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**Speaker 1** [00:00:01] And you change your mind and your memories from that day to day after you are somewhere around one a.m.. I mean, afterwards I was here the day after, you know where

**Speaker 2** [00:00:19] where I was here on the first Sunday?

**Speaker 1** [00:00:21] Yeah, in Portland, Maine, I was right here. That I wasn't here somewhere else. Nice meeting. You knew someone could be here right now. Give me your information, your name and phone email, and I can get that on the web. You know, some of the crew tell that guy right there. Oh my god, my thing. I have no idea. Yeah. Yes. And are you? I don't believe this. Can you believe it? Believes in you that you know who right to your home? I do think there's lots of room in here. Didn't. The control, I think, oh, yeah, oh, we need to close. Wouldn't you put this on notice that she would have to put Chenrezig Bodhicitta Shakyamuni Karmapa Vogler the streaming deal? It's too late, someone who held up and more. You can get it for you.

**Speaker 2** [00:02:12] Okay, she's letting the darkness in.

**Speaker 1** [00:02:17] Yeah.

**Speaker 3** [00:02:21] Did that work? Where you were hit

**Speaker 1** [00:02:24] with strong stuff is kind of cool because it's. You.

**Speaker 4** [00:03:04] Like Santa has been here.

**Speaker 1** [00:03:07] Alex Jones, Elvis.

**Speaker 2** [00:03:28] Whenever there is a celebration of some kind of religious or spiritual thing, I always find myself wondering why, why they or why we do that? Why do we ask, why do we celebrate it? And I think in one in one way, of course, it's it's just the obvious. We like to party. We like to celebrate. We like to celebrate something that's uplifting somehow. But I think there is something. Let me put it this way, I think we're selling it short. If it's just about a celebration and just the joyful mass of a celebration, so then I pose that question. What why do we do that? And I'm not just talking about celebration of Christmas or the birth of Christ or some other thing. All religious traditions celebrate things in the context of their tradition. And often it's focused on some particular person like Jesus or Abraham or. And so on. So what's what's the benefit? Why do we do that other than the economic benefit

**Speaker 1** [00:05:15] or the economic pain?

**Speaker 4** [00:05:27] But I'm in a choir. It's called St. Portland, and one of the songs we've been singing this season is calm down. It's just a short little, oh, like a sentence. And it says I feel like going on and. And then there's another sentence that comes in. Those trials mount on every side. I feel like going on and it just gets repeated over and over. But it's really inspiring. And I think that's the other side of the celebration they're talking about because trials amount on every side. And we need to encourage ourselves.

**Speaker 1** [00:06:30] I think it's partly true this is going to get a little preview alive, but it.

**Speaker 2** [00:06:36] That again.

**Speaker 1** [00:06:37] So I the physicality in that. I've noticed with people that like, I think we do this definitely to cheer ourselves up something that's kind of special to cheer yourself up. That actually creates within you. There's sort of a joy that will last for a while. Right. The time I was visiting a lady that she had really bad dementia and, you know, she usually couldn't remember anything, but we had this organization that gives us flowers to bring people. So I brought her a bouquet of flowers that day, and she was so overjoyed that the flowers and they were so pretty. And you know, when I left that I came back and saw a week later and your caregiver said, you know, she was happy for a few days after that and wasn't because she remembered specifically that flowers. It was just like, it just sort of created this something within her that helped her, you know, just stay happy in there actually is something about that belief. So anyway, I think it's partly because it's, you know, it does actually do something. It makes us feel better. And just like Michael said, I think that, you know, when the world is supposed to sort of remind yourselves of this joy and beauty that is also there. And we celebrate these people that are so inspiring. You know, the Christ Jesus. This is this incredible teaching with his life, and he's so inspiring that he went before us like Buddha went before us and and these these beings, they they want to uplift all of us. And so we celebrate, remember them as as pulling us forward. It's like in a guru yoga. It's like, you know, they're they're bringing this up. They're the poor myself. And to remember them as a blessing.

**Speaker 2** [00:08:52] That's good. What are the benefits, are there? Yeah.

**Speaker 1** [00:09:08] Mercy, I think there's something in just the other, the tradition of it so that every year people know in their communities, they expect this certain landmark like this we have this day. And I think for people, it creates a sense of stability and a grounding like there they they it helps people to feel that they're rooted in some way. Reminds them of who they are kind of like a reminder

**Speaker 5** [00:09:43] of

**Speaker 1** [00:09:44] its importance to them or when they're too busy to be important. I see it as more of a way to connect with each other and to connect with the mystery that we use, we have these incredible people who preceded us and who will come after us. And it's just through all of this celebration reminds me of just coming together, just sitting with each other and just being present with the unknown, really, the mystery that prevails that keeps us moving toward that place of of connecting with that mystery. Somehow, we've turned it into a lot different than the stuff that makes us feel like we're connecting and we walk away and don't feel quite connected.

**Speaker 2** [00:10:47] And there is a way, isn't there, that we don't want to give up the mystery. It's as if we knew that that it couldn't actually be understood. And so if we if we actually came to understand it, we would have solidified a misunderstanding or something unspeakable about it in.

**Speaker 1** [00:11:30] I was just thinking of what Mary said. And it may also have been the reason that she was so happy, it's just that sense of connection. And then the flowers symbolize that connection and she saw the flowers. And even though maybe she wouldn't be able to remember it all the time, she would remember the flowers because they're right there that would symbolize maybe for her, you know, that that love that she experienced and that would recreate that good feeling in her body that you're mentioning. I'm glad you did that. But. Another word that comes to mind is kind of piggybacking on the connection is community feeling a part of the larger whole. I mean, not that.

**Speaker 4** [00:12:30] Client speaking to them is the symbol of that little baby in a manger, for example, and and has all the power to move the world who is really amazing a symbol because it's like so precious and so defenseless and vulnerable and right away in this story that it is babies under assault, you know, from the powers of the world. And yet it has its a locus on the power and mystery in the universe right there. It's pretty amazing. Symbol.

**Speaker 2** [00:13:33] Hmm. Yeah, maybe that's there. Also, just when we recall our connection to the linage, for example, or to some past great being that recalling in that connection is also fragile in that same age, it's not so obvious. Yeah, but we celebrate the connection. And then there's ceremonies for doing that to make it a little more.

**Speaker 5** [00:14:01] Mm hmm.

**Speaker 2** [00:14:03] I don't think it's so much to make an inspiring as it is to make it strong.

**Speaker 5** [00:14:08] Yeah, yeah.

**Speaker 2** [00:14:18] Are I often I remember this thing about? About different forms of government and people often say the best form of government government is a benevolent monarch.

**Speaker 1** [00:14:39] You know,

**Speaker 2** [00:14:42] we don't seem to find so many of those

**Speaker 1** [00:14:45] things.

**Speaker 2** [00:14:49] It's a high risk also. Yeah, but I think there's a way in which when we when we encounter maybe even some ancient person who wrote and was inspiring, we have a certain sense of appreciation for the gift of connection

**Speaker 5** [00:15:14] and

**Speaker 2** [00:15:16] having the things and that the inspiration is while it's fragile. We also have it with us all the time. So one way it's fragile and another way it's not fragile.

**Speaker 4** [00:15:32] It just feels like it, because in a way, it's like so hard to get to touch it. Yeah, it's there, but getting there,

**Speaker 2** [00:15:47] I think there's a piece here. Also, we often in the invasion of practices. We often involve ourselves in ceremonies and rituals that for a period of time feel bewildering in a not very positive way. Why? Why are we doing this? And then there is, I think, a key here. And what we're talking about is that in order to know why you are doing something, you have to connect it with what you already know and understand somehow, or you or you can't cross that bridge. So we all appreciate someone a friend, the pope, if you will, someone who is inspiring and feels worthy to us, then we sort of we're happy that they're in the world. And today when we do those rituals, it's helpful to recall from a personal perspective. Those kinds of relationships that we have with someone who's alive and they're gone so that we can sort of breathe life into the ritual.

**Speaker 3** [00:17:17] When when a group of us

**Speaker 1** [00:17:22] were on a

**Speaker 3** [00:17:24] three month retreat doing inventory on a practice and such a thought, which is this period of time practice alumnus of Kalu Rinpoche came and sat us in the retreat with an empowerment, and he said something that really astonished me. And it touches on what Michael was saying this this little baby. You know, one of the powers is that vulnerability, but it's also the purity. And he said, because we were launching on a purification practice, he said there is huge power in purity. And I always thought, well, purity. I always thought it was a little bit weak, you know, like, it's kind of like it always gets overwhelmed by a bit of dark, you know? And he said, No, no. He said he told this story when he and mommy, she who wrote, you know, a number of advisory on the practice, but they they went to Italy and yell, Mommy, yes, she wanted to visit Assisi, where St. Francis was was doing his his connection to the ministry. Lamia, she was fascinated with St. Francis, and I was just so happy because I grew up Catholic and so few answers were like, Yeah, like, I came out to give this. So like you say, some way you can connect because I'm giving. My first thought was like Louis post-race, So what's this hundredth syllable mantra? The St. Francis I? So, so Naomi. Yes, she really wanted to visit for St. Francis was and he talked there about the power of St. Francis. This purity, because due to his purity, the story Sara and I guess your corroborated that historically he was able to turn water away like a flood was coming and he met the water Typekit to the water connected with it and convinced it to go a different way and more. There was a wolf in the area that was very wild and was really calming beings and had killed some people and and some people had come to him very distressed. And he said, I'll go up to the wall and they said, Oh my God, don't do that, you'll be killed. And he said, No, no, I'll go talk to him. And he did. And the wolf like the elephant with the Buddha, the mouth, the elephant with the beautiful wolf bowed down to St. Francis is pure not to humans a person, but to his practice and left the area. So I was fascinated with that idea. It is symbolized by this little vulnerable baby surrounded by, you know, Herod King Herod and killing the Jews and all that. Yeah, it's a fascinating thing. So I started thinking and talking with my teacher about this purity thing, and it's it's all about, you know, keeping her who thinks doing practices that shift your mind to Islam? Might, Michael was saying earlier to the positive we become what we think. So the purification is not something magic is to shift your mind, shift to shift your mind the direction you want it to go. And then it has quite a

**Speaker 1** [00:20:54] huge amount of power,

**Speaker 3** [00:20:56] not the way we think of power, but the different way like that little baby and nature's power. Yeah, not where we would think it is. So it's something to just ponder. It's being helpful to.

**Speaker 1** [00:21:15] Listen, I just don't want to be asked to speak up. I don't want to be a downer, but for me, Christmas has always been very sad.

**Speaker 2** [00:21:23] They have to speak up good to not be a downer. You have to speak out.

**Speaker 1** [00:21:29] There's also this other aspect in which you are forced to do something, even if you don't feel it in some way. So I remember many Christmases and all the system that we had with all this presences buying things and stuff, which to me is always felt like false, not really true. So I would like to also emphasize this aspect of it, which can be it's very inspiring in some ways, but in other ways that it can be empty of meaning. And that's what has always happened to me for many, many years. Because when you go into the relationship with your family, sometimes they don't really, really want to accept you the way you are and everything else. So there's all this dynamic that goes on. And I remember even when I was going in Al-Anon that everybody was really desperate the Christmastime, the vacation time. So just.

**Speaker 2** [00:22:27] I don't think that's a downer. I think that's that's just the other side of the thing.

**Speaker 1** [00:22:32] That's reality. And I don't really say that that I mean things, things change.

**Speaker 2** [00:22:41] So we can look at all of the commercial stuff around the Christmas season, and it's easy to see all the negative things, but things will change. They just naturally will change. And in order for them to change in a certain direction, you have to hold that direction in your mind and not expect that it's going to happen tomorrow. But if you hold it in your mind, then you act in accordance with that. If you just think, well, maybe someday it'll change, but not in my life and you don't actually carry it. It'll change still. But it may not change in a direction which is positive really requires that kind of steady sense of it's going to work. It could work in this way so that when we have an opportunity to say something or do something, we can kind of put our little pea in the basket, you know, so that gradually the basket fills up.

**Speaker 4** [00:23:49] Well, I think it's really remarkable that this kind of renewal ritual happens at the end of the, you know, the winter solstice when the darkest night of the year. And it's to me, it's very remarkable is the end of a year and maybe even sometimes a longer cycle and the beginning of a new and and addressing the dark side. You're talking about there's a really great poem by Lawrence Ferlinghetti that starts out cries climbed down from his bare tree this year. Mm-Hmm. And he goes on to talk about this whole aspect of Christmas. So materials he. But to me, that that can symbolize also letting go of the past and letting go of all the

**Speaker 5** [00:25:05] tinsel and

**Speaker 4** [00:25:09] decoration that no longer means anything to you. And moving forward into a fresh approach to life, a fresh approach to maybe, you know, even using those symbols again, maybe adopting new symbols, but wanting to bring in to get in touch with their new life. And really? Take a fresh approach to the next year,

**Unidentified** [00:25:44] so, you know.

**Speaker 1** [00:25:55] I you as you're talking, one of the things that comes up for me is like the rituals around or celebrations or doorways, you know, and there's a lot of there can be a lot of like cultural stuff that can be positive or negative around the doorway. And there can be some doorways of like, I don't even want to go in that doorway. But the fact that there doorways like, I think, like what is opening to, you know, so sometimes Christmas is not thinking of anything, you know, but sometimes it is. If I don't, you know, it's a personal practice that feels like linked to that period of peace for me in that way of like, what is the invitation, but the invitation into what, you know, I think that's where it's good to with the mystery. And I think, you know, there's so many religious traditions that have celebration for something. We're going to connect to all of them of all the traditions. But it might be that we have some doorways that we can connect with. And it seems like over time, it's like you were talking about the living in meditation, Michael, like what we put in our minds to really cultivate something. So I think there's this thing of ritual or celebration at certain times or around certain events. And it seems this, if you will, for yourself as lives that help us cultivate some connection with something. So I feel like that, like if we didn't have that, what would happen, you know, maybe we would kind of get lost in our mundane and things were just sort of evolved. And, you know, who knows where it would go? But there's something about coming back to that and seeing it as kind of a fresh, I mean, like what I've kind of tried to do is like, what's the what is that?

**Unidentified** [00:27:47] So that's my thought.

**Speaker 2** [00:27:53] Thanks, Carol. Thank. So answer,

**Speaker 1** [00:28:14] I think the thing for me that stands out on such occasions is just to see people who

**Speaker 5** [00:28:26] the

**Speaker 1** [00:28:26] remainder of the. Don't cultivate a sense of what the teachings are. You, no matter what the tradition is, but just for that brief moment on that briefly, there is some alignment that comes from extending, you know, from everybody doing it. So they they open up to it even briefly. And just to see that, you know, makes me happy. It's.

**Speaker 2** [00:29:44] Yes, you want to you want to raise today, even if it's not raised from the dead. Oh, mercy.

**Speaker 1** [00:29:57] Oh, just talking about this, and I've always been curious why there aren't more things like this in the Buddhist tradition, or maybe things like what holidays there are? Are you kidding? But I'm wondering if it's because it's in the in the trend in the migration to the West. Has that been lost from the other Buddhist cultures or because we don't seem to think so?

**Speaker 2** [00:30:25] I mean, I just it's a holiday at least one a day. And I think there's more holidays than anybody does, but that doesn't mean that everybody celebrates all those holidays. So yeah, you're probably right that in some places, and this might be one of those places that many of the holidays are not celebrated and maybe not celebrate, maybe celebrated, but in a way which is not, you know, all the stops pulled out really big. And we've also we've also manufactured holidays like the body softener to the manufacturer and all.

**Speaker 4** [00:31:24] It seems like it has got a much more internal internal focus, certainly in the West, where there is so much external focus, it seems like the festival thing is sort of something many of us are trying to get away from. And so then it would be one reason why it might not be. So it might not be so many celebrated holidays here. I'm just guessing. But.

**Speaker 2** [00:32:02] Everything on the three year retreat retreats like they do two to three strokes a week, so they're like almost continuously celebrating. It's really so we're just we're in a different place outside. It's hard to get people together from work and family things to to do these things. But if you're living on a retreat, then of course that's all you're doing. Your job is to celebrate. And and so the celebration just goes on sometimes to a day, and they last for an hour and a half to two hours each.

**Speaker 3** [00:32:42] And that's true in the monasteries, too, like the

**Speaker 1** [00:32:45] day

**Speaker 3** [00:32:46] of the Buddha's birth, enlightenment and death. Those are very ritualized, and this part of it is in our daily lives. We don't have time to learn these rituals and we don't want to come together and just eat and party because that would flatten it out. But the actual traditional rituals take some time to learn them, to do them, you know, well. So we're I think we're in the middle of figuring all that out. Yeah, but that's a big, big holiday. And they say, at least in the Tibetan tradition, those three are all on the same day. The Buddha was born on the same day, even got enlightened later on the same day and passed in parliament behind them on the same day. Then the Chinese Buddhists do it on a different day. Now they have a different calendar. So a lot of this is also a culture bound, and we're going to be figuring that out of your question. So if you're mean, you know, as these come to the West, what do what do we do? But not night is great. It's such a common practice in a kind of western loose with loosey-goosey enjoying each other. Yeah. So nice. I was sitting

**Speaker 1** [00:34:21] here very confused

**Speaker 5** [00:34:24] and

**Speaker 1** [00:34:24] even negative. But this is really helped me, this discussion has helped me a great deal. Just have hope. In a sense, I grew up in a I'm about as genetically Jewish as you can get. And a family that was more or less Jewish. And yeah, no, we were Jewish anyway. And so odd sort of a good time, you know, like everybody else was partying and getting more gifts. And I we give these three, you know, eight small Islamic Hanukkah. It was just this odd sort of thing. And it's not a high holy day, and it's like no one knows what the heck, you know? Anyway, just confusion, confusion and feeling left out and also being a person that was always, I didn't understand. I'm not very social. You know, I don't get the partying thing. I still avoid them. But over time, like over time, I have developed an appreciation and a willingness to be a little bit more positive about it. And it's stressful. But I can. I can give some gifts. It's OK. It doesn't have to be. I'm not. I don't consider myself religiously Jewish. I consider myself. I even spent some time being Christian for a little while. You know, so I don't want a journey in my life. And it just seems like what you explained about the holidays in Buddhism and Guru Yoga, which is something I guess maybe I'll look forward to in the future. Maybe, maybe another life. I don't know.

**Speaker 2** [00:35:56] This is that other life.

**Speaker 1** [00:36:00] How many times we're going to do this? We were supposed to be the last one. Well, I wasn't. I wasn't hedging my bet. And I just wasn't very good to hear all that positive stuff about transforming it and, you know, and being as positive as possible, which can be infinitely positive if you wanted to be and make that effort. And and thank you. It was really helpful. I was just sitting here going, Oh my gosh, I'm so confused. It was very helpful. Thank you. Time for a fact check. You gave a very nice birthday party and you were being social and it was well attended, just for the record. Let me tell you, the effort and emotional, mental spiritual effort it took me was and physical effort was a good deal for this and for the big I. So thank you.

**Speaker 2** [00:37:13] This will change this, that story of the good, the boy when he was dying, it was quoted as saying that in the future, the teachings would go to many lands and many periods of time,

**Speaker 5** [00:37:27] and

**Speaker 2** [00:37:28] that those teachings, which are relative truth, which is almost everything, is very small. Ultimate truth, teachings and comparison of the relative truth said the relative truth teachings needed to be allowed to change so they could adopt cultures and cultures, adopt it. And so I think we're in some way. We're we're kind of exactly in that spot. We're looking at it and we're trying to wrestle with what could be changed without ruining it. We want to do X. Is that a problem or not a problem? But really, there's a lot of that sort of thing going on. And and I and I think that in the best case, people are very careful and kind of conservative about that, but gradually it will change. And the very thing that we complain about that we actually don't have right now. And that is to say, hard and fast rituals will come to be just by virtue of dint of force over time. So we're actually in that place where we have this kind of extraordinary freedom to move with things. We have the freedom to screw it up.

**Speaker 1** [00:38:48] Yeah.

**Speaker 2** [00:38:49] And that will also solidify and become hard and fast. And that's kind of how you get different lineages. And also, you they they harden it one way and one place in a different way in another place, and then you got to spend centuries working on it and so you can be friends again. So the change will happen. And it's interesting how we sometimes are when the change happens and we solidify, we'll be unhappy about that. Just like we're unhappy now with not quite understanding the flexibility in this year. This is just us.

**Speaker 1** [00:39:37] Two of those

**Speaker 3** [00:39:38] two Typekit too loose

**Speaker 2** [00:39:40] to tie, too loose

**Speaker 3** [00:39:42] with. What we're doing

**Speaker 5** [00:39:51] is

**Speaker 2** [00:39:53] there are very few key principles and out of all of the teachings that we can study and practice, it's often helpful to individually as well as collectively but individually to find one of those very straightforward, understandable teachings and just do that. Like the form Immeasurables, for example, where you first start with equanimity and you think about all beings being endowed with that primordial, impure nature. And the only issue is they don't recognize it. So you take that kind of equanimity that can come out of that almost like a position and you just hold it so that everyone you meet, you recall this person also has that. This person also has that. And then because of that, your loving kindness becomes immeasurable. And the compassion becomes immeasurable. And when you see positive things being done, your joy becomes immeasurable. I think there are many people, many great beings who have taken a relatively small subset of all the teachings that relatively a very small subset of all the teachings and made that the core practice of their life. And they're not necessarily renowned for it because they may be responsible for many things. But I think that actually it's the key, the key you can find that we often say that in all of the practices can be approached through any of the practices, like all of the practices, contain all of the other practices and all of the other methods and all of the other truths. We tend to have an insatiable appetite for solving all of the mysteries at which point, of course, can be grossly disappointed if we actually so, we'd have nothing less to solve. Well, now what? Wait till it snows. Anything else? Shall we dedicate this virtue?

**Speaker 5** [00:42:52] May I quickly realized my mother and we shall be without exception in this case?

**Speaker 2** [00:43:44] If you are for coming,

**Speaker 1** [00:43:48] he

**Speaker 2** [00:43:50] expected three people today

**Speaker 4** [00:43:53] over here now to disappoint

**Speaker 1** [00:43:57] the rest of you. Yeah, yeah. Which three three residents? I'm one of these. It's more expensive. Well, it was so nice. I think it's kind of.