The Bodhisattva Path of Joy (Retreat at Spirit Rock)

Jack Kornfield · Notable Dhamma Teachers — Jack Kornfield · 1:01:59

What becomes apparent today, as I've had a chance to speak with various people in meetings and with the other teachers as well, is how much greater stillness and settledness there is in the retreat and in people's hearts and minds. It doesn't mean there isn't stuff of all different kinds, but it's a very different experience to allow this deepening of stillness to happen in the room, in your own body, in your own heart.

Crowfoot, a Blackfoot native elder, says: What is life? It is the flash of a firefly in the night. It is the breath of a buffalo in winter. It is as the little shadow that runs across the grass and loses itself in the sunset.

As you become still, there also comes a kind of opening in which the trees and the sky, the salad and the mops and all of it—they teach you things because you're present for it. There are lessons learned in each turn of the path and each moment because your stillness allows you to be in a very different, receptive, open relationship to life itself.

This part is really important. It's important in some way for the next days that you stay with it and invite the stillness to deepen, invite the layers that want to open to open. Sometimes you get very still and new experiences of mind opening and well-being and joy come. And sometimes you get still and new layers that need to be released come. You just did that forgiveness practice with Spring, and you notice, "Oh yes, there's this whole part that needs to be forgiven, and then that part, and oh yes, myself as well."

You can trust this process. You don't have to do it—you have to be present for it. You don't have to pull the petals of the flower open, but your presence allows the natural opening to happen.

With the teachings on equanimity from Gina last night, you're invited to reflect on what it means to live with a peaceful heart. Even to think about the difficult situations in your life, which you have, because everyone does. What does it mean to enter those difficult situations? What could it mean to enter them with a peaceful heart?

We did that practice of big sky meditation this morning. What we're learning in some way is both how to be more alive and also how to be present not just for life but for death—because it will happen, in case you hadn't noticed.

It's one of the great mysteries talked about by the ancients. They say one of the most mysterious things in life is that people can see other people die all around them and still think it's not going to happen to them. I remember being with Stephen Levine when he asked, "How many of you think you're going to die?" Only

about a quarter of the hands went up.

What you're doing here with the forgiveness and the unfolding—the joys and the sorrows that come, the trees and the breath, the salad, the yogi meditations, the work practice—you're bearing witness to your human incarnation in a way that certainly wasn't part of the curriculum in my Ivy League education, I assure you. We did philosophy and science. But this is the education of the heart.

That practice this morning of the big sky, big mind meditation—if it connected for you, which it did for some people—it gives you a sense that you can sit with someone who's in great difficulty and know that they are not their body. You are not your body. You're not your feelings. You're certainly not your thoughts, I hope, given what most of you think. You become trusting of this capacity to witness, to rest in awareness, even with the things our society turns away from.

A story from my dear friend Frank Ostaseski, the founder of Zen Center Hospice, from his book: He writes about having gotten a call from some parents asking, "What do we do? Can you help us? We have a seven-year-old boy who's been very sick with cancer." Frank thought he would go and give them some ways to be with him. The conversation went on a little. It turned out the child had just died at home half an hour ago. "What do we do now? Can you come over?"

Frank went there, and he said, "I'd sat with a lot of people dying, including children over these many years, but I didn't know what would be needed." Part of what's true when we are in the face of the great mystery of life—which is really what we're sitting in the middle of here—is that we can't know ahead of time.

He said, "I went into the house and into this little boy's room, Jamie's room. His parents were sitting there in shock. I went over and leaned down to little Jamie and kissed him on the forehead." They began to weep, because while they had cared for him as he was dying with great love and attention, they hadn't touched their boy since he died. It wasn't fear of his body that kept them. It was the fear of the grief that it would unleash if they touched their son.

Frank told them about the ritual in every ancient culture of washing the body. They prepared this potion with rosemary and sage and lavender and sweet rose petals, warmed it up, and got towels and washcloths. After a few moments, the mother and father began to wash their boy. They started at the back of his head and moved down his back. Sometimes they'd stop and tell a story about their son—"Remember when he fell? Remember this?" At other times it became too much and they would stop and stare out the window and weep. The grief felt enormous. The mother examined and lovingly cared for each little scratch or bruise on her son's body.

When she got to Jamie's toes, she counted them as she had done the day he was born. It was both gut-wrenching and extraordinarily beautiful to watch.

As I sat with them quietly, a beseeching question filled his mother's eyes. *Will I be able to survive? Can I do*

this? Can any mother live with this grief? And I would nod in encouragement for her to continue.

It took a long time for them to wash their son. And what she saved for last, with incredible tenderness, was to turn toward his face and wash his face for the final time. Somehow it was as if she had turned toward the very thing she didn't believe she could bear. And by turning toward it with love, by entering into it, the fierce fire of her heart began to melt the contraction of fear that had taken over her.

He goes on in this story. And of course, I read it and it's so tender and painful—we could weep at the story. And yet it's also our story, because we're human beings. We're born and we're mortal. We have a certain arc of incarnation, and we will die. And within this, with the practice that we have, comes the possibility of opening with courage and tenderness and compassion and mystery.

You sit, and we hear your stories—with your own longing and great love, the beautiful states that come, and also the divorce, the family pain, the loneliness, and the vastness of your own heart and mind. The praise and blame that come to you have come to all people, as have the joy and sorrow.

What you learn is that you can trust awareness itself—that you can trust the heart to hold all that arises. A profound kind of trust grows, a trust in awareness: that it's vast enough and great enough.

When I was in China with Trudy recently, we were teaching at this twelve-hundred-year-old temple. The abbot, who was in his forties—the Shifu—was like a brother. He was a really wonderful man, very interested in how we blend Buddhist psychology and Western psychology, bringing in an understanding of trauma and healing together with the deep practices of compassion and mindfulness. He was open-minded; he wanted to learn.

Part of the difficulty is that the abbots of many of the great temples there—we met several others—are in their forties because the generation before them, all those teachers, were killed in the Cultural Revolution. So they didn't receive the kind of training that generations had had before.

One evening at dusk, we were walking and holding hands, just talking to each other about our teachers. He'd had a wonderful master who is now ninety-one and very old. And his teacher's teacher, Xu Yun, was the most famous Zen master in China in the last hundred years. He died in 1959 at age one hundred and twenty. There are records of his teaching at a retreat like this for a thousand people in Shanghai in 1958 that you can read. Really remarkable.

Then he told me, "I have a little concern."

I said, "What's that?"

He said, "Well, the great master was so extraordinary, and my teacher was, and now it's me."

I held his hand and said, "Yo, I had Ajahn Chah, the wisest person I ever met, and his teacher Ajahn Mun was amazing, and now it's me. And not only that—it's not just me, but it's Spring and Khonda and Celeste.

Is it getting watered down each generation?"

We laughed about it. But we also knew that what was happening, what was being taught, is ever-renewing—that the Dharma itself doesn't get watered down because it's born into us. And when I look at Spring and Khonda and Christiana and others in the new generation, I actually have a great deal of love and trust that it will be carried. And not only that—when they get to be one hundred and twenty years old like Xu Yun, they're really going to be wise. They're on their way.

But it was a very tender moment.

Then he said to me, "So do you still get angry?"

I said, "Yo, dude, I get angry. Frustrated. Afraid. And it's not just me. I've seen some of the great masters get upset. I've watched the Dalai Lama chew people out and Thich Nhat Hanh get really upset. And I went to India and I pissed off Mother Teresa—but that's another story. I'll tell you another time."

And here's the thing. There was this contractor working to redo the house I'd lived in for a long time, and we had to go to Europe, and he was slow. He'd promised to get it done, and I had to be there to finish all these things, and he wouldn't finish. I kept asking—nice guy—but nothing happened.

Finally, only a few weeks before we had to leave, I went over to him and I yelled. I said, "Listen, dude, we have a contract. I'm going to sue your ass, get you in court. You better finish—" blah, blah, blah, swearing at him.

And he looks at me and says, "Oh, you want it done, don't you?"

I realized I had to speak a different language—contractorese. He understood that.

And if I didn't speak that language, it was like, "Oh, nice Buddhist guy. Yeah, I'll get it done whenever." No, no—you get the damn thing done, and soon. And the next day, all of a sudden, all these people showed up working on the house.

I remember after I'd come back from the monastery and I was driving again. I was driving down the freeway in Massachusetts, crowded, and a big semi in front of me lost part of a tire. It smashed into another car, was about to smash into more cars, and I hit the brakes. There was a pileup happening, some pretty high-speed accidents. And I thought, "Okay, I'm going to die." It was really scary. My mind was so calm, because I'd been on retreat like this for months and years, very, very still. I thought, "Oh well, I guess this is the day I'm going to die."

But my hands grabbed the steering wheel, my body filled with adrenaline, wrenched it over to the side, through the grass and so forth. My body did not want to die, and it was not taking it peacefully or lying down. It was really interesting to see that, as Whitman says, "I am large, I contain multitudes."

So he asked me, do I ever get angry? Of course. But here's the thing: that's not who you are. It's not who I

am. Yes, we can release it. Yes, we can learn to work with these energies.

There's a poem from Juan Ramón Jiménez, "Yo no soy yo"—I Am Not I:

I am not I. I am this one walking beside me whom I do not see, whom at times I manage to visit and at other times I forget. The one who remains silent when I talk, the one who forgives sweet when I hate, the one who takes a walk when I'm indoors, the one who will remain standing when I die.

It's a really remarkable poem. It's a poem about soul, or spirit, or something that's greater than all the things we get caught up in during our lives.

And so yes, fear can still arise. I think I'm all chill with everything, and then fear comes anyway. Talking with Ram Dass, he said, "Oh yeah, I flunked the course lots of times." You get to practice with these things. But what you start to recognize is that that's just part of human incarnation—the emotions and the thoughts.

As Khenpo Rinpoche, the great Tibetan elder, writes: "Mind creates both samsara and nirvana, yet there's nothing much to it. It's simply thoughts. Once we recognize that thoughts are empty, the mind will no longer have the power to deceive us."

And so we see it in all these stories that come: you're doing well, you're not doing well, you should be improving, you shouldn't, you're unworthy, you're worthy, you're glorious, you're noble, you're a failure—all those, and everything in between. You start to see that's just the mind doing its thing. And it does it on the pettiest level as you walk around. It has no pride, you know.

Julia Child writes, "In department stores, so much unnecessary kitchen equipment is bought indiscriminately by people who had just come in for men's underwear." You walk by something and it just captures you. You see them and you like it and you hate it—the mind does all this stuff.

But as Trudy talked about in the Four Noble Truths: the principle that there is suffering and loss in life and death, and it's part of the game of being incarnate; that there are causes to human suffering—greed, hatred, ignorance, and the things that come from them: fear, violence, racism, and so forth. And it's not just in us, but in the world. The sufferings of the world are caused by greed. There are millions of hungry children and grain elevators full of food. It's not that we don't have enough food. We have too much greed and not enough love. The world is full of ignorance. The world is full of hatred, along with other kinds of blessings.

But what we're doing here is learning to deal with these primary forces, with the roots of them. This from Karlfried Graf Dürckheim:

"The person who, being really on the way, falls upon hard times in the world will not, as a consequence, turn to those friends who offer them refuge and comfort and encourage their old self to survive. Rather, they will seek out someone who will faithfully and inexorably help them to risk themselves, so that they

may endure the difficulty and pass courageously through it. Only to the extent that a person exposes themself over and over again to annihilation can that which is indestructible be found within them."

In this daring lies dignity and the spirit of true awakening.

So on the days that you have beautiful, glorious, spacious, delightful meditation—hallelujah, that's great. And on the days that you feel like you're falling apart, or you're facing the primary forces of anger or fear or rage—hallelujah to those as well. These too are part of the opening to that which is indestructible in you, and the trust in the body of awareness that can hold it all.

Now some people here—activists, people who have big lives in the world, many people, all of us individually—can be concerned that coming on retreat is somehow a withdrawal from the world, or even that it becomes self-centered. There's the ecological crisis. There's the crisis with immigrants. There's the rising tide of hate and divisiveness. There is world hunger, and there's racism, and there's a spreading tide of weaponry across the world that our country sells a lot of. We sell more weapons than any other country on earth, and then we don't feel safe. There's something a little wrong in that equation. Or even nuclear war.

So how does this relate to that?

In Zen, they say there are only two things: you sit, and you sweep the garden. And it doesn't matter how big the garden is. The garden is the garden of the world. You quiet your mind. You open your heart. You open beyond the body of fear, the small sense of self. And then when you get up, you return to the world in a different way, with a kind of wisdom and courage.

Gandhi did it, as we know, one day a week. It didn't matter that he was dismantling the entire British Empire—hundreds of thousands of people demonstrating or rioting or being killed or being activated. They'd say, "Gandhiji, you must come and help." And he'd say, "I'm sorry, this is Thursday. It's my day off. It's my day of contemplation. I have to stop and quiet myself and listen to what is the best and deepest and most loving and honest response I can make." It was out of that stillness that the depth of his work and transformation happened.

So when you get up from your seat, you become—chosen or not—a bodhisattva. Bodhisattva is a compound word. *Bodhi* means awakened. *Sattva* means being. A being who is committed to the awakening of the world. Because you sit, you quiet the mind, you remember something vast and true. And you also see—as you could feel in the big sky meditation or in the various forms of metta we've done—that it's all your family.

As Thich Nhat Hanh wrote in that famous poem "Call Me By My True Names": "I am the frog swimming happily in the clear water of a pond, and I am the grass snake that silently feeds on the frog. I am the twelve-year-old girl, refugee in a small boat, who throws herself into the ocean after being raped by the sea pirates. And I am the pirate, my heart not yet capable of seeing and loving."

Everybody's heard this poem. But it's not simply poetry on a page. It's a reality. The walls of who we are start to dissolve, and we discover very directly and immediately that we are woven in a single garment of destiny, as Martin Luther King said—that we are part of this network of mutuality.

And then when we understand this, how do we act? The key is intention. If you're committed to your own well-being and the well-being of the world—because it's your world and your family—the key is intention. That intention comes from the heart, as Spring talked about listening to the heart.

There's short-term intention, and you'll notice it even as you sit or walk, that before you move or before you do things, there's always some intention. You can begin to tune into it with mindfulness. But it's especially good when you're in conflict or in difficulty. There you are, about to send a text to somebody who is very upsetting, who is upset with you. And you take that mindful pause and breathe and ask yourself, "What's my best intention?" Then you discover that you want to rewrite it, because your best intention is really to connect, or be loving, or work things out—not just to be right or defend yourself. In your conversations with people, to take that pause and ask, "What's my best intention?" becomes the step-by-step life of a bodhisattva.

Because the heart will answer if you ask. And because you have done the kind of training that we've all shared in here, something in you knows, and you can't lose it. You may think you can lose it, but you actually can't. It's in you.

I think about meeting this guy at the Miami airport when I was on the way to a retreat. He was walking around, and he said, "Jack, is that you?" I said, "Yeah."

He said, "Do you remember me? I sat at that retreat with you in 1978." I sort of remembered him. And he said, "You know, I think I practiced for a while after that, but then my practice kind of fell away, and I thought it was kind of a failure."

"But last year I had a major heart attack and needed surgery. I wasn't sure I was going to survive. There I was getting tested and then rolled on the gurney through the halls of the hospital." He said, "And it all came back. I could be with my breath. I could be with my body. I could be with that space of awareness." He said, "Thank you. It was all in there."

So you're learning something that changes your life. It changes your DNA and the cells of your body—or at least the expression of your genes. It does.

So there is short-term intention, where you can ask your heart and it will answer. And then there is long-term intention.

The most famous example of long-term intention in Buddhist teaching is the bodhisattva vows. In Zen, you sit before every sitting and recite: "Sentient beings are numberless. I vow to save them all." And there are several other vows like that—"Desires are inexhaustible. I vow to end them all"—things like that.

Now, it's a beautiful vow to save all sentient beings. But it's also problematic, as I like to talk about, because you'll notice that the sentient beings you live with and around you don't want to be saved by you. Right? So then you have to think, well, what could this mean if those people around me don't want to be saved by me?

And what it means, if you listen more deeply, is that it is a setting of the compass of the heart, a setting of direction, so that your life and this vow becomes: I vow to bring compassion alive, to bring care to life itself in every moment, in every form I find it, as best I can.

Later on, perhaps on our closing morning, we might do a little bit with these vows, because it's a beautiful thing to do. The Dalai Lama wakes up in the morning and recites this vow from Shantideva: "May I be a bridge, a raft, a boat for those to cross the flood. May I be a resting place for the weary and food for the hungry. May I be medicine for all those who are ill. May I be a lamp in the darkness to illuminate the path for all beings. And may I do so as long as stars and galaxies exist, until all of us are awakened together."

Some little vow like that, right? And what you hear is that it really sets the direction of the heart.

That's the traditional vow. There's also a beautiful contemporary one from my friend, the poet Diane Ackerman, that I love to read or recite. She writes: "In the name of daybreak and the eyelids of morning, and the wayfaring moon and the night when it departs—I swear I will not dishonor my soul with hatred, but offer myself humbly as a guardian of nature, a healer of misery, a messenger of wonder, and an architect of peace."

And because she's a fine poet, she has the language to express something that actually resonates in many, many people's hearts in their own form.

So this is long-term intention. When I was at that White House Buddhist leadership gathering, there were a hundred or so Buddhist leaders. Most of the communities had prison projects, projects with the homeless, disaster relief. They weren't just sitting on their cushions. They sat, and they also swept the garden of the world—like the abbots who wrap the old growth trees in the forests of Thailand and Burma with their fanciest robes and perform an ordination, so that the loggers are afraid to cut down any of the trees in that part of the forest because it's now sacred.

But here's something important about long-term intention—really a secret that you need to know. The secret is that what you get to do is listen deeply for a beautiful intention and then follow that. But you don't get to choose the outcome. The secret is to act beautifully without attachment to the fruits of your action. And that's the place of freedom.

Thomas Merton, the Christian mystic, wrote this passage I've read so many times, to an activist: "Do not depend on the hope of results. You may have to face the fact that your work will be apparently worthless and achieve no result at all—if not, perhaps bring about results opposite to what you expected. As you get used to this, you start more and more to concentrate not on the results, but on the value, the rightness,

and the truth of the work itself."

This is what's given to you as a bodhisattva: to plant seeds in the world, beautiful seeds, that you may not see blossom.

There's a story that I love of a man named A.T. Ariyaratne. Ari, as he's called, is the most celebrated and successful community organizer in Asia. He's been nominated for the Nobel Prize and has received many other honors as well. As a young man, he was a high school teacher at the fanciest prep school in Colombo, the capital, and also a very devoted practitioner.

And he saw the great disparity between wealth and poverty in their country, as we might be noticing in many places.

And so he took his high school class out to one of the poorest villages, the lowest caste, to the extent there is in Sri Lanka—not to go help them, but to go be with them and learn from them. To learn how they lived. To have the villagers tell the kids about their lives, but also to learn how the villagers planted and dug and got their water and did all these things.

He arranged in advance that the villagers would give these kids a big banquet, so that they didn't go in order to give something to the villagers. They went to meet them and learn from them, and they were honored by this banquet. It's a really beautiful kind of reversal of "Oh, we're going to go and help these people." And of course they all fell in love. The kids made a project to help them dig a new well and things like that. But they did it together. They didn't do it because these poor people needed them to help.

And this was the beginning of the Sarvodaya movement, which then spread from village to village until it has now encompassed more than half of the population of the entire nation—building schools, building roads, digging wells. And as Ari says, "We're actually not that interested in building schools and digging wells. What we're interested in is teaching people to love each other. And the schools and the roads are the vehicle to that."

There was a terrible civil war in Sri Lanka until about five years ago. The Norwegians were trying to broker a peace treaty, and in the middle of those negotiations, Ari called all his followers together at the ancient temple of Anuradhapura. And 650,000 people came. This is in a country of 18 million people.

He stood up. And I remember this because I was teaching at an event with the Dalai Lama, and I got to tell this story while teaching with the Dalai Lama sitting there, which made me very happy—because, well, you'll hear.

So Ari got up there and he said, "We're in a time of conflict and war, but if we're wise we have to look for its causes. The foolish look at the results, and those who are wise look at the causes of things. And if we look deeply, the causes of greed and ignorance and hatred go back hundreds of years. They go back 500 years—conflict between Muslims and Hindus and Buddhists. Four hundred years of colonial oppression

from various colonial powers, empires that had taken over Sri Lanka. And 200 years of economic disparity between the rich wet parts and the poor dry parts."

"So it took 500 years to get into this predicament. I would like to offer you the Sarvodaya 500-year peace plan to get us out of it. Five years of ceasefire. Ten years of rebuilding roads and schools. Twenty-five years of learning each other's language and religion. Fifty years of economic development to share the wealth from different parts of the island. And each 100 years we'll get a grand council together and see how we're doing and how to turn it in another way. And I think in 500 years we will be the island of peace that we want to be."

When I heard that story I could almost have wept, because it was the voice of an elder. It was the voice of somebody who says, "It doesn't matter what happens now, and I'm not going to live to see it. And I'm not worried about the latest poll numbers and the focus groups and who's going to get elected and what's happening. I have a vision that we all can follow that is true and wise, and however long it takes, this is the direction we're going to go."

And the Dalai Lama loved it, of course, because of the struggle with Tibet for 50 more years, not being able to go back. It resonated in the way that only can resonate when you understand that you may not be able to fix certain things, but you know what direction you're going.

So this is the work of the bodhisattva. And Thomas Jefferson put it this way: "One person with courage is a majority."

And Ari Ratana was amazing. He's a beautiful gentleman and a sage, but also, he was harboring Muslim activists in his house during the civil war—the Tamil who were part of the group that the central Sri Lankans were at war with. At one point some military came to his door, having heard this, and knocked. His fifteen-year-old daughter answered. They said, "We know you're harboring these people. You must let us in. We're going to take them away."

And she said, "My father has said that if anyone comes to harm them, they have to kill him first. But he's not here. And my mother said if my father cannot do that, then you will have to kill her first. But she's also not here. And I'm here alone with these people. So you will have to kill me before you can come in."

Of course they didn't. And it's one of twenty stories I could tell about Ari. One person with courage is a majority.

I think about that Chinese man with his shopping bags standing in front of the line of tanks—that image we've all seen. Or I think about Wangari Maathai, who won the Nobel Prize in Kenya, who started planting trees but got on the wrong side of the government, which isn't hard to do in this life, and spent some time in prison—which I think is part of the necessary resume to get a Nobel Prize these days. But she ended up with her group planting fifty-one million trees, because she had a vision of what was possible.

But it doesn't have to be huge. Those are magnificent stories. Listen to this one:

"During my first year of teaching, a girl named Shay was assigned to my seventh grade class. She was a desperately unhappy child and rebelled against the most basic rules—stay in your seat, raise your hand to speak. Shay and I battled for control of the classroom. I tried every technique I knew: behavioral contracts, praise, reprimands. None of them worked. I even called Shay's home every week but no one answered. She lived with an older sister. I went to the school counselor who said I'd done my duty and offered to transfer Shay to another classroom. I declined. Shay was my student and I wasn't going to pass her on to someone else. In the faculty lounge, the older teachers patted me on the back, thankful they didn't have Shay in their classroom.

June finally came. On the last day of school, Shay was quick to head out the door. As I sat contemplating my failure with her, she walked back in. 'Oh great,' I thought, 'one last act of terrorism.' In Shay's hand was a small bowl, the kind that students made in ceramics class. She thrust it into my grasp. 'Here,' she said. 'It's the only thing I could think up to give you.' I turned the bowl over and saw Shay's initials etched on the bottom. 'Thanks for trying to like me,' she said. And before I could speak, she turned and left.

After several more years of teaching, I went on to become a school principal and now a district superintendent. Shay's bowl has never left my desk."

So sometimes it's the big grand things. Maybe it's a tree at a time that becomes fifty-one million. But sometimes it's just your presence with another being going through something painful or beautiful that simply needs another person with them to say, "Yes, this is us. This is human beings together."

And so you start to trust. You trust your awareness to hold it all. You trust the spirit of compassion in your heart, that the heart has the capacity to hold it. The great Zen ancestors say that enlightenment or awakening is one with the trusting heart. It's actually the same thing.

The moral arc of the universe may be long, as we've heard, but it bends toward justice. Sometimes it seems way too long. And then here is Gandhi: "Do not be discouraged. When I despair, I remember that all through history, the way of truth and love has always won. Yes, there can be tyrants and murderers, and for a time they seem invincible, but in the end they always fall. Think of it—always."

And it's true both outwardly in that way, and it's also true of the earth itself. A little poem: "When the governments tried to suppress the truth of the Chernobyl nuclear disaster, the wind told the story. It carried the truth across the nations. The wind became a poet, a scientist, and a prophet."

So there is a trust that things will awaken eventually and in their own time, that seeds planted will grow, and that your task isn't to shoulder the whole of the world but to take what you're able—to stretch your arm out to mend or to plant as the bodhisattva. And not to be too loyal to your suffering or the suffering of the world. Consider being loyal to love. I think you'll find it a much more salutary way of living.

When I think about my teachers—Ajahn Chah, Maha Ghosananda, the Dalai Lama, Dipa Ma, this wonderful woman in Calcutta who was a teacher of mine—they knew how to laugh. I think it's called the laughter of the wise. Yes, they could weep, and would easily, for the sorrows of the world. They had great compassion.

But they also had tremendous joy in life and its magnificence, its unbearable beauty.

And the instructions from the Buddha, where he writes: "Live in joy, in love, even among those who hate. Live in joy and health even among the afflicted. Live in joy and peace even among the troubled. Look within, be still. Free from fears and attachments, know the sweet joy of the way."

These are instructions. This isn't some nice poem. It says you can choose this, and it is possible for you.

There's a wonderful book published this last year which records a week-long meeting between Archbishop Tutu and the Dalai Lama. I think it's called *The Book of Joy*. The central question explored was how these two men, who both suffered incalculable difficulties—the Dalai Lama with what has happened to Tibetan culture and people, the destruction, and apartheid in South Africa, the killings and suffering that Tutu lived through—how can they be happy? And they both laugh a lot. They're very joyful.

They talk about it and try to answer the question. As the Dalai Lama says, "So much has been taken from us—my ability to go home, the sacred texts burned, many of our monasteries closed, our culture oppressed in so many ways. So much has been taken. Why should I let them take my happiness?"

Because your depression doesn't actually help the world. It doesn't serve to be depressed.

In a long poem that I won't read but is quite remarkable, called "A Brief for the Defense," I often read these lines: "If we deny our happiness, resist our satisfaction, we lessen the importance of the deprivation of others." To make injustice the only measure of our attention is to praise the devil.

When I've been in refugee camps, the children make these little toys out of old cans from tinned milk with a little bamboo stick in them and roll them around and play games like any child anywhere. It is born in us, that child of the spirit. And to serve the world is not to serve it out of duty, as a grim duty, but to really see its beauty and to be loyal to love.

We didn't do the mudita, loving joy practice. But part of the way it begins—you can even close your eyes for a moment and reflect, you don't have to change your posture, it will just be a minute or two—is to remember that there's a child of the spirit born into every single being.

As you sit quietly, we could work with images of people you care about, but for yourself, let yourself remember your best adventure as a young child. No matter how bad it was in your home or your life, like any child, you had moments of tickling and laughing, rolling in the grass, having an adventure. Let yourself remember one.

May I be joyful. May this child of the spirit born in me be joyful. May my joy and happiness increase. May the causes for joy and happiness grow.

As you do this practice, remember that this is still in you. Picture others—people you know, loved ones, friends—and think of their best adventure as a child, their happiest day. Know that it's still in there. May they too be joyful, and may their joy and happiness increase.

I heard recently of a study—the usual studies—done on little rats, rat pups, at the University of Chicago. I think they were attending the university. It was a study about play, because it turns out that most mammals play. We know this. There's a certain stage where whether it's otters or chimps or bonobos—and the famous ones aside—mice and rats and little creatures play.

What they did in this study was divide a population during a certain period in the aging of these young rats where they like to play and wrestle and squeak and grab one another and roll over. Half of them they let play, and half of them they would interrupt so they couldn't play during that critical period. Afterward, they brought into the cage the collar of a cat that smelled as cats do, and needless to say it freaked out these little rats. They all went into hiding.

The ones who had not played didn't come out. They were too traumatized in some way and never really recovered from even smelling that to come back out. But the rats who had played, who had that in their nervous system, after a while poked their nose out—hmm, I don't see the cat—went back in, came out again, and began to explore and experiment. Because play is really the way that we learn.

So the idea that spiritual practice is a grim duty and you have to kind of fix yourself—good luck. You've tried that. Suffering is the beginning of the story. It's not the end of the story. The end of the story is actually to bring a joyful and beautiful heart to the world.

to stretch out your hand and mend what you can, to touch what is before you.

I remember last year when the first edict came down banning immigrants from those seven predominantly Muslim countries and people were stuck in airports. There was so much confusion and quite a bit of suffering. I went down to the airport with my daughter. She happens to be an asylum attorney. Her work, after she was at Berkeley and became interested first in human rights law and then in this work—her work is basically to help people whose lives are in danger from all around the world to get asylum. She'll have people like a gay man from Uganda who would be stoned to death if he went back. She had a transgender woman from Saudi Arabia who came to Mecca in her mind, which was San Francisco. A different Mecca.

So she went down with a lot of her peeps, these young lawyers. There were more lawyers than there were people in detention. They put up a sign offering free legal advice. And there were fifteen hundred, two thousand people in the international terminal. Part of it was the usual demonstration—chanting and signs and all of that. We were there for a while. And then we went over to one of the immigration doors where

three or four hundred people were chanting, "No ban, no fear, refugees are welcome here."

In the middle of it was a New Orleans jazz band. The people would start chanting and then the drummer would kick in a little background rhythm and the sax player would play a little riff and the trombone would come in. The chant was going and the music was going. The cops were smiling. The airport security was smiling. For a long time it was like this musical celebration. It wasn't a demonstration. It was somehow a celebration of love.

And so you get somebody like Molly Ivins, the great correspondent for the New York Times, Texas political street fighter, liberal, whatever. She wrote, "Keep on fighting for freedom and justice, beloveds, but don't forget to have fun doing it. Be outrageous, rejoice in all the oddities that freedom can produce, and when you get through celebrating the sheer joy of a good fight, be sure to tell those who come after how much fun it was."

There's something artful about it. I think if we're going to change the world, we can't do it as a grim duty. We have to do it out of the power of love. And it's the same in your practice. It can't be a grim duty. As Guillaume Apollinaire wrote, "Now and then it's good to pause in your pursuit of happiness and just be happy."

And then this beautiful instruction for meditation from Laurie Chapman, who writes, "I like nothing more in the world than sitting on my ass doing nothing. And it's not my fault that I have this attitude because I happen to have an amazingly comfortable ass. It may not look like much, but if you could sit on this baby for two minutes, you'd realize that getting up off this ass would be a crime against nature." This is another form of meditation instruction that I think you would do well to take to heart.

And so, whether when you get up from the retreat you plant a garden, or whether you run a conscious business with integrity, whether you raise a healthy child, whether you're a healer or a teacher, an artisan or a business person or a parent—you sit and quiet the mind and know that this is your world that you can hold in your heart. And then when it's time, you get up and you plant these seeds.

I have a little reluctance in giving this talk tonight. I switched with Trudy, who will give a talk probably tomorrow night or so. She's still kind of recovering a little bit, although she'll be here for interviews tomorrow. And the reluctance is that I don't want to give you a talk that turns you too far toward the end of the retreat, because you're still really in the middle of it.

So instead, what I want to say to end is that this is really important, difficult, fruitful, and at times magnificent work that you're doing—to be able to sit at the bedside of the world and the bedside of your own heart and mind and learn how to really be present and open and find a kind of freedom and well-being that will serve you as you take your intentions out to serve the world. It's really valuable and precious, very rare to have this kind of time in your life. You know that well.

So I want to urge you first of all to stay deep in the silence. And the beautiful thing with intention is that as

you sit, in the sitting, you can invite with your attention in these next two days that the meditation deepen. As you sit and start to get quiet, you may say to yourself, "May this stillness deepen." Or as well-being comes in short or longer moments, "May this well-being fill my whole body and the whole sky." Or if moments of happiness or joy come, "May this joy expand. May it open and fill all of this being." You can use the stillness and the steadiness now to invite a deeper level of practice.

What's important is that you remain silent. There are a few people who said, "Oh, we're getting along in the retreat. Maybe I should talk to my friends." Please don't do it. It's not good for you. But more than that, it's not good for the others.

This is precious time. You don't know when you'll be able to come on retreat again. And the world needs you to do this—now here's the guilt trip part, right? It's not just for you. It's for the people you love and the work that you do. To be able to stay with us and truly receive the fruits of practice, because this is the fruitful time now, is critical.

You can invite well-being. It's a beautiful thing—as you get quiet, when you invite well-being or joy, often it will come. Try it.

I'll end with this from Laurie Anderson. She writes:

In the Tibetan map of the world, the world is a circle. And at the center, there's an enormous mountain guarded by four gates. When they draw a map of the world, they draw the map in sand, and it takes them months. And then when the map is finished, they make some prayers and then erase it and throw the sand into the nearest river.

Last fall, the Dalai Lama came to New York to do a two-week ceremony called the Kalachakra, which is a prayer to heal the earth. Woven into these prayers were a series of vows that he asked us to take. And before I knew it, I had taken a vow to be kind for the rest of my life. I walked out of there and thought, for the rest of my life? What have I done? This is a disaster. I was really worried. Had I promised too much? Not enough? I was in a panic.

They had come from Tibet for the ceremony and were walking around Midtown in their new brown shoes. I went up to one of the monks and said, can you come with me to have a cappuccino right now and talk? So we went to this little Italian place. He had never had coffee before, so he kept talking faster and faster. And I kept saying, look, I don't know whether I promised too much or too little. Can you help me please?

He was being really practical. He said, look, don't limit yourself. Don't be so strict. Open it up. He said, the mind is a wild white horse. And when you make a corral for it, make sure it's not too small. And another thing—when your house burns down, just walk away. And another thing—keep your eyes open. And one more thing—keep going, because it's time to find your true home.

So let's sit for a moment.

Remember as well the invitation to sit longer now that you're quiet. Come back after half an hour of walking and sit. If you're awake, sit for more than half an hour. Sit for an hour. Sit up, take a walk, and sit again. Come earlier in the morning and sit. Or if you want it really quiet, go sit in the council house for a time and then come in. Extend your sittings during the day, or do a long walking and then a long sitting.

You're still really in the middle of it, and inviting it to deepen will happen as you stay with it.

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