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SPEAKERS

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So today is Halloween, which is the literally means the sacred evening, the holy evening. Before All Saints Day, tomorrow is the day we celebrate, or Christian celebrates, celebrate all the saints, I guess it's supposed to be all goodness. And next Monday, we have the election Eve, the day before United States selects the president. So I don't know if what you know, this, I don't know if we'll make too much of a connection between these two events. But, um, that that was interesting. And Halloween is a time that many people use to recall some of the unseen parts of our world. Traditionally, it's a time to remember the dead, and people who recently died. And to help them along as they as kind of ghosts or spirits kind of are on their way to wherever they're going next. It's also a time to celebrate, to prepare for the celebration of the saints. For many people, it's a time to have some kind of relationship with the unseen world of ghosts and demons and witches and things like that, which many people and some people in the modern world see as an opportunity to give expression to their alter egos or to parts of themselves, maybe that they don't normally bring forth and come out. It's nice that it's makes make some sense that it happens this time a year is kind of going into winter, the dark, the dyeing coming to an end, and then we are you know, then the spring comes and things get renewed. One of the things that's interesting is that Buddhism does have a very similar celebration, like Halloween used to be not the candy and the costumes, but especially the Buddhism of China and Japan. And they have something called the set gucky ceremony. And it's usually done on July 15, in Japan. And it's a very happy event, celebratory event, but it's also to is to welcome and invite the hungry ghosts, the ghosts, the ghosts of the or the ancestors who have died and are somehow continuing to live on as some kind of particular kind of ghost to, and they're kind of wandering around, having a hard time. And rather than stay frightened of them, they're invited, and welcome to the temple. And then they put out food and offerings for them, to feed them and support them. And so rather than abandoning the unseen world and the world of ghosts, this is a time to invite them in and to help them out, feed them support them in ways that help their transformation as well. So in United States, the Buddhist groups that they're associated with that kind of, you know, the cigar key, the Japanese forms of Buddhism, someone who has switched when they do this July 15, celebration to Halloween. And like, if you go to San Francisco Zen Zen center, I think they're right now they're probably having a ceremony up there, called a cigar key ceremony. And the this cigar key, as I understand it, the gucky means is a Japanese way of saying hungry ghosts. And said as I mean, speed feedings are feeding the hungry ghosts. And the hungry ghosts are an interested species of or beings. They are. We call them ghosts in English, but they're, they're kind of they're kind of transparent. There's not much to them, but there are that they have bodies more than ghosts have bodies. And they have very, very, very huge bellies, stomachs. But they have very, very, very, very, very narrow throats. And so they just can't get enough food and water down the throat to their stomach in order to ever feel satisfied.

So they're always dissatisfied, always hungry, always wanting and, and it's become popular amongst them Buddhist groups. To say, Well, if some people are like that, and they're hungry ghosts, they can they can. They always want more, they're never satisfied. And they're always craving and wanting. And perhaps all of us have a hungry ghost in us that we're, we're obsessed or compulsively thinking about something, we can never get enough of it. hungry ghosts too often associated with the past. So people who are living in the past reviewing the past trying to have a better past, trying to trying to kind of come back come with a better rejoinder to conversation didn't go very well, trying to justify themselves for whatever they did in the past. I once left not a cult, but I left the commune, it was very intense back in the mid 1970s. I was lived there for a while and, and for the next probably six months, almost anyone who had listened to me, I would justify why I left. As I was, I was like a hungry ghost me like, you know, they couldn't care less that I lived there, who I was even, but I had to tell them that, you know, let me tell you about you know why I left. Because I guess I felt insecure I felt very uncertain about what I'd done. And so this was a hungry ghost me like I wanted more I wanted recognition I wanted to make make it all okay. There's a hungry ghost of people who just full of greed, they just want more and more and more, and Nick just can never get enough of Goodson and we have a culture of hungry ghost kids around the country today who, you know, can't get enough candy. So the hungry ghosts in us, and, or in people. And so it was interesting in this set gucky ceremony, the idea is to not to not to drive it away, but to feed it to satisfy it in some way. But even though they put out offerings of food in the temples, the idea is that they can't really eat it, partly because their throats are so small, but also because they live in a different realm than we do. So they're not quite able to get what we offer them. But what they feed on is the generosity of the people who make the offerings. They feed on people's good deeds, because if they see the good deeds that people do, and if they rejoice or appreciate those good deeds, that's what feeds them, it makes it creates kind of good karma for them. But they have to witness it. And they have to appreciate it. Without the appreciation, you can't be fed. And so they do these joyous celebrations in Japan called sakaki ceremonies. And partly because it's supposed to be a really good grandal time to brighten the spirits and encourage these hungry ghosts to have deep appreciation. And in what's happening, and in the appreciation kind of partake in some of the good merit that's being created. So it's an interesting move, where things that are often considered frightened or something we don't want to pay attention to, there's a way of feeding it to turning towards it. And they don't get what they want, because they can't get the food. So but but you can feed it in some different kind of way. So what are the disowned parts of you? What are the parts that you don't pay attention to that you avoid that you kind of repress perhaps the shadow sides of your life? And is there a time when you can welcome it? invited, invited forth, here come this is your day, Halloween? This is your day, and we're going to actually tend to you and you're welcome today. Even though you know, the complainer is constantly complaining that I don't let people know. But in my head, I'm always complaining. Or I'm always dissatisfied with what anything that's happening. Or I'm always resentful, or I'm always ambitious. Or I'm always insecure, and I can't let people know how insecure I am. So whatever it might be, we were invited here to on this, we invited in Welcome, welcome. And then we don't exactly give it what it wants, because it can't really get what it wants, because it can never get enough. You can never get enough safety. If you're really insecure. You can never get enough things if you're filled with greed. You can never get enough you know.

And so what is it that that can feed it what is it can really settle it to settle the hearts settle the stomach? What is it they can nourish it so that something relaxes deeply and I think for each person that has to be something different, but it's something that's positive, something that's healthy, something that's, that's nourishing for the heart. nurturing for the heart. So in the Buddhist tradition, one of the things that is often celebrated as part of this nurturing of the heart is people's virtue, people that have others that have oneself. And so the people who saw that tradition, when you come to a Buddhist temple, on a holy day, in Buddhism, you follow the precepts impeccably, for that day, supposed to do it all the time, but at

least for that day, and that's supposed to nourish yourself, or you practice acts of generosity, you find people, or that could benefit from something that you have to offer, whether it's your time or your money, or your food or your, your anything counsel that you offer, come and offer. And that act of generosity is meant not to be a duty, but to be done in such a way that it inspires your heart something settles your heart does something good in you? What is it? How is it that generosity can do that for yourself? participate in the Dharma is a classic Buddhist one, that there's something about honesty and the truth telling of sitting down in meditation, that is very healing for the heart. So again, the greed and the hate and then security doesn't get to what it wants, but it gets something different. It gets the deep kind of sense of safety and well being and nourishment, of the Dharma of the truth. So, but the important thing is you invite it to come here, come here, that part I don't want to see about myself come here. There's a story of, of an old old hermit, who was considered to be very, very wise. And people would travel long distances, to try to get advice from this hermit, because you're so wise. And he is rumored to always have exactly the right advice for the people who came. The thing was that he'd lived so far deep in the mountains, without any roads, it would take three days of hiking in backpacking and hiking in to get to where he was. And then you get if you're lucky, you got an audience with him, and he would listen to your concern that he'd give you the tailor made advice for you. And then you'd have to walk out for three days. And most people are almost everyone who will go in there would tell them their concerns and, and he would tell them the advice. And most people like what, kind of disappointed but by the time they had to hike three days out this way, I was perfect. That was the advice for me. Turns out he gave everyone the same advice. And the advice was, what are you avoiding? What are you avoiding? Which doesn't sound like that monumental when you first hear it? But if you can spend three days alone, maybe nature on retreat, just having that echo through your mind? What am I avoiding? What am I avoiding being with yourself staying with yourself not being distracted? it'll it'll show itself to you. And it will be just the just the right thing for you to discover. So what is it you're avoiding? So I think of Halloween is that's the time to welcome those and look at it. There's a famous story of Miller rapper who was a Tibetan Yogi who lived in the mountains in the caves and kind of a hermit type. And he was still living his cave. And one day, he went out to gather firewood or something and he came back to his cave and a host of demons had taken it over fierce demons with fangs and blood dripping down from their key than red fire your eyes glared and saw you right through you and claws that were three feet long and ready to just, you know,

Pierce anything that came close. So they were a living in his cave in his house. So he kind of like been practicing Buddhism for a long time. And, you know, he thought he had good karma. He thought he had good wisdom and understanding and he had some kind of understanding that you know, it's everything's a projection of my mind. So it's not really demons there. So he went into his cave. And he's sat down. And the first thing he did was, he just praised them, you guys are great. And they just got snarly or. And they started showing more fangs and coming closer they were like thought he looked delicious. And so then he got up on his teaching seat. And he started giving Dharma talk about compassion and emptiness, and liberation. And, and, and you know, they just kept advancing towards them. And so after a while, he was getting kind of annoyed, that none of his good attempts that praising them and welcoming them and offering Dharma had worked. So then he got angry at them. And he yelled at them and swore and told them to leave. And they didn't leave. You know, they're getting closer now. And they're hot, hot, fiery breath was, you know, beginning to incinerate his clothes. And it was getting serious. And so then he said, Well, if you guys aren't living leaving, I guess we're just going to sit live live here together. I'll just, we'll just accept each other and be here. And with that, all but one of them left. But the biggest, meanest, fiercest one was still there. And so all these other tricks of the trade that he had to try to expel these demons didn't work, even accepting them for that for that one. And so I said, Okay, I guess I'll have to just surrender. So he walked towards this big, fierce demon, there's, you know, this one had the biggest teeth and the biggest mouth me huge, like six foot long gap got gaping

mouth, you know, you know, teeth that were just like, you know, sharp scissors pointing at each other and, and he jumped right into the mouth and laid there. And then that's when vanished. And then he was alone and get an escape. So that's a kind of teaching story about. He didn't he didn't invite the demons in. But you know, sometimes they come uninvited, her demons. But how do we deal with them? What do we do with the things that are really troublesome and difficult for us? And so the Dharma Some people try to praise or do good things or kind of pretend they're not there, or just kind of try to be really nice, but doesn't work. do good deeds. Some people try to rely on Dharma teachings and understandings and see if that can help. But sometimes that doesn't work. Sometimes people try anger. That doesn't work. And sometimes people learn to just accept and allow and just be present. And that works for some of them. But not all of them. And then there's this guy, you jump in, dive right in, you don't fight you don't try to get rid, you don't even accept, but you just kind of like, dive right into it. Okay, you and me. And that's the thing that helps us heal or overcome or evaporate, the challenges we have. So the hungry ghosts, the demons, welcoming them.

There, there's another story that's told in the ancient Buddhist texts of there is a there's an in heaven in Buddhism, there's all these realms of heavens. And then one of the highest heavenly realms. There is a host of gods that live there. And that coast of Gods has a chief God, called Brahma, and Brahma has a big palace. And that big palace has a big throne, that only Brahma sits on because he's done, Chief. One day Brahma was off somewhere in his universe doing something. And while he is away, an ugly little runt of a troll came and just came into the palace and waddle up to his throne and jumped up in sadness throne and the other gods of the realm, the heavens, they got upset. You can't sit up there. That's the throne of the Great God, Brahma. And so as they were angry, and he refused to get down, not only did he refuse to get down, but as he was sitting there, he got bigger and bigger. He grew to be stronger and stronger, and more and more beautiful and radiant and just powerful sitting on the throne. And so the gods got pretty confused. So they went and found Brahma and said, This, something's happening at home, we don't understand. There's this ugly runt of a little troll setting your throne, and he just growing there and won't leave. and nice. And so I Oh, I know what's going on. He said, I'll come back. So he went back. And he stood in front of the troll. And he put his hands together, Anjali, and he didn't say, welcome. I hope you're comfortable up there. It's nice to have you stay as long as you wish. And he offered all this kindness to him. And as he did it, the troll shrank and shrank. It got smaller and smaller and smaller, until poof, it vanished. And then Brahma got up on his throne. And he explained, that was an anger eating troll. If you are angry with it, it just gets bigger and bigger and bigger. But if you stop feeding it anger, then it shrinks. So, trolls, demons, hungry ghosts. What's your favorite? animal? What are you avoiding? And how do you step into it? How do you relate to it? How do you welcome it? How do you invite it once in a while? What do you do?

So when Buddhism has these cigar, key ceremonies to the ceremonies, it is meant to be an invitation and a welcoming of these unseen parts of us are avoided parts of ourselves, things that we don't usually bring into the center and, and hold in some way. And then we hold it, hold it in the space allow it to be there. And maybe that's enough. And then, you know, just to name it is a quite powerful thing. So I would like to suggest that we have a naming ceremony now. Now, probably none of you have any unseen parts that you're avoiding, or that you could invite the name here, but you probably know of some that are floating around our society. And maybe we could name some of these things. And no one will know that it's yours if you name it because it could be your net your neighbors or you could you know the politicians or something. But I wonder if your game to be can just kind of popcorn style. Why don't you name some of the things that humans are you? That's part that's in its there sometimes kind of tucked away and often not something people want to acknowledge or see or admit, that would be nice to kind of name once a year whenever such things. So somebody might start and just scaredy cat. But you do it loudly and I'll repeat it. Yeah, I heard TV movie hungry ghost jealousy or envy or jealousy

or envy? judgements. resentment. Missing wise. The missing wise father figure lonely This desire for attention sitting next, divisiveness shame ignorance propaganda propaganda machines that makes people think others are evil.

I can dress Stress Stress, yeah. Missing missing nurturing mother in attention to suffering, addiction, addiction, dishonesty, dishonesty,

impatience.

Not knowing how to have a healthy conversation, so ignorance

competition, scarcity a feeling of scarcity

neediness gratitude, in gratitude.

Couldn't hear that manipulateness

fear of the world we imagined we see

all those demons

lost opportunity, lost opportunity.

Power, hungriness,

perfectionism, perfectionism,

failure, failure,

arrogance.

complacency, yeah, good.

ego,

selfishness.

Well, that was a great list. And I feel kind of full. All that. So all that is a welcome. And so you should know that in the Dharma. There's a way in which all those qualities when they exist in you are welcomed in a certain kind of way. When they exist in other people, and they come here, they're welcomed. The idea is that this is supposed to be a place where it's safe. And kind of none of welcoming is the right word, but safe or allowing to hold it in the space of awareness and compassion. It doesn't necessarily mean we condone these things. But we allow it to surface and show itself without being critical or saying it's wrong or you shouldn't do it. It's just a welcome. And in that welcoming, in the practice in our hearts in the community like this, then hopefully there's a way in which something can resolve it's For heal itself or settle itself, something that needs to be fed deep inside, can be fed and be nourished. So the hungry ghosts can finally get their throats opened up. Or the hungry ghosts can evolve. Because in Buddhism, no one's ever stuck as hungry ghosts, they always evolve into

something else. So hopefully they can evolve into being that can be liberated and free. So I think it's a powerful thing that Dharma practice is a practice that we never turn our backs to ourselves to any parts of ourselves. And hopefully, as a Dharma community, we never turn our backs towards anybody. But rather, we figure out how to practice with it, how to meet it, with care, with compassion, with respect, with dedication to find the truth and find the freedom in the midst of it. And so all those things that were listed, are appropriate to have present in Dharma practice or have if they're there for you, it's not something you have to avoid, you come here, you don't have to be embarrassed by it or be afraid of, to show it. This is a place where hopefully, we can hold it with care and respect and compassion. Because then the practice has a chance to, to work it, our practice can kind of find its way through it. So once we admit it, there, stop avoiding some of these things. And once we kind of welcome it and allow it to be here, what are what do you think are some of the many choices of what can be a healthy way to heal or transform these things into health into well being into freedom? What are the health you know, you know, don't get caught up on you don't want to just feed it candy, because then it won't get satisfied and won't really feed you want to really settle something. But what what what do you what are some what what are some of the things you can do that can transform these into health and freedom? So this would be the popcorn style before? What are some of the things you can occur to you? That can be done? Understanding forgiveness. compassion. Really, really, listen, really listen to the story.

loving kindness, loving kindness, connection, real connection. Principle. find common ground with yourself so that you can relate to inside and when it's when it's in you, for example, yeah. Some people live divided inside of themselves. Acceptance

staying present, maybe that's the most powerful sometimes just being present for it. comforting, comforting.

Attachment, non attachment.

might ask, can you offer to our little ceremony here? These are all things to evoke. And as we name them, hopefully you'll take them in and be fed by them. So what about more? education, acknowledgement, recognition. Attention Why? I heard something that's area. gratitude.

ceremony of release, like burning. Sorry. ethical behavior is allowing

Humor humor. Great. Thank you.

Remembering impermanence

KEEP IT company. show it's recognition. One thing to recognize the other thing is to really show the recognition. Nice. an openness for change. Hmm, that's necessary. Yeah. Because without that, maybe we're stuck.

Asking for help. Letting Go lightness lightness, on the way to enlightened ness.

emptiness modesty, articulation. Give it a voice.

humility, humility, gentleness, simpleness, gentleness.

So from all that, I appreciate it, the first list of all the things that our people avoid. There's a lot was a long list and even a longer list if we really were thorough. And I appreciated this list of all these good actions, good activities we can do that are healing or transforming or freeing. And that was also a little long list. That could be even a lot longer. And it points to there's a lot going on. In the human heart in the human mind, it's a whole ecology of things that we can notice in ourselves. things we can do things we can approach. And there's a wide range of choices of things to pick from, that are healing and helpful to do. Not just one. And so tomorrow is November 1, which is All Saints Day. Or for Buddhists, it's the day of enlightenment. So it's a kind of special day tomorrow. So you have about, you know, technically about three hours and two minutes through the night to complete this Halloween exercise for yourself. And see if you can this evening, be welcoming to that which you avoid. Welcome the demons that you're struggling with. Welcome the hungry ghosts. Welcome the anger eating trolls. Welcome at all. And then evoke in you some of the powers of goodness that you have. Not to get rid of the demons. But to feed those demons feed that part of yourself with genuine goodness that you have, maybe from that list of things we talked about now. And then maybe kind of wish and hope that as you as as you go to sleep tonight, that the alchemy of your demons and your goodness, can somehow join together blend together in your sleep in your dreams, so that you wake up in the morning ready to join the saints and enlightened beings in a new transformed world where you're literally With more or more very much more fried, healed and nourished, may halloween be freeing healing and nourishing for you and your demons. Thank you