bringing warmth and illumination to my own journey. Amen.

Well, that wraps up this episode of Coffee to Go. We invite you to join us next time for the next part of our journey through the liturgical seasons and holy days of the Christian tradition.