Tonight I'm going to continue with this series that somehow began so many weeks ago now. I started by giving an evening talking about mindfulness. And that led to an evening about mindfulness practice in India that mindfulness practice is different and broader than just like mindfulness is it's a mental factor. And that led to discussion about concentration, since the partner of mindfulness is concentration, and the Buddhist path very much involves that partnership or those two. And that'll lead to a second night talking about concentration because he couldn't do it just in one night. And, and then, there was a night talking about insight, because the fruit of mindfulness and concentration is in sight, insight meditation center. And that was last week. And the insight, the fruit of insight is liberation. So, kind of ends up kind of like a series building on itself as we went along. And this evening's talk will then be about liberation and freedom. The you know, Buddhism is not unique in trying to address some of the fundamental existential issues that human beings face. And in some ways all religions try to address them. And you don't have to investigate life or be sensitive to life very much to realize that human beings if they're going to be awake or Pay attention to what's going on and get through life. It's sooner or later most people will have to address the issues of the fridge empty with the fragility of life, that life is actually quite fragile. Our own life is quite fragile. It's amazingly so biologically, it's fragile, you know, we get sickness, old age and death will come soon enough, everybody and the, but also our, our, our identity, psychological identity of who we think we are. Something is shifting all the time. And oftentimes, who we are is shifts faster than our identity. So we might think we are something and then things change, and so on. How do we keep up There's the freight for agility of our social life that can change very quickly, overnight. The minute the second, I've known people whose lives Something happened very dramatically, very suddenly just over in a few minutes or a minute or a second, and they knew their life was gonna be changed forever from that moment. Settlement better. Nick was kind of crinkling wasn't so so Buddhism is, like, you know, other religions and ways of life are is trying to address some of the fundamental issues that we have. And there's many ways of looking at these
issues and understanding them and also many ways of understanding the solution to so called
solutions to them many different attempts, some very creative in the history of humankind. so
amazingly creative ways of trying to solve the issues of suffering. One of the creative ones, has been
the attempts to put it off the solution to suffering or solutions to some of the problems of the being until
the next life after like, after we die, somehow there's, you know, there'll be a heaven we'll go to or
something. And it's been pointed out that people who for whom there's intolerable oppression and
suffering in this lifetime, and they see no hope, when he changed in this lifetime here, will sometimes
come up with religious solutions. With a solution to the life is in the future life, in next life in heaven or
something, because they don't see anything's possible here and they need some kind of hope,
something to live for. So they put all their hope into the future. There's also, you know, the solutions
that people have when they try to route their what they try to do is to kind of fix the world. If only the
world can be a better place, then it'll take care of everything. And so there's all kinds of approaches
people take. There's one very wealthy businessman here in Silicon Valley, who the rumor goes is he's
afraid of death. And he's putting some of his money, love his money into long life research. That's one
solution. You know, doing you don't deal with death by not dying. So that's, that's helpful. So that the
story one of the stories that Buddhists like to tell themselves one of the ways of understanding
religions is religions are constantly around stories and narratives. And so Buddhism has its story
stories that he tells, and so much of Buddhism kind of orient itself or comes out of the story that
Buddhists tell each other. So, the one of the one of the core stories of Buddhism is a story of the
Buddha or siddartha, before he was Buddha, living as a prince in the palace. Actually, he is supposed
to have three palaces for each of the three seasons in northern India. And he could travel to different
palaces, so you could just have the ideal season all year round. The hot season went higher up in the
Himalayas. In the cold season, he came down again and his father wanted to protect them from the
sufferings of life, because the father was afraid that his sons saw what life was really like the suffering
of life, that siddartha would leave the family business and would not come become a king and will
often become something else was life. So we stayed quite protected. And some people who grew up
grown up in the suburbs in the United States, can also live very protected lives. I was one of those. in
the suburbs where I grew up in Los Angeles. I never encountered death. And it wasn't until I was 11.
And I went to Nepal, with my parents, that I saw a first dead person because they were carrying the
dead person on the street, to the crematorium who's carrying infrastructure and I've never seen a
dead person who I came back to Los Angeles and didn't see a dead person until I was a freshman in
college. And then only thought because my art teacher took us through the anatomy lab in order to
draw a cadaver. So, you know, I was living in my own kind of protected environment from certain
aspects of life. So the Buddha live is protected life. And at some point in his, he decided to jump the
wall, and he left the palace with his attendant on a chariot, chariot here. And they went through town
and the first thing they encountered was someone who was old and they would see siddartha passed
material here. What is that? What is that I was in office many years ago and I was walking down the
side street from because University Avenue and there was this amazing building that seemed kind of
out of context for what I've ever seen ever seen before in Palo Alto. It looked kind of like a palace law
kind of clickz something. What is that? It was a plastic surgery center. I never seen that. So Buddha
saw old age, you know, so I guess it's an old person. And so you What's that? And, and the charioteer,
so that's an old person. And it's the nature of everybody to get old. That's kind of a shock for the Buddha. Me too. So then they go out another day, and the next day they encounter a sick person and the same exchange happens and charter says as a sick person to nature everyone to get sick sooner or later another shock for siddartha. And then he goes out third time and he sees a corpse. And what is that? And the theory suggests a corpse, it's the nature of everyone to die. That's the third shock of the Buddha, somehow being shocked by right by reality, hadn't watched enough television. We didn't know about death. And so then he goes on a fourth time. And the fourth time, he sees a renunciant. If you go to India to this day, walk around and you'll find many different ground students with different stripes different kinds, but it's a fairly common part of the landscape in India, assuming nonsense. Maybe not so uncommon some places in our culture here we see people also non students. In fact, around the corner from where I live, there's a house with nuns, Catholic nuns. And so every once you see these nuns with their ba testaments walking down my street, say hello very nice. And it's very nice to see them funny inspired by them. Very nice manner about the missing nice, hello very nicely to a great I love having these people in my, my block. But in India, so the Buddha saw permanency. And what is that? It's your curiosity or so to Oh, that's renunciant as someone who has left the household life and is seeking truth, speaking, spiritual truth, speaking, seeking liberation. And the way the story of stories often told, there was something about the demeanor of this renunciant that grabbed the Buddha. Somehow he had a horror of peace and presence. composure they never seen before. And this perhaps was the fourth shock. But the first three shocks are called, is 44, called the four heavenly messengers. And one part of the legends lore of Buddhism, is that some kind of gods and heavenly realms song, no, this was not a good scene to have this young man protected. So they manifested these three images, so you know, just the right time. So, heavenly messengers, divine messengers. It's kind of a nice story, because all of us, sooner or later, will encounter something like sickness, old age and death will encounter some form or the fragility of life in all these different forms. And we can be horrified by it. distressed by it. Or we could see it as a heavenly messengers, divine messengers, as messengers that come to us with certain kind of offering certain kind of lesson and you don't want to say that to someone Right at the moment of crisis, perhaps in our life, oh, that's the messenger. But at other times, it might actually be, you know, something very profoundly maturing and insignificant to actually orient ourselves to see these situations as the opportunities they offer as lessons they offer, or as a wake up call for certain kinds of wake up to this life of ours to not be complacent. And being willing to step out of the palace. That's what the Buddha did, he left the palace, he saw them the renunciant and then decided himself to go off and become renunciant and seek kind of some kind of solution to the suffering that he encountered in the world. So the story we brought with us was tell each other it's a challenge also to each of us to consider what are the palaces we live in? Who will protect where we are protected from this Life, you know the existential life and protected from life. And I think every every human being is something often is protected from something. But it's often pointed out that in our amazingly affluent culture, where not everyone is affluent, the it's very easy to be blinded to what's going on beyond the walls of our communities. And to be surprised by it, to counter it or to know about it and not feel like it's anything to do with me. So to live in our own palaces, protected palaces would have to encounter and deal with what's happening in this world to really see this world as it actually is. So is there a palace that you're living in some way that something that some
blinders that we’re living in really facing your life addressing your life as it really is? is some for some people, their palace is work They hide the work that you do and do and do it work work work or the people hide in entertainment some people hide in relationships you’re supposed to get the right relation to have relationship always get busy talking enough to really see what’s going on. So in telling the story, Buddhists are kind also challenging themselves. What is it? What are the palace you’re living in? They’d be helpful to step out of. And the odd thing about that are they’re very strange thing about that is the palace is a comfortable place. So what is the comfortable place you're in? That you're hiding in? What's a comfortable place to be willing to step out of? Why in the world, would you Why would you leave a comfortable place? That's part of the question in the story. Why would you leave some places comfortable? Isn't it isn't about being peaceful. Peaceful accepting at ease with how things are. Everything's perfect 52 inch television to me, were just perfect. Yes, I can accept this. But to step out of our comfort, is that required sometimes. And I would suggest that the story that Buddhists tell each other is pointing to the fact that yes, it is necessary if what you want is freedom and liberation. At some point we have to step out of place we’re comfortable. So the Buddha did that. He left the palace and went into renunciant life. And one of the striking things for me about the boiler going off into renunciant life he went into a lot Life a practice of exploration of discovery, that he had no map, he had no guidebook. He had no assurance that he would find his way in it. Even though basically on his own, so he went off into the redundancy of life. And then, after many years of searching and practicing, eventually, he discovered freedom. And the there's a variety of words there are more or less synonyms for freedom in Buddhism. The one word is Bodhi, which means awakening. And the other is the Ivana and Nirvana, which basically probably translates in English as pretty pretty good well as the as release Nirvana as it just means the same thing as release to be released and another is peace. For awakening, it's really necessary to understand something deeply for release, it’s partly necessary to let go of something and for both last one piece and then no for awakening is necessary to arouse something for something to be awakened. For release, something has to be let go of peace, something has to be understood. So, these are kind of the three tasks of practice. To develop and cultivate ourselves some can be awakened something has to be let go of be released. And something has to be understood or seen very deeply. And for this, these projects, Buddhism has a whole slew of practices. And it's very helpful to think of Buddhism having a large repertoire of practices. It's like having a big, big chest of medicine. Because the, the illnesses that are being addressed in human beings are so varied, that they're just simply one pill. You know, just just take the aspirin is not really going to do it for all the different kinds of illnesses people have. So Buddhism actually has a whole chest full of different kinds of spiritual practices that you can do. And so it takes some wisdom to know which of these practices to pick up and what to practice what to do. And then like, domestically different from each other what people do. Some people might practice sitting in meditating on beauty, the beauty of life. And other people, maybe it's the federoff, sitting at the cemetery and meditating on death, but very different approaches. But different medicine depending on what the illness is tending what needs to be addressed and looked at and worked with are the core of this, of all the different practices are these two are the three practices, I would say, that have come over and over again in the tradition. One is the practice of mindfulness. The other is the practice of concentration. And the third, which I haven't talked about in this series, is the practice of
loving kindness. Those three are kind of like at the very heart. And some people will protest and say, What are other things that should be included in the heart as well, like ethics, and then you keep filling it in. But so these practices we engage in, and the ultimate goal in Buddhism is to look for a solution to the existential issue of life. That, that provides a lasting peace for the lasting happiness. And that's the particular focus of Buddhism is its particular focus of Buddhism is that the gaze, the search for freedom is searched for inside rather than outside rather than trying to arrange the world differently, or rather than looking for a heavenly realm that we can go to rather than amassing all the wealth the weekend, rather than amassing acquisitions, or messing status, the arrow or the direction that we look for peace and freedom, this last thing is within ourselves. And if we look within ourselves, then what Looking for his release and not relief. And this is a very important distinction in the search for freedom. We're looking for release and knock relief. Relief means a temporary appeasement, a temporary vacation, from our difficulties from our struggles from suffering. Release implies it kind of a transformation that moves us away from or out of it once and for all. We actually something gets released once and for all. And if we're looking within what we're looking for in release is a tendency to be in bondage, a tendency to be somehow enslaved, to be released from that enslavement, that bondage. Is that the you know, the goal of Buddhism. So then we have to appreciate how are we enslaved? How are we involved? bondage. And in the time of the Buddha, he talked frequently about using the language of bondage and enslavement, which when I first encountered Buddhism and heard that kind of language was kind of jarring To me, it's just a kind of in computer first for me, but I think that it Firstly, it's a language that is kind of putting you pushing your face up against trying to understand the ways in which our attachments and clinging compulsion operates in our life, to really face it and see it honestly. How free are we actually is the question, are you really free? And then that points in the direction of making a distinct distinct distinction between the American idea of freedom or kind of popular idea of freedom and what's meant in Buddhism by freedom? One idea freedom is the freedom to freedom to do things. So, for example, the freedom, the freedom to freedom of expression is important American rights, right? The freedom of the bear arms, the freedom to vote, the freedom to shop. You know, there's, you know, the freedom to own property, these freedoms to do things. And they're enshrined in American culture is very, very, very important, this freedom to and there's a lot of wisdom to it. However, it might, if we if we're free to do something, it might not reveal to us the inner forces that are compelling us to act that way. So take for example, the freedom to shop it'd be great to right shop to your drop. Or the freedom to eat. You know, you could, you could have a craving to shop, there can be tremendous greed to go shopping. And if you have unfettered access to shopping, you might not notice that you're in bondage for your greed. don't see it as a limitation. You only see it as limitation. If you can't shop and you feel this tremendous compulsion or addiction to shop to get something. So with addictions, or compulsions, or attachments, the freedom to act on them gives kind of relief gives kind of a sense of ease or happiness or well being in the short term. But we're not really free. We're acting in our lives by compulsion. It's not we're not really in charge. Our desires are in charge. Our fears are in charge. are ill wills in charge. So in contrast to the, to the idea of freedom to do something, one way of understanding freedom and Buddhism is it's freedom from freedom from compulsion, freedom from these inner forces that make us do things, think things, feel things, want things that maybe are not to our best interests? So, if you turn the mirror around, to try to
understand how is it that I'm in bondage? How is it that attachment and clinging operate here in my life, then there's an opportunity to understand it deeply enough and become free from these attachments. And there's two ways of becoming free from attacks. One is to somehow see them arise and not given to them. The other way is to be released from them once and for all. It's simply something see something, some deep penetration of life, the purification of our life and the very forces of attachment are uprooted. And that's the one of the core part of the classic Buddhist language to uproot the defilements, to uproot these attachments and that is our routing, the first incentive be released. With the F routing of greed, hate and delusion. The person said to experience Nirvana, or touch Nirvana, or be Nirvana. To be released. It's often kind of of not noticed so much, that in Pali and Buddhist language, the word Nirvana is sometimes used as a like an intransitive verb to be Nirvana nice. It doesn't come doesn't doesn't you can't, you know, doesn't make sense much in English, right? You don't go tell your friends you know, I was Nirvana. But if you think of Nirvana as being synonym to release, then it makes sense right? To be released. So the freedom from these compulsions within us and then you say, might ask what good is that? And one of the benefits of that is then it's no matter what happens in your life, no matter what difficulties and challenges happen the world life brings to you. You'll know that forces of greed, hate and delusion will not be your response to those things happening. So that can be a tremendous tragedies that might be for some of you There's no guarantee that your Buddhist practice is going to save you from sickness, old age and death. I'm sorry to say. And so sooner or later these things will visit you sooner than later that visit your friends and neighbors, or friends or people. All kinds of things will happen. Earthquakes, fires, war. I am amazed, actually, that I have lived so long and not had to live in a war. I put them amazed by this. I think it's kind of rare for human beings to have that situation. And I spent much my life kind of in the background kind of assuming that sooner or later, against my wishes, I'll find myself in a situation or war because I kind of have so I saw I see it everywhere. Part of my growing up I grew. I sort of grew up partly in Los Angeles, but I'm originally from Norway. I was born in Norway and I grew up in Switzerland, Switzerland and Italy as well. And evidence of war was all around me. And evidence of war was in the stories that my family and their friends told. Growing up. I heard all these stories growing up. World War Two was so present, still present. My parents in law will still send us new information they pick up from magazines or from books or different places. They're sending us a book now. That is some new angle news story new recounting new discovery, new research being done on concentration camp that they lived in, in Germany in World War so it's still very present in my family. You know, something happened 60 years ago. So it's very, very, very alive for me this idea of war. You know, so I'm amazed. So we don't know what's gonna happen. Anything can happen to us. The Buddhist question is, what is your response going to be to that? What's your response? Is your response going to be one that expresses the way you're held in bondage? Or is your response one that expresses the way that you're free? To come from freedom from bondage. And if we run away in fear, then we're in bondage. If we get swept up in hate and anger, then we're in bondage. If we get swept up in desires, greed, wanting it to be certain way, then we are in bondage. And some of the ways in which we get swept up in greed, hate and delusion, cause tremendous suffering to ourselves to be caught in the grip of fear, or the grip of holding on to some attachments. And this is, you know, it can't be this way it can't change I have to hold on to where I was in the past causes suffering. When
someone is discovered how to be free on the inside, or not to be in bondage, to be free of these compulsions, then you have it but then the person has a certain assurance, a certain safety that they know that no matter what happens to them in their life, that they can meet that without adding more suffering to it, adding a second arrow I think all of most of you know the second arrow story but few of you who don't, don't tell it and then came to the Buddha. The Buddha was talking to the monks. And the Buddha said if a man was struck by an arrow, would that be painful? And the answer was yes. And then Buddha said, if the person was struck by second arrow, would that be even more painful? And the answer is yes. And the Buddha said approximately, if the first arrow is what life does to you, there's no guarantee that their life's not going to come along with an arrow, sickness, a job and death. But the second arrow is what you release when you shoot it yourself. And this when we've been freed from the inner compulsions, then we don't shoot any more arrows we don't add arrows to the first so that we can walk into a situation where we don't add we know we can stay at peace. A graphic story that began Buddhists tell each other tell themselves is the story of the first Buddhist king in India, two centuries after the Buddha King Ashoka, and before he became a Buddhist, he was an awful King, who went around conquering much of India. And after one very gruesome battle, they were, I don't know the legend or what but their stories are real. Thousands and thousands of thousand people died on the battlefield. And he walked across the battlefield. We still were standing in the middle of it. And then walking across the battlefield, came a Buddhist monk. And there was something about something about the peace and the present this Buddhist monk had that stopped King Ashoka kind of caught his attention. And then he stopped. he renounced warfare from that somehow from that, that encounter. So is it selfish to look for this kind of personal view? This is a selfish to, for Buddhism to emphasize, put the mirror here and try to understand the way that you live under compulsion to look at the way that you live in bondage, the forces of compulsions that drive you, and free yourself from them. Is that selfish? And the classic answer is no. What's selfish is to act out of bondage. To act out of compulsion, because that's when we act out of compulsion in bondage. We adds the suffering of ourselves in the world. And it's a tremendous gift we give the world to be the kind of person that the world doesn't have to fear. That's the kind of person who can bring peace can act peacefully. But more than that, what Buddhists will say is that if you want to be a lifeguard if you want to be no, you know, at the water you better learn to swim first. Is it selfish for the person to learn to swim before she becomes a lifeguard? I don't think so. So the way that they focus on Buddhism, the core of the practice of Buddhism is directed inward, to understand ourselves. My hope is that once that works been done once we've learned to swim, that then that translates to being lifeguards. That translates to meeting the world, responding to the world in ways that help the world in effective ways and useful ways. So the story that Buddhism tells the story of release a story of bondage or attachment or innocence. Freedom from that. That's, that is a not a temporary release. But something that's a radical transformation in the heart. So that release becomes permanent and us becomes who we are, come to what we carry with us wherever we go. So I think it's enough for today. But I have more to say. So I guess this series will continue next week, but we have five minutes and may be nice after this. If some of you have any comments or questions you'd like to make. A couple a couple of minutes or five minutes, we can see if there's anything anybody wants.

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He talked about one leaving the comfort zone or leaving a place they’re comfortable, when actually being really comfortable within your organized spiritual practice cannot be something that can actually get in the way, you know, being part of an organized practice.

Yes. And that is one thing we'll talk about next week. To be certain, to be very simple about it. What are the very important forms of release that Buddhist practice supposed to free you from? Is is released from religion of that, but you have to come back next week to hear about that.

When you're talking about release from suffering, and attachments, get brought to mind the families of the Amish children who were murdered a few weeks ago. Boy, and obviously, that community is in tremendous suffering. But it set off kind of waves of curiosity and confusion in the surrounding communities and in the media, trying to interview people who knew the Amish like Why aren't you angry or why? Why aren't you manifesting more visible signs of your your suffering? And the story of the second arrow is really right to the point on that

one so inspired when I read about the Amish, what they did and, and I felt like it was like it was a bright light that kind of traveled through the country. And I just hope that that light just kind of sits because it can change my metaphors. But, you know, you said seeds, you know, all over the country, the idea that they would, you know, offer this forgiveness for the men. Not only that, but they would go to his funeral and all of that, but the some of the family members of the victims who died, I put together a fund raising money for the children of the murder. Isn't that something? So, so, learn to swim. Maybe you could do these kinds of things. And the time comes Thank you.