Joy (Muditā)

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So it's a pleasure to welcome you back after that meditation. A couple of things to say about that practice: for some people it's natural, but for others mudita is actually unfamiliar. They can go to compassion or loving-kindness or a peaceful heart, but joy seems unfamiliar or foreign. It brings up its opposite.

You know, why should I feel joyful? So many terrible things are happening in the world, or to myself. And Mara will come—Mara who tempts the Buddha and attacks the Buddha under the Bodhi tree, saying, "What right do you have to feel this?" And if resistance and difficulty arise, the response is to become curious, to say, "Oh, Mara, what is it that you want to tell me? Are you afraid of joy? What are you afraid of, my friend? Are you judging the joy?" Bring a curious and loving heart, even to the resistance that comes. Even to Mara: may you too be joyful.

Tonight, as usual, I'd like to offer some teachings. They're not so much something for you to remember or take notes on—no exam afterward. They're really a reminder to your heart, to your deeper understanding. And if they touch you in some way or remind you of what's important, beautiful. And if they don't, if they don't seem right in some way, trust that and let them go. Let yourself listen as a meditation and sense what it is that wants to be nourished in yourself.

Here are the instructions from the Buddha speaking of joy. He instructs: Live in joy, in love, even among those who hate. Live in joy, in health, even among the afflicted. Live in joy, in peace, even among the troubled. Look within, be still, quiet the mind, tend the heart. Free from fear and clinging, know the sweet joy of living in the way.

That's a kind of wild instruction—to find joy even among hatred or illness or those who are troubled and in conflict. Let's talk about this.

Last month, when I did the Monday talk, I talked about springtime and tending the garden of the heart, a sense of renewal, and how much we need it because we're still in the middle of the viral pandemic. We're in the middle of the terrible military coup and takeover in Burma and endless wars elsewhere. We're in the middle of the climate crisis and the very deep crisis for racial and economic justice. These are the first noble truths of the Buddha—that there is suffering to be seen and acknowledged. And the noble truth that speaks of the causes: greed, hatred, fear, ignorance. These are the causes of war and racism and climate destruction.

But the beautiful and important thing is that these are not the end of the story. From suffering and greed and hatred and fear, we can also shift our whole identity and find well-being, release, freedom. This is

possible for us and for those around us.

"Oh, nobly born," begin the Buddhist texts. Remember that inner nobility that was born in you, the fundamental dignity that is who you really are.

A poem from William Stafford called "A Story That Could Be True"—Stafford was one of our great poets:

If you were exchanged in the cradle and your real mother died without telling the story, then no one knows your name. And somewhere in the world your father is lost and needs you, but you are far away. He can never find how true you are, how ready. And when the great winds come and the robberies of the rain, you stand in the corner shivering. The people who go by, you wonder at their calm. They miss the whisper that runs any day in your mind: "Who are you really, wanderer?" And the answer you have to give, no matter how dark and cold the world is around you: Maybe I'm a king.

Maybe, if you were exchanged in the cradle—maybe I'm a king.

Or Rumi, who puts it this way: In springtime, it's all right for a beggar to brag that she's a queen today. And this is us.

We practice mindfulness and compassion, and this allows us to see and tend the world accurately and wisely. Mudita, or joy, is a factor of enlightenment. It's necessary for awakening. More than tending the world, it allows us to appreciate the world. Mudita means joy and shared joy—joy with the joy of life itself.

And of course, I think of the exemplars of joy, like the Dalai Lama. There's this remarkable book that many of you have seen called *The Book of Joy*, conversations between the Dalai Lama and Archbishop Desmond Tutu about why they can be so happy after all the suffering they've seen—apartheid and deaths in South Africa, and the suffering in Tibet with the loss of monasteries and the burning of the culture. And they sit there and they laugh.

People go to hear the Dalai Lama. I don't think they go so much for those remarkable but often somewhat inscrutable Tibetan philosophic teachings that he offers. I think people go by the thousands to see somebody who has suffered and gone through so much yet can still have so much joy. They go to hear him laugh.

He and Tutu in this dialogue are teasing one another and playing. At one point, Tutu tries to take the Dalai Lama's hat off and they wrestle. Then the Dalai Lama says, "Hey, we're supposed to be holy men. The cameras are on—stop that!"

They talk about what's going to happen when they die. The Dalai Lama says, "I suppose when you die, you go to heaven." And Tutu asks, "Well, where are you going to go?" "Maybe hell," says the Dalai Lama. "I thought you were supposed to be reborn," said Tutu. The Dalai Lama replied, "Well, it's not certain. I better be nice to the Chinese, because they're going to pick my next incarnation."

You see them bantering in the midst of all the things they've been through. There is somehow this delight that they carry, one that lights up the room.

But it's not just them. I've been hanging out with my two-and-a-half-year-old grandson. Nini—that's Trudy, my beloved—and I go to visit him. I'm Baba Jack. Nini and Baba Jack come, and I've been bringing balloons, which he likes a lot. I have a whole big pouch of different sizes and colors, ones with strings on them. He will say in his little cute two-year-old voice, "Baba Jack, blow up balloon! Blow up! Blow it up!" So I pick a balloon. "What color?" "Oh, red!" I put it to my mouth and he's watching me, and I start to blow—and his eyes get big and his cheeks puff out. As he watches, it's as if he's trying to blow the balloon at the same time. It gets bigger and bigger and his eyes get bigger and bigger. Then he will say when it's all blown up, "Now fly it!" And I have to let go and let it fly up in the air. Or, "Now, Baba Jack, now pop it!" He gets very excited when the balloon pops. "Now do another one!"

It's just so amazing to see how simple the light can be for a child. This is that child of the spirit that was born into each of us.

Mudita, as part of the Brahma Viharas, as part of the awakened heart, is our capacity to find joy, to feel delight and happiness, rapture, well-being, pleasure. In Thai, it's called *jai pong sai*, which means a lightness of heart.

Why is it a factor of enlightenment, a necessary element in awakening? Because joy arises with the freedom to step beyond the small and separate sense of self. The enemies to mudita are jealousy—"Do I have as much joy as someone else?"—or comparing, or feeling guilty that I shouldn't feel joy, as if there's not enough joy to go around.

As one of the divine abodes, the abodes of the gods, the quality of joy invites us to openness, to wonder, to mystery. It's said in the mythology that after the Buddha's enlightenment, he shifted away some paces from that great Bodhi tree—you can still go find its granddaughter, this huge tree in the temple in Bodh Gaya, the granddaughter of his tree of awakening, with the giant tree and temple there where you can sit under it. He moved away from his seat under the tree, and for seven days he contemplated the tree with gratitude, simply enjoying the fact that there he was, free now and awake. The tree had held him and cared for him, and how joyful his heart was.

After that, he got up, and for forty-five years he wandered the dusty roads of India, offering the teachings of well-being and freedom of heart and joy wherever he went.

This is how it happens. You find joy, and then you find yourself opening for forty-five years. Or there's Rumi, who wandered around, and his poems are called the *Divan*, the ocean of poetry—one hundred thousand poems. He didn't write them down. Some of his students were there with him, writing them as he wandered in joy, like the Buddha spreading it across the dusty roads from Afghanistan to Turkey, across the Middle East. Dancing lyrics, joyful spirit, profound peace.

Mudita invites us to open a channel to joy and delight and creativity. Joy arises, like the Buddha sitting under the Bodhi tree, from following the heart's silent source. When we get still, as we did in the meditation, and the mind quiets and the heart opens, we remember: live in joy, even among the troubled. Out of that stillness, there is a silent source of something beautiful that wants to come through every one of us—a tending of the garden, a tending of one another.

As the composer Puccini said, "I've done nothing. I've simply written down what I heard from the gods." Mozart expressed the same understanding—he didn't compose things so much as get quiet, hear the symphony, and write it down as quickly as he could.

Joy arises from following the heart's silent source. And it's uplifting. Whenever we stay connected to our deepest love and our joy arises—whether it's in parenting or building or teaching or healing or making a conscious business or tending the world—when we get quiet and listen more deeply, that innate joy is there within us. The possibility of having a joyful heart is present in every moment.

And it's possible to see joy everywhere. The world in joy. Yes, it has its troubles. Yes, it has its ocean of tears. But it also has unbearable beauty and mystery. As Walt Whitman writes, "A mouse is miracle enough to stagger sextillions of infidels." Just the existence of a being like a little mouse—with its tail and ears and eyes—where does this all come from?

Wrens and warblers. There are all these birds around my house now in spring. We're living on a lagoon as part of the San Francisco Bay, and it's filled with pelicans and Canadian geese and all kinds of birds and ducks. And then I look, and if you look everywhere, there's this amazing life happening. I was hiking up the hills behind Spirit Rock and suddenly saw this bright red bug I'd never seen before in thirty years of hiking in those hills. It was tracking its way across the path, and then there was another one following. I thought, wow, they have their own community, their own life, and I don't even know about it. There are one million different species of beetles—bright beetles and luminous beetles. Of course we might be concerned about climate change and what's happening to the beetles, but to understand it, we first have to see the mystery of them all.

"When the eyes and ears are open, the leaves on the trees become like pages in the holy books," the Sufis say. And in Zen, it's said, "When the temple bell stops, the sound keeps coming out of the flowers." This is mysterious.

If I take my little grandson out to see something marvelous—the ocean or the Grand Canyon—he's as likely to look down and pick up a little red pebble and say, "Baba Jack, look at this amazing pebble!" And there's the Grand Canyon or the ocean behind him. Because everything is amazing to him.

"Oh nobly born," say the Buddhist texts, "remember who you really are, the child of the spirit." Oh nobly born, the one who has the potential to live with an awakened and joyful heart no matter what.

As the mystic Thomas Merton writes, "Life is simple. We're living in a world that is absolutely transparent,

and the divine is shining through it all the time. This is not just a fable or a nice story. It is true."

So you ask, where can I find enlightenment? In the Himalayas? In some great temple in Thailand or Japan? And the poet Kabir says, "It is nearer than near."

You know the stories of the astronauts who return from traveling around the Earth or even to the moon—sometimes with considerable danger, unsure whether they'll make it back. When they land, especially those who land back on the Earth, one of the first gestures some of them make is to kneel down and kiss this earth. Because when you're far away up there, circling the Earth in your spacecraft or circling the moon, you see that blue globe that has everything on it. Everything that matters—all the people and art and history and love and community and conflict and beauty and tragedy. Everything that makes the great novels. All of humanity. The sequoia trees and the whales and the polar bears, the noteworthy species and the millions of beetles and insects and worms in the fields, the smell of spring and the coldness of winter. They look and they say, "Oh, I want to go home." They kiss the earth. It's such a miracle to be here.

So awakening is really a shift of perception—to see this with a joyful heart.

Here's Rumi again: "Do not sit long with sadness, my friends. When you go to a garden, do you look at thorns or flowers? Spend more time with roses and jasmine." Yes, there are thorns in this world. Yes, the garden needs to be tended. But do you look at thorns or flowers? Spend more time with roses and jasmine. This is that amazing shift of perception—to see the mystery where you are, where we are.

I remember hearing about a university class in sensory awareness. When it came to exam time, after people had been learning to pay careful attention to their body, to other people, to the circumstances around them, here was the final exam.

You know, there were forty students in a room and a big basket of oranges. Each student was invited to take an orange and sit down and write for twenty minutes what they observed about it—the stippled color and the little dimple here, how it ended, whether it was completely round or had a flat side, what it smelled like, what it felt like under their fingers. All the things that, if you took your time to live with an orange, you could see. And because they'd been training, they really looked, and they wrote.

But that wasn't the conclusion of the exam. That was only half of it.

The second part: the oranges were collected and placed in a big bowl, mixed up, and then set out around that bowl on the counter. You had to go up and find your orange and see how long it took. It wasn't a race, but an invitation. And as the story was told to me, when people found their orange—which they did, because they'd looked so closely—it was almost like, "Oh, I found my orange! I found my friend." There's something joyful about being present for every small thing in life as it presents itself.

André Gide says, "Know that joy is rare, and more difficult and more important than sadness. And once

you make this discovery, you must embrace joy as a moral obligation."

Your attention, your care, your mindfulness—all these things we've been teaching over the years—is an invitation to this factor of enlightenment. Tutu, the Dalai Lama, whoever you think of: a joyful heart. Those who are awakened.

But what about the ocean of tears? What about the First Noble Truth?

I was sitting at a very small retreat for teachers some years ago with Thich Nhat Hanh, and I may have told this story in recent months. As he was teaching, he talked about smiling, putting a little Buddhist half-smile on your face. I felt a tremendous sadness, a kind of grief, even though I was trying to smile as he spoke of the half-smile.

Then we sat down and had lunch, just a small handful of us. I was confused. I said to him, "Thầy"—the word for teacher, respectfully—"I was in there and you said for us to smile, but I felt this great grief. I don't know if it was my sadness or yours."

He looked at me for a time, gazed at me, and then shook his head. He said, "I've seen so much suffering." I'm sure he was referring, among other things, to all the work he did in the School for Social Services that he created with young people during the Vietnam War—how half the young people who came to follow him and be with him and do this beautiful peacemaking in the middle of war, how half of them were killed. If you can imagine bringing young people together and then having them killed.

And he said, "I've seen so much suffering. I have to teach joy."

Here's a poem I find magnificent, though it's tough also, demanding. It's by Jack Gilbert, one of our great poetic masters who died in recent years. Listen to it:

Sorrow everywhere. Slaughter everywhere. If babies are not starving someplace, they're starving somewhere else, with flies in their nostrils. But we enjoy our lives because that's what the gods want as well. Otherwise the mornings before summer dawn would not be made so fine. The Bengal tiger would not be fashioned orange and black so miraculously well. The poor women at the fountain are laughing together between the suffering they've known and the awfulness in their future, smiling and laughing while somebody in the village is very sick. If we deny our happiness, resist our satisfaction, we lessen the importance of their deprivation. We must risk delight. We can do without pleasure seeking, but not delight, not enjoyment. We must have the stubbornness to accept our gladness in the ruthless furnace of this world. To make injustice the only measure of our attention is to praise the devil. If the locomotive of the Lord runs us down, we should give thanks that the end had magnitude. We must admit that there will be music despite everything.

If we deny our happiness, resist our satisfaction, we lessen the importance of their deprivation. We must have the stubbornness to accept our gladness in the ruthless furnace of this world. To make injustice the only measure of our attention is to praise the devil.

It's a really powerful statement and a call to the heart—to live like Tutu and the Dalai Lama and those great joyful beings, the exemplars of what's possible.

This is the child of the spirit that was born in each of you, as we touched in that opening meditation. Every being—oh nobly born—is born with an innocence, and the child of the spirit can see with eyes of joy.

In the story, the archetypal history of the Buddha, as he was seeking enlightenment, struggling and fasting and doing all kinds of ascetic practices that got him nowhere in the long run—just skinnier and more weary of fighting against himself—he sat one day against a tree quietly, and all of a sudden a memory arose in him, an insight. One of the most important insights, actually part of the opening of enlightenment for him.

He remembered being in his father's garden, in his father's field, during the spring plowing festival. His father being a local king, there he was, seated under a rose apple tree, watching the festivities and the beginning of the planting of seeds, the plowing of the fields. And as he did, a huge contentment came over him. As he closed his eyes, he felt this innate joy as a child, this wonder and well-being, and his mind became silent and absorbed in joy and peace.

The Buddha remembered this.

He thought, "I've been doing the wrong thing. I've been fighting against myself. I forgot that joy and well-being is in me already, is my birthright." And this was the realization of what he later—shortly later, in the next step of his enlightenment—called the middle path: to let go of fighting against the world on one side and to let go of grasping on the other, but to be present with that deep stillness and innocence and presence of a child.

Let yourself reflect for a moment on those magic moments of your own childhood, what that was like when the world was new, when morning has broken like the first morning, to quote that Cat Stevens passage, or maybe it's a biblical passage. Remember it, because it's in you.

When I remember the day that I got let out of the hospital, I was eight years old and I'd had polio and was paralyzed and couldn't walk. And somehow, miraculously, the paralysis lifted. I was looking out of the window of my hospital room, quite scared because of all these doctors and priests and everybody who came to visit me, and the spinal taps with this horse needle, and just all kinds of terrible things. I just wanted to be able to walk again. I saw this green patch of grass out my window, and then my movement came back. I was no longer paralyzed. I got home and I ran to the park next to our house and I tumbled over and over and I put my face in the grass and I just became so happy.

What were your magic moments? They were there. They had to be. No matter what you went through, the child of the spirit is indomitable. It's innate. It's who you are.

So there's a longing in everyone for this beauty, this joy, this love, and it changes everything when we tune

into it.

There was a remarkable experiment, if you will, done in London some years ago in a neighborhood that was poor and rundown, where there was a lot of crime. And of course, as you can imagine, sadly, that was the result as well of economic injustice and racism and all these kinds of things that are striking children who are born in that neighborhood who are innocent, like every child saying, "Why is this happening?" Why don't we tend those children? We ask ourselves, that's what's needed now—that every child be born and that spirit in them be honored.

But in this strange kind of social experiment or study, two parallel streets, boulevards, about eight blocks apart, high crime, great poverty—the crime comes because there's nothing. On one of these streets, they fixed the street lights and added more to them. They freshly painted the lines on the street. They swept the street. They sent street sweepers and cleaners once a week. They repainted things. They repotted the plants that were supposed to be along the street, and they made it more beautiful. They did nothing else.

The neighborhood was the same. The oppression was the same, enough to break your heart. The economic injustice, the racism, all there. But something remarkable happened. The level of crime on the street that was made beautiful dropped by half. And I would think that it's because beauty reminded people that they could care about themselves and one another even in the suffering. Whether they knew it or not—nothing was told to anybody, it just was done—there's a longing, even unconsciously, to live with beauty.

It turns out that beauty comes alive, joy comes alive when it's shared. That's why mudita is called shared joy.

I remember when my daughter was young, when the Golden Gate Bridge still took tolls before there were the automatic electronic fast track. One of our favorite things was we'd go over the Golden Gate Bridge regularly, and she said, "Daddy, pay for the car behind us." You remember when that was fashionable? So I'd go to the toll booth and I'd give my whatever it was, five, six dollars, and I'd say, "Oh, here, here's for the car behind us." Then we'd go through and she'd say, "Go slow, daddy." So I wouldn't speed up a lot, and she'd watch the next car go through and the smile on the driver's face. They'd be told, "Oh, the car in front of you paid for you." Sometimes she would wave at them or they'd wave at us. And it brought so much joy, that simple action.

You know, recently in Texas, there was that huge storm that put out the electricity and power and travel for that ice storm and cold storm for almost a week or longer.

And in Plano, Texas, there was a restaurant called Bella Italiano run by Ari and Benere Isufash. I think he was from Kosovo, but it was an Italian restaurant—perhaps some kindred spirit connecting Kosovo and Italy. People were hungry and cold. They couldn't cook, couldn't heat themselves. And what they did at this restaurant, at Bella Italiano, was say, "Come and get food for free." They served hundreds of meals—huge pots of spaghetti sauce and spaghetti, huge trays of lasagna. They said, "People are hungry,

they can't cook food, come and eat." And you can imagine, it wasn't just the joy of those families and those children, by the hundreds. It illuminated the whole community.

When we're still and let go of our fears and self-absorption, our plans and our tears, when our heart becomes peaceful in the mystery, then our actions and responses become joyful and virtuous. Like a lovely flower, said the Buddha, bright but scentless, are the fine but empty words of one who does not mean what they say. But like a bright and fragrant flower, the fine and truthful words are like perfume that rises to the gods. There's something so beautiful in caring for one another, in the shared joy and in the integrity of taking care of one another. And that's in you from the beginning.

Albert Camus says a person's life is a slow trek to reclaim those moments in their childhood when their heart first opened. I think at best, meditation is exactly that. It's an invitation to quiet the mind, to come back to a place of inner well-being or peace or wholeness in the midst of things, to have the loving awareness—the mindful, loving awareness—big enough to hold the ocean of tears and the unbearable beauty. And then to come to rest in this mystery of human incarnation.

This longing for beauty is there in everyone, irrespective of caste or race or creed or level in society, wherever you are. You can be in prison and it's still there. Oh nobly born, this is your true nature, and the heart shines.

About a week or so ago, I was part of a celebration event and conversation that I helped to foster for an organization called Combatants for Peace. It was comprised of former combatants from Palestine and Israel. In our group where so many people came to watch was Tully, who'd been an Israeli commando and commandant who had a whole battalion under him, and Osama, who'd been a Palestinian freedom fighter. All of them had seen battles where people were killed, had participated in it. And somehow they'd come to the place where we cannot keep killing children. We cannot kill one another on a land that we both live upon and revere. And you could feel the dignity, the moral authority they had to say, "Yes, we have seen this, we have participated, and we will no longer do so." It was really inspiring because it was their nobility shining.

In Japan, there is an art called kintsugi. And you may have heard of it. Kintsugi is the art of taking something that's broken—initially it might have been a beautiful tea cup or tea bowl or teapot, some piece of ceramic, though it can be other things—and if it falls and breaks, instead of throwing it away, lovingly putting it back together with gold filling in the cracks. The gold filling in the cracks shows that as it's all put back together, it has a new kind of wholeness. And as Leonard Cohen said, the cracks are where the light comes in.

In a book by Chris Cleave called *Little Bee*, he talks about kintsugi—not just as the Japanese craft for cups, but of course for us. "I ask you right here, please, to agree with me that a scar is never ugly. That is what the scar makers want us to think. But you and I, we must make an agreement to defy them. We must see all scars as beauty, okay? This will be our secret." Because he'd been through a lot in his life. He says,

"Because take it from me, a scar does not form on the dying. A scar means I survived." And you can feel the life force in that poem and the meaning. Growing strong in the broken places is the simple way of saying it. The nobility of the heart, no matter what we've been through.

A couple more stories to tell you as we wend our way toward the end of this teaching. This is from one of my favorite books ever, called *How Can I Help?* by Ram Dass and Paul Gorman, full of gorgeous stories of service and love. It's about a nun who some years ago had volunteered as a Maryknoll sister to go and be a teacher in Peru, to go to some villages and towns where there weren't many teachers, to serve as a teacher for children because she'd taken vows as a sister to serve the world. But it was a very high village, at 13,500 feet. She said, "And then the illness happened."

Rheumatoid arthritis came, and more and more it began to cripple her hands and cripple her knees. The doctor said it was partly because of the altitude and that there was nothing to do about it. She went to see more doctors in Peru and Panama, and gradually it became clear that she needed to come back to the States for treatment.

She got good care. The doctors helped her somewhat, but it was quite clear that she couldn't go back high up in the mountains. She wanted to go back. She wept. She struggled. Self-pity, anger, discouragement, doubt. She wouldn't give up. Every day it seemed like she was losing. She had surgery at the Mayo Clinic. She did a great deal of prayer.

And then one day she realized: I can't go there as I had. I had to use my crippled hands in a different way. Maybe these crippled hands, these broken and cracked hands, could become sacred. They would be the compassionate hands of Jesus as much as the hands of the doctors and nurses that tended me.

So she went back and returned to Peru at a much lower altitude. Almost everything had changed. Most importantly, her attitude toward the people she was working with. She could feel their terrible poverty and pain in a whole new way from what she'd been through. In fact, it seemed she was seeing it for the first time. She wasn't there as a kind of white savior, a colonialist nun-teacher. She could really feel their poverty, how she'd rushed around trying to save people's problems, solve them without really seeing them—not seeing the pain in their faces, the insecure eyes, the nervous hands, all the expressions of struggle and beauty in their lives. It was only when suffering had actually touched her that she began to feel their conditions.

They said to her, "You're the same person you were before, but somehow you've changed." And her ministry changed. It became the ministry of walking together. She became more sensitive and maybe humble.

So then she started to work with what was around her. She began to work with those who were handicapped—but in Peru, handicapped children were hidden away. They were seen in some way as a reflection of their parents who might have done something bad or wrong. They were hidden.

She thinks of Juan, a polio victim at three who'd been hidden by his family in their small mud-brick house until they discovered him at age eight. His brother Julio took them home to see him one day. There was Juan, his twisted legs underneath him, scooting around a small dirt patio on a circular piece of rubber. His mother was suspicious and didn't want them to stay. A handicapped child meant she was being punished for something. She was ashamed.

And in this, you can feel the pain of every disabled person who's judged by others—how much sorrow that brings, and how unnecessary, to not look in their eyes and see them.

So they returned on several occasions to visit Juan. One time they found him all alone. His family, with the rest of the town, had gone to a religious procession. Of course, he'd never seen one. So they borrowed a bicycle, put Juan on it, and joined in the procession itself. It was his first time outside the house, the first time he'd looked at people from a level higher than the ground, his first procession. His parents were momentarily annoyed, but their attitude changed gradually.

And when they thought it right to raise the idea, they asked at the next town meeting if they could raise money to send Juan to Lima for physical therapy. Everyone liked the idea, and Juan went off to the big city. He had a long, hard struggle with much pain and effort, but one day he returned to the village. He was using braces and a cane. It was very hard for him to do, but as he began to walk down the streets to his home, people came out of their homes. They appeared from all over. They were cheering and clapping and followed him all the way home. It was so wonderful. It was Juan's second procession.

It's never too late to be joyful, to take even that which is pained and broken—like kintsugi—and say, let's let something more beautiful shine through it in our life, in our hearts.

And there was a woman in the group—Deborah was teaching meditation, compassion, and mindfulness—who'd had terrible trauma in her childhood, grown up in circumstances where there was addiction, people in and out of prison, other kinds of abuse. Somehow she survived it, got herself out of it, and managed to get herself through high school. But she became bitter.

And then she decided, "I have to change this world." She went from high school to community college and became an activist. She said, "I became a radical—radical for justice, radical for women, radical for those who'd been traumatized. I was a revolutionary." She became a mother with a couple of young children, and she was a revolutionary for parents, a radical fighting for all the things that mattered.

But she was also exhausted when she came to that retreat, to that group and those teachings. After some weeks of practicing mindful, loving awareness, of coming back home to herself, when people were asked in that circle what they were learning when they got quiet—what happened when they practiced compassion toward themselves and others, what happened when they tended their heart, when they looked at who they are and who they wanted to be—she raised her hand.

"I've been a radical," she said. "I got out of the worst circumstances. I got myself an education. I worked for

the rights of women and the disabled. I worked for the rights of those who are poor, for children. I was a revolutionary and a radical." She paused. "And now—now I'm going to do something really radical. I'm going to let myself be happy."

After all that fight and struggle, letting herself get quiet and practice as you have, as we did tonight, she touched that deep stream the Buddha invites us into. Live in joy and love and peace, even amidst the trouble and turmoil. Live in the sweet joy of your own heart, the sweet joy of the way.

What would it be like for you to be joyful? To be really radical in your life, to own your joy? When you go into refugee camps, if you go depressed, it doesn't help those people you work with or support or care for or stand as an ally with. It's radical to be joyful. And joy doesn't mean we don't tend to the world. In fact, it allows us to show up with an open heart and be in solidarity, to stand up with others. It's called shared joy—for justice, racial justice, economic justice. Stand up for the earth. Stand up for the innocence and beauty of every child, for the dignity of every adult.

Think of a person who's the most cheerful and good-hearted you know. You could be like them. You could be.

When the great environmentalist and poet Gary Snyder was asked about climate change—remember, fifty years ago he won the Pulitzer Prize for *Turtle Island*. He was one of the prescient early voices for bioregionalism and caring for the climate. Someone said, "Gary, the world is falling apart. The oceans are rising. The temperature is getting hotter. The storms are getting bigger. There's so much we haven't learned to stop. What do we do? What advice do you have? You've been doing this for fifty years and you're a Zen elder as well. Tell us, please—how do we do this?"

Gary looked back and said simply, "Don't feel guilty. If you feel guilty, it's not a healthy way to operate. Don't do it out of guilt. Don't do it out of anger. Don't do it out of fear. Those are the very energies—fear and anger and guilt—that have caused the problems between humans. If you're going to save the earth, if you're going to care for it, do it because you love it." Let that be the force—love and joy.

One last poem for you, called "Camas Lilies":

Consider the lilies of the field, the blue banks of camas opening into acres of sky along the road, with the longing to lie down and be washed by that beauty. Of bathing—if you knew their usefulness, how the natives ground their bulbs for flour, how the settlers' hogs uprooted them, grunting in gleeful oblivion as the flowers fell.

And you—what of your rushed and useful life? Imagine setting it all down: papers, plans, appointments, everything. Leaving only a note: "Gone to the fields to be lovely. Be back when I'm through blooming."

Even now, unneeded and uneaten, the camas lilies gaze out above the grass from their tender blue eyes.

Even in sleep, your life will shine. Make no mistake, of course your work will always matter. Yet Solomon

in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these.

So let's sit together. And we sit in the tenderness of joy, the sweet tenderness of joy of this mysterious life.

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