Mindful Respect | Monday Night Talk

Jack Kornfield · Notable Dhamma Teachers — Jack Kornfield · 54:17

Tonight, the theme of the talk will be respect.

The teachings of many of the texts begin with the phrase, "O nobly born, O you who are the sons and daughters of the awakened ones, remember who you really are." Treat yourself with respect, honor. As Martin Luther King said, if a man or a woman sweeps streets for a living, they should sweep like Michelangelo painted, like Shakespeare wrote his plays, like Beethoven composed his music.

One of the beautiful things in the forest monastery where I lived with Ajahn Chah is that everything was done with that spirit of mindful respect—folding the robes, how you cared for your monk's bowl, the bowing before you eat, when you meet your elders, before you chant, the sweeping of the path through the forest as the trees would lose their leaves. Sweeping like Michelangelo painted. O nobly born, you who are listening, my friends, meditators, remember this sense of respect.

Now what's true, and I can't bypass it, is the recent Supreme Court decisions, especially the decision about abortion and making it illegal or allowable to be illegal in so many states that will impact especially women who are poorer, people of color. I think about how long it's been—the march for women's empowerment, when they had to fight to get the vote. They've had to fight to not be a slave, to not be raped by the person who enslaved them, to not be somebody who was just producing more babies for the man, to not be the person who is under the thumb of their husband. They had to fight to get contraception. Women have had to fight just to get equal pay, and it still hasn't happened—equal opportunity.

I think of Dolores Huerta, when she says, "Why is it the farm workers and the farm worker mothers feed the nation, but they can't get food stamps and food for their children?"

I am someone who really respects life, all phases of life from the very beginning. More than that, I respect that each woman and each person should be able to decide and live their life for themselves.

So I want to tell a story to continue with this talk tonight on respect. It's an old story that goes back to the time of King Arthur, the story of one of his great knights, Sir Gawain.

Sir Gawain and some of his fellow knights were out on an expedition across the countryside. Sir Gawain took a path that led him into a deep and dark forest. He continued to ride, to see what was there. Gradually it got darker and darker and night fell. As night was falling, Sir Gawain found himself in a clearing where there was a beautiful, almost magical well. Being thirsty, he dismounted from his horse and drank the waters of this well and began to rest.

All of a sudden, at a distance, he heard the sound of horse hooves. A horse came toward the well. It was nighttime and the moon was shining. A gorgeous white horse appeared with a woman veiled in a scarf. She took the scarf off and looked at him, and she was a fright. She was the woman who in India we call Kali, and in Russia she's called Baba Yaga. The Mayans have a word for her. She is the fierce ancient feminine—one eye on him and the other kind of drooping out and looking another direction, wild looking.

She said, "Who gave you permission to drink from my sacred well?"

He didn't know what to say.

She said, "You got no permission. You came here and took what was mine. What will you give me, knight?"

Being a knight and trying to be an honorable man, he said, "I will give you what you wish, madam. I'm sorry I have caused affront."

She paused for a while and said, "Well, knight, I've been alone a long time, and I need a husband. What I would like is to marry you."

This took poor Sir Gawain aback. He was ready to do whatever she wanted, but this seemed a little bit much. He took a deep breath and reflected and said, "Is there not anything I can do to offer you instead of this wish that I marry you?"

She said, "Yes. There's one other thing. If you can answer a question for me, then I will release you from this request."

He said, "Why certainly, what is your question?"

She looked down at him from the horse and said, "The question you must answer is: What is it that women want?"

He began to think, he began to imagine. He said, "May I have a little time to reflect on this?"—being a meditator as he was.

She said, "Yes, I will give you a year. I will lead you out of the forest, and I expect you to return in one year with an answer to this question—or else we shall have a great wedding feast."

Sir Gawain mounted his horse and agreed to her terms. She led him under the moonlight out of the forest, and he hightailed it back to the castle where he found King Arthur and some of the other knights. "Let me tell you what happened to me," he said.

They all heard his story and said, "Go to sleep, sleep on it first. We'll find out what women want."

And the next morning, the king and the knights went out across the countryside. They deputized others and they had these great leather-bound books, and they began to write down from one woman after

another what it is that women want. They want children, they want love, they want land, they want money, they want music and joy. One possibility after another, and the books became filled with what women want.

Sir Gawain relaxed a little. He said, "We must have the answer somewhere in here." He lived his life, but then a year started to come up and he realized, "I have to go back. I swore as a knight that I would return, and on my honor, I will do so." So he took a stack of the bound books with all the answers and he went back on his horse into the woods.

And there in the dark forest by the well, he waited. And sure enough, after it got dark and the moon rose, he heard the hooves of the horse. And sure enough, the great white horse appeared, and the woman with the shawl unveiled herself—to be one of the ugliest women he'd ever seen, one of the least desirable of women he'd encountered. Because when you are Baba Yaga and when you are Kali and so forth, you can take any form.

And she said, "Do you have an answer, fine knight that you are?"

He handed her the books and she began to leaf through them. "No, no, no, no, no." And finally she put them down and said, "This is not the answer."

"So what now?" he asked.

"We will have a wedding. You will take me back to the palace and we'll have a wedding."

"All right, how soon?"

"Tomorrow."

"Couldn't we have it at night, please?"

"No, no, no. We have to do it honorably. I want a banquet. I want all the knights to attend. I want people to know. Let us do it in the daytime. The next day, bring them all together."

So he went back with her. They gathered a banquet and everyone came to see Sir Gawain marrying this old hag, as she was called—the Hag of Bera in Irish mythology, Kali, Baba Yaga. And once the wedding took place, everybody was talking about it, but they all respectfully watched. Then Sir Gawain and the lady he'd married retired to the bridal chamber.

She looked at him and said, "Well, it's time for us to do our wedding night lovemaking."

He was somewhat taken aback.

"You're a great knight," she said. "Are you frightened to kiss me?"

So he took all of his knightly powers and stood up and walked over to her and planted a kiss on her lips.

And the moment he did, she turned into this beautiful princess, more beautiful than he could have imagined, and explained that she'd been under a spell and he had now broken the spell—in part. By his willingness to kiss her, he had broken part of the spell. He, of course, was thrilled. "Okay, I've married someone and look who it turns out to be."

"But to finish the spell," she said, "here's the dilemma. If you would like me to be beautiful like this for you at nighttime, then I will be the hag in the daytime, for you have broken only half the spell. On the other hand, if you would like to have me go around with all of your friends and all in the court in this beautiful way, I will do so, but then I must turn back into the hag at night. Which will you choose, Sir Gawain?"

He sat quietly. He did a little mindfulness meditation, reflected some metta, compassion practice. And finally he looked at her and said, "I cannot choose, really, my dear. It is up to you."

And the minute he said this—

A great smile broke across her face, and she said, "You have broken the spell. When you offered me the answer, 'It is up to you,' you granted me something that answers the question of what women want." She gazed at him and said, "What women want is their own sovereignty."

Sovereignty means to be the lady, the lord, the person who is in charge of their own life, not under someone else's rules. To be the queen of their own life, the one who decides. This is what women want—this freedom. Sovereignty is a loving respect, an awakening of respect for the Buddha nature, the secret beauty of every being.

It's interesting when I look at the Buddhist texts that mirror this story. Often people would come to the Buddha with questions and issues and problems. He would listen to them and then give teachings or advice, question them, get into dialogue, help them see in a new way. Very often at the end of those texts, when all was done, half of the time someone had some great, amazing revelation or breakthrough or enlightenment—but not always. When the dialogue was finished, the phrase that the Buddha used was: "Now it is time for you to do as you see fit." He didn't say, "Follow these teachings, do what I told you"—none of that. They had their dialogue, something was illuminated, and then: "Now it is time for you to do as you see fit." You can feel the level of respect, of sovereignty if you will, in this.

Every being loves respect. I think of the story of a little seven-year-old boy who went out to a restaurant with his mother. It was dinner time. They got the menus. The waiter came and said, "What would you like?" She ordered, and then she said, "Let me order for him. He would like mashed potatoes, peas, and maybe a little bit of chicken." The boy looked at the waiter and said, "What I really want is a hot dog and fries." The waiter looked back at the mother, then looked at the little boy and said, "Would you like ketchup with your fries?" Then he turned around and walked off. And the little boy turned to his mother and said, "He thinks I'm real."

We all long for respect. Our employers and employees, adults, children, elders, our garden, the fields

around us, the quail and owls and rabbits—and bugs. I love this poem from Lloyd Reynolds, who was the greatest American calligrapher. He was the person who taught Steve Jobs, before Steve started Apple, the elegance of language: "A bug crawls over the paper. Leave him be. We need all the readers we can get."

I remember when the Dalai Lama had come to Spirit Rock along with Maha Ghosananda, the Gandhi of Cambodia. They were old friends, and when they saw each other, great smiles crossed their faces. They approached each other and each one began to bow, and the other bowed, and then the Dalai Lama bowed lower, and Ghosananda bowed lower, until finally they were almost horizontal and the tops of their heads touched. There was so much loving respect between them.

This is what mindfulness offers. When you sit and you name what comes—the sadness, the excitement, the fear, the longing, the sensations, the stories—and you meet them with loving awareness and a bow, you become the loving awareness that can honor things as they come and as they go.

I remember going with my teacher Ajahn Chah to visit a temple on the border of Cambodia. The forest monastery where I practiced was near the border of Laos and Cambodia, and it was a fairly long ride across the province and then through a dirt mountain road to get near the Cambodian border. As we went, the driver who had picked us up in a little Toyota started to drive really fast. He was a young guy and he liked to show his stuff. But it was a one-and-a-half-lane dirt road winding through the mountains; you couldn't see around the curves. He was speeding through it, and periodically—not very often—a big bus or a logging truck would come by. He would go fast, and we said, "Please slow down, please slow down." But he didn't listen.

It was quite a trip, speeding around those blind curves, hoping there wasn't a bus or a logging truck. I got rather frightened. Then I looked over at Ajahn Chah and saw that his knuckles were white. Somehow it reassured me—I wasn't alone in it.

We finally made it to the courtyard of this Cambodian temple, and he turned to me and said, "Scary ride, wasn't it?" It wasn't as if he was supposed to never be afraid, some kind of idealization.

It was as if he was bowing to it. You know, people go to the amusement park and get a ticket for a scary ride. It's just the way it was.

So mindful loving awareness offers a bow of respect to what arises. Respect for the body. As the poet Eduardo Galeano wrote, "The church says the body is a sin. Science says the body is a machine. The marketplace says the body is good for business. The body says, I am a fiesta."

With loving awareness—not obsessed and clinging to your body and not avoiding it and ignoring it, but with the curiosity and interest of loving awareness—you can begin to pay respectful attention to your body. Close your eyes just for a moment and ask: What in your body is wanting respect? You can know. Let your eyes open gently.

It's this loving awareness, this mindful loving awareness that can offer respect, that can listen and tune you to your own body, to the fiesta of your body.

But what if your body's in a lot of pain? I think of my dear close friend Jon Kabat-Zinn, who started mindfulness-based stress reduction decades ago in the basement of the medical school in Massachusetts. He went into the hospital—he'd done his doctorate at MIT and was a scientist, but he'd also been practicing mindfulness intensively and he knew its power. He opened a clinic in the basement and then he went upstairs for rounds or grand rounds with all the physicians and some of the nurses and said, "I'm opening a clinic in the basement for all those patients that you can't help, that you've had a struggle with because they have too much pain, too much anxiety, too much fear, and you've been unable to help them. Send them down to me." Later he said to me, "Because I knew I had the great medicine."

And people began to come down. They'd been struggling with their illness and struggling with their pain and struggling with how it was going to work out—a lot of stress and struggle. The main thing, the first thing that Jon did and the training that they had, was to take their seat and stop the war. Stop the struggle against the way things are, trying to fix it and change it and make it and all that. They'd already done all the medical things possible.

When they stopped, he said, "Let's pay a respectful attention to the pain, to the stress carried in your body, to the difficulty you're going through. Instead of trying to fight against it, what happens if you wrap it with compassion and kindness and loving attention?" And of course, much of the problem came from all the resistance and fear in the experience. When they were allowed, all those difficulties were held in a new way with care and respect.

But it's the same kind of respect for the earth itself, the body of the earth. Rachel Carson writes, "If I had influence with the good fairy who's supposed to preside over the birth of all children, I would ask her gift to each child in the world be a sense of wonder so indestructible it would last throughout life."

Just as we can become the steward of our body, just as we can respect what's here in our body, we can also listen to what the earth is calling you and me and others to do. I think of the monks who were terribly aggrieved when the great forests around the forest monastery were being cut down and the teak trees sold—the environmental destruction. So they went out into the middle of the biggest remaining parts of the forest and took the robes and wrapped them around trees. You've heard this story. They did a whole long ceremony to make the biggest trees the abbots of the forest and created a shrine there, and the loggers wouldn't go anywhere near it because it became sacred again. This is the body of the earth that asks for your bow of attention, your care. What is it asking of you even now?

And then there's the feelings that we have. William O. Douglas, Supreme Court Justice from a previous generation, said, "At the Supreme Court level where I work, ninety percent of our decisions are made on an emotional basis. And the other ten percent is our minds used to rationalize those decisions." We can see that even now. It's really led by feelings—what people want, what they believe, what they don't want,

all different kinds. And yet mostly we're unaware; we're lost in our feelings. Each one comes, each perspective. We don't know how to step back and be quiet and listen more deeply in a connected way to what will serve everyone.

But it's not just the Supreme Court. You too carry the ocean of tears, sadness, and fear. And you carry the unbearable beauty and joy and love of this world, all in you. How do you treat this? Do you treat your heart, your feelings, with respect? Do you listen deeply?

During my second month of nursing school, our professor gave us a pop quiz.

I was a conscientious student and had breezed through the questions until I read the last one: "What is the first name of the woman who cleans this classroom, this corridor, and the rest of the school?" Surely this was some kind of joke. I'd seen the cleaning woman several times. She was tall, dark-haired, in her fifties. But how would I know her name? I handed in my paper, leaving the last question blank.

Before class ended, one student asked if the last question would count toward our quiz grade. "Absolutely," said the professor. "In your careers, you will meet many people. All are significant. They deserve your attention and care, even if all you do is smile and say hello." I've never forgotten that lesson. I also learned that her name was Dorothy.

What does it mean to pay attention with loving awareness and respect to one another? Take a pause. Listen inside. What in your heart wants respect? And what in the feelings of others around you wants respect?

In this difficult time, we have to learn to listen to each other. In this divisive and fraught moment in our history in the United States and elsewhere in the world, we can't afford to not offer respect to one another and to try to listen in a different way—because it's not "them." As Alexander Solzhenitsyn said: "If only it were so simple. If only there were evil people somewhere insidiously committing evil deeds, and it were necessary only to separate them from the rest of us and destroy them. But the line dividing good and evil cuts through the heart of every human being. And who is willing to destroy a piece of their own heart?"

There he was, writing from Siberia and the Gulags, with this great heart of wisdom—a Nobel laureate. This is us, this is human beings. We need to find a way to listen to all the parts of one another.

Then there's respect for the mind. The Buddha asks: Who is your enemy? Mind is your enemy. Who is your friend? Mind is your friend. No one can help you more than a mind trained, not even your most beloved friends, and no one can harm you more than a mind untrained.

So you begin to pay attention. And with loving awareness, you see that the mind creates everything. As the great lama Khenpo Rinpoche says, the mind creates both samsara and nirvana. Yet there's not much to it—it's just thoughts. Once you see deeply, you'll see that thoughts appear and disappear. They're empty like clouds. And the mind will have no power over you.

So you have to see the mind—the thinking mind, the planning mind, the remembering mind, the judging mind, the doubting mind—and say, "Oh yes, thank you for those thoughts. Thank you for trying to keep me safe. I'm okay." You offer respect and see anew and see clearly. Who are you? This invites a shift of identity from being lost in the thoughts.

When I was at UC Berkeley at the law school as part of a conference, there was a man who had been a judge. He was a meditation practitioner invited to sit on the bench. And he thought, "Sit on the bench? I know how to sit." He'd been meditating for many years. "I can do this." And here are the instructions he gave to his jury: "I want you to listen to what will be presented in this courtroom with total attention."

You may find it helpful to sit in a posture that embodies dignity and presence, staying in touch with the feeling of your breath moving in and out as you listen to the evidence. Be aware of the tendency of your mind to jump to conclusions before all the evidence has been presented and the final arguments made. As best as you can, try to suspend judgment and simply witness with your full being everything being presented in the courtroom, moment by moment. If you find your attention wandering, you can always bring it back to your breathing and to what you're hearing, again and again. When the presentation of evidence is complete, then it will be your turn to deliberate together as a jury and come to a decision—but not before."

You could hear his wisdom in this instruction, the respect he wanted the jurors to offer to all that was going to unfold before them.

So we listen not with ideas of how it's supposed to be, but with a gracious, loving awareness. And as we do, instead of filtering everything through our thoughts, there's a kind of beginner's mind that opens, and we can see anew.

I remember a cartoon that showed two generals striding down the hall of the Pentagon with all their medals and decorations. One of them said to the other, "It really shook me. I dreamed the meek inherited the earth."

We all have our perspectives of how things should be. But what does it mean to live with beginner's mind, with an open heart, to value the sovereignty, the nobility of all?

Who you are is loving awareness. You have an original innocence that was born into you. And even with the conditioning and such common self-doubt and self-judgment and unworthiness, when you practice mindful loving awareness, you listen in a different way. You listen with the heart, and it expands the sense of not only who you are, but who we are.

We weep for all the parents who've lost a child or whose child is ill, for all those who are losing their rights. We rejoice for all the parents whose children succeed, for the sovereignty and rights that are growing for human beings. We hold them all in our hearts.

A poem for you, called "The Sleepless Ones":

What if all the people who could not sleep at two, three, or four in the morning left their houses and went to the parks? What if hundreds, thousands, millions went in their solitude like a stream, and each told their story?

What if there were old women fearful that if they slept they would die, and young women unable to conceive, or those seeking an abortion, or a child that was wrong to carry?

What if there were husbands having affairs, and children fearful of failing, and fathers worried about paying the bills, and women having business troubles, and men unlucky in love, and those in physical pain, and those who were guilty?

What if they all left their houses like a stream, and the moon illuminated their way, and they came, each one, to tell their stories?

Would these be the more troubled of humanity? Or would these be the more passionate of this world? Or those who need to create in order to live? Or would these be the lonely ones?

And I ask you, if they all came to the parks at night and told their stories, would the sun on rising be more radiant?

And again, I ask you—would they embrace?

You can feel this, what it would mean to listen to one another deeply.

I love the Quaker Listening Project. They've been going around the world now for decades—to Sudan and Libya and North Korea, places that people don't go—simply saying, "Tell me your story. Let me understand you." You can do it in your family, in conflict, in your community, with neighbors, in so many ways. But it means you have to be somehow flexible. You have to honor the sovereignty of each being.

I remember shortly after I got married to my beloved Trudy—and today is our wedding anniversary; I took her onto the Ferris wheel here in Santa Monica, in Venice, because that's where I proposed to her—at one point early in the marriage, she said she wanted to go somewhere and take a trip. I spent time planning it, trying to figure out how we'd fly there and where we'd stay. And then after a week or so, she said, "You know, I don't think I want to go there."

I got upset. I said, "Yes, but you said you wanted—" and on I went. I felt that upset rising in me. She smiled, looked at me, and said, "Jack, women change their minds."

Of course, men change their minds equally so. But there was something in the way she said it that just touched my heart. It's like—why would I judge? We all change our minds. Why would I get rigid?

And there was a sign posted on it that said, "Not accepting change, thanks." And then underneath it,

somebody put another posted note that says, "Change is inevitable, deal with it."

This is the way this world is—it's not fixed. And the views aren't fixed, and even the court decisions, sometimes bad as they are, are not the end of the story. But the story will change also when we begin to listen to each other. Try it in your family; you'll find out they like it.

Even dogs like it. There's the story of this guy who had a Doberman, and he'd heard that cod liver oil was good for the coat of dogs. He would call his dog and grab its mouth and pull it open and pour in the cod liver oil, and the dog resisted and hated it. Then one day when he was trying to do it, he dropped the bottle and a whole puddle of cod liver oil spilled onto the kitchen floor. He went to get a mop, and when he came back, the dog was licking up the cod liver oil. The problem was not the cod liver oil, it turned out. It was the way he was trying to administer it or force it down the poor dog's throat.

When people ask for a little attention, it's not a little thing—it's a great thing. Because the whole path of awakening, of quieting the mind, seeing clearly, opening the heart, is based on respect. A generous heart. It's us. Not harming ourself, not harming others. Can we listen deeply?

A poem for you:

When someone deeply listens to you, it's like holding out a dented cup you've had since childhood and watching it fill up with cold, fresh water. When it balances on top of the brim, you are understood. When it overflows and touches your skin, you are loved.

When someone deeply listens to you, the room where you stay starts a new life. And the place where you wrote your first poem begins to glow in your mind's eye. It's as if gold has been discovered.

When someone deeply listens to you, your bare feet are on the earth, and a beloved land that seemed distant is now at home within you.

Wisdom and compassion for all that we have to hold as human beings. Can we actually listen in this way to one another, to ourself and others as we sit and walk and engage in our community, in our society, the joys and pains of it? Because the game is respect.

And I remember from a men's retreat years ago at Spirit Rock, there was a man—we were telling our stories about men—who had a blues radio show in Los Angeles on Sunday evenings. He said he'd studied and loved the blues for most of his life. He had a lot of listeners, many of whom were incarcerated men in prisons. He got a letter one day from a man in prison, Joe Johnson, who said, "I love listening to your show and I'd like to see if you can play these pieces from some of my favorite early bluesmen—from Muddy Waters and Blind Lemon Jefferson and a few others of the masters."

So the next week on his show, he said, "I got a letter from Joe Johnson, a man who obviously knows the history of the blues, a blues aficionado, and it's my pleasure to play first for Mr. Johnson these pieces from Blind Lemon Jefferson and Muddy Waters." And he did. A few weeks later another letter came from Joe

Johnson. He said, "Thank you for listening to me, for playing those pieces. I love listening to that show. And more than anything, it's the first time I can remember my name being said with respect."

Imagine that. Imagine that.

Could the Palestinians and Israelis listen to one another and treat each other with respect? And the Hutus and the Tutsis? And the Northern Irish, and the Irish and the English, and the red states and the blue states?

But what about the big difficulties? Racism, economic injustice, endless wars, so many kinds of global dilemmas created by human beings. James Baldwin writes, "I imagine one of the reasons people cling to their hate and ignorance so stubbornly is because they sense once hate is gone, they will be forced to deal with their own pain."

And so there's pain and insecurity, and now you have to have respect for Mara. Mara who appeared to the Buddha in the form of greed and temptation and addiction—and that didn't move the Buddha. And then Mara appeared in the form of aggression, flaming arrows and swords—and that didn't move the Buddha. And then Mara appeared in doubt: "You'll never get enlightened. This won't work. You can't help other people." And that didn't move the Buddha.

Because each time, the Buddha responded by saying, "Oh, I see you, Mara. I know who you are. I see you." Not with fear, not with confusion—with a bow. "Is that you, Mara? Oh, yes. The Mara of doubt, the Mara of insecurity, the Mara of fear, the Mara of greed and aggression."

These are not small things. The power of greed, of hatred, of ignorance—huge. Civilizations, warfare, on and on. But when we see deeply, when we listen with the heart underneath all of that to the longings and the fears and the confusion and the pain that James Baldwin points to—the hurt that's underneath everything else.

I remember when Maha Ghosananda, the Cambodian teacher and colleague and friend, went to the U.S. Congress to testify on a ban for world landmines. When he came to Spirit Rock, he was raising money for artificial limbs for children who'd stepped on landmines in Cambodia, and crutches for people who'd been maimed. When he spoke to Congress, yes, he spoke about voting for the ban. But then he got quiet, and he said, "Before we can do that, the most important thing is to remove the landmines from our hearts." To remove the landmines from our hearts—the landmines of our aggression and fear, all those energies of Mara and confusion, the anger and blame and revenge.

Martin Luther King, after his church was bombed: "We will match your capacity to inflict suffering with our capacity to endure suffering. We will meet your physical force with soul force. We will not hate you, but we cannot in all good conscience obey your unjust laws. And we will soon wear you down by our capacity to suffer, and in winning our freedom, we will so appeal to your heart and conscience that we will win you as well."

Without mindfulness and loving awareness, we get lost in polarization, isolation, separation, aggression, fear, racism, violence. The wonderful thing is that there is mindfulness. There is loving awareness. It is your birthright. O nobly born, remember who you really are. It is your sovereignty, and no one can take it from you. There can be laws one way or another, but the reality is that it's your heart and your spirit—they can put you in prison, but no one can take your spirit from you, or your choices.

When you realize this, it becomes an enormous blessing. William Butler Yeats, looking back on his life, said: "I am content to follow to its source every event in action and thought, measure the lot, forgive myself the lot. When such as I cast out remorse, so great a sweetness flows into the breast, for we must laugh and we must sing, for we are blessed by everything. And everything we look upon is blessed."

We have to live true to our values, true to the deepest place in our hearts of what we know is right and wise—the actions and thoughts of the wise ones. This is what the Buddha called them: the loving heart, the wise heart, the strong and courageous and steady heart. And we must do so, and then listen to each other. To see the sovereignty in one another, and respect it, and support it in whatever way we can. For all beings. For the benefit of all.

For we are the world. We are consciousness. We are the field of awareness having this human incarnation, this human life. And what we do makes a difference. When we embody respect, graciousness, loving awareness for all, when we listen deeply, we are changing the world person by person, piece by piece. And this is the only way that it happens. We add our voice. We add our love. We add our courage.

And we do so with the power of loving awareness and the freedom that it offers.

So I thank you. And I see so many more people on the screen than there had been in previous nights. Sadly, I'm not going to take time for questions and dialogue as I usually do after these talks, because it's my anniversary—happy wedding anniversary with my beloved Trudy.

I just wish blessings and well-being to you all. May we stand up for what matters, and may we do so with a wise and loving heart for all.

Thank you. Blessings. Good night.

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