

Every Perfect Gift



All Saint: The Gift of Miracles

“God helps those who help themselves”. 75% of Americans think so, according to pollster George Barna. In fact, the phrase topped a poll of the most widely known verses in the Bible. Despite the fact that it’s not actually there! But God does help. Lest we forget that fundamental truth, today’s Gospel is intended to remind us: the name Lazarus is a shortened form of Eleazar, which is Hebrew for “God helps.” And Lazarus is from a village whose name, Bethany, means “House of Affliction.”

Names like this are characteristic of John’s highly symbolic gospel. Which we can read as a cosmological tale—unconstrained by time and space—about the human dilemma and the persistent love of God.

When the gospel tells us that Lazarus—the suffering one whom God helps—is also the “one Jesus loves,” he represents all those whom Jesus loves. Including all of us: we who suffer, die, know the potential for new life, and—when we’re stuck—need others to take away the stone that holds us back, and unwind the cloths of our pain.

We are people who can do great things. And we are also people of great need. To use cosmological terms, we could say that all human beings in all times and places need places to gather and worship and dream. We also need skilled and compassionate pastors to encourage and comfort us as people called to do the work of Jesus. And we need money to pay for all of this, which is where our stewardship come in.

God has done, is doing and will do miracles; and we know that God also asks us to participate in the miracles. Sometimes by taking away the stone, sometimes by unbinding a friend, and sometimes even by filling out a pledge card.

Julia McCray-Goldsmith is Priest-in-Charge of Trinity Cathedral in San Jose, California. She often fails to see the stone in front of her or the cloths that bind her, but is grateful to friends who point them out. She lives in a family compound in Berkeley with her husband, married children, disabled sister and the puppy who binds us all together in love and silliness. | TENS.org

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION



1. What does the Bible actually say about who God helps?
2. How has your church community “taken away the stone” or unwound the cloth” for you, or created opportunities for you to offer that kind of service for others?
3. Is there a saint or a soul in your story who inspires you to greater service and generosity?

