So probably this will be the. So probably this will be the last talk in the series that I began many weeks ago. And again with a simple description of what mindfulness is, in the Zen tradition, they have an expression called single enlightenment, or sometimes simple enlightenment. And that is the kind of wonderful experience of being very, very much in the present moment. Really appreciating the present moment being very present for the present moment is kind of insensitive, like and kind of awaken to the present moment, but it's called a single enlightenment or simple enlightenment. Because enlightenment is much more Then that childlike, just being present for this moment in its pristine glory. Because enlightenment or liberation is more than a kind of presence that we bring to this moment here. It's possible to lose yourself in this moment is very present here. And it's kind of simplistic. It's kind of judicial doctrine, holistic, because we're much more than much more than just the ability to be present here. And now. We have the ability to think about the past or the ability to think about the future. And so, liberation is more than a presence we bring. The presence we bring to our life is the foundation for liberation. And liberation involves a transformation and a transformation of us. So today, I want to talk some more about liberation, which was a topic from last week and as I was thinking about this topic for today, I was reflecting, reflecting a little bit and how many religions focus on an unseen world. And sometimes very explicitly, where the unseen world is the big part of what the religious faith is about, unseen, unseen world of God or God's heavens and hells, may different things. And as with many religions, Buddhism also puts an emphasis on it an unseen world. And with the same maybe same sense, there's more to this life, then what how we normally experience it. And many people kind of for some point, realize there has to be more, there has to be more than you know, for some people, you know, the endlessly going to their job is not something that brings them a tremendous amount of meaning. It has to be more or a certain kind of pursuits or certain kind of way of living. Fast more than necessity with his life and really, maybe it's okay or maybe it's not okay. Maybe there's a lot of suffering a part of it a lot of difficulty, a lot of challenges, a lot of poverty. It's VFE wasn't
there must be more not that something else is possible. Is it Buddhism points to this something else is possible, something which we could call, we could perhaps call the unseen world, but unseen, not because it's not seeable. But rather, it's unseen, because we haven't yet seen it. And, and it's also unseen because it doesn't belong to we can see with our eyes, it's not doesn't have to do with, you know, the external world, the empirical world, but rather something we see within with an inner eye. So how many we see with with sometimes it's called the Dharma i would i or the wisdom i. So rather than something it's unseen, because it's by nature, unseen seeable Buddhism focuses on what we normally don't see as we go about our life, but is seeable, but is seeable it with the inner eye. And when the Buddha talks about the Dharma and talked about Nirvana, a synonym for liberation, he emphasized that it was something you can see here and now can be seen directly. It's to be seen directly. But normally people don't see the Dharma. Normally people don't see Nirvana. And when he tried to explain or describe how Nirvana can be seen, to be interesting, right? How do you see liberation, freedom, awakening, how do you see it? How can it be directly visible for you right here now, in what he said is that you see liberation by the absence Greed, hate and delusion, that we have the capacity to notice the presence of greed, hate delusion, and also the capacity of seeing the suffering that follows in the wake of our greed and our hate and their delusion. And it's possible to see the absence of greed, hate and delusion. And it's possible to see the sense of freedom or peace that might come with a proper liberation from greed, hate and delusion. And in seeing that, in seeing the absence of liberation, greed, hatred, delusion, then we've seen liberation we've seen Nirvana. The absence of a hidden delusion is not visible. If you know if you're caught in that if you're blinded by greed and delusion, you're grinded and blinded by desire and attachments and fear, and it can't be seen. But when that is dropped away, then it can be you can see the inner I can see that directly So, there are two streams, or currents, in the currency, in the flow of life in the live stream of a human being. And once stream is a stream that in Buddhist practice were meant to go up against, up upstream from the stream, up current flowing up current. And that's the current of greed, hate and delusion, the ways in which attachments and clinging addictions, compulsions, fears, kind of drive our lives motivate our life. That is something we have to somehow overcome. And that's describing Buddhism is going upstream. It's called upstream up current. For many of the popular currents are what we can see in our society, and much of society seems kind of crazy to see that A lot of greed, hate and delusion that's kind of rampant. So that's one stream, one current. The other current is a current of the Dharma. And someone who has tasted the first taste of liberation, they said to enter the stream or enter the current, but not the current of greed, hate and delusion, but the current that leads to full liberation. And so these these two currents that going on, one we have to kind of work against, and the other that we have to get herself into, and then be carried down along it. And so there comes a point that we start crossing from one current to the other. If all if all your life is about his behavior, illusion or attachment, then it's work to practice. So if your mind you sit down meditate and you're in your thinking mind is addictive, then it has a certain degree to work. Like, oh, it's work to relax, it's work to kind of overcome be stronger than the compulsive mind. But at some point, the force of compulsive mind quiets down enough. Or at some point, we switch gears switch tracks in the mind. And we enter this stream, where it becomes kind of like a gravitational pull or stream that's carrying us towards a sense of peace, a sense of freedom, a sense of spaciousness, of transparency. And when you enter the stream of the Dharma, then you can
feel that there's, like, there's a pull towards goodness is a pull towards something really wonderful. And it's a magic it's magic, but it's, it's a really special moment, or a special thing, to be able to see or feel. moved from one gravitational force to another from one current to the other. And for some people who practice at some point, you get kind of right to the juncture between these two streams. And they might kind of sway back and forth. They are caught a little bit in the stream of greed, hate and delusion. But they're able to pull themselves out of that, and find this house in different stream. And then you can, it can feel the pool or feel that wonderful kind of floating that goes on, that blows you down towards a greater sense of freedom. But maybe, you know, it's not stable. It's at some point, the wind blows you over a little bit back over to the other stream and create delusion and you've gotten that go out there. And you might take a you know, a few hours or days or months to realize, Oh, wait a minute. I've been caught up in that stream. Let's get back to the one I prefer. Go back to one of freedom. But it's a great thing at some point to feel that there's this force whose momentum or this a clear sense of possibility or this towards a level of peace or freedom. That's almost like beckoning us calling us come here or kind of pulling us like, that's where we want to go. It's not like you have to reason with yourself or like to be free. It's not to have to want to be free because you're trying to get away from something that's painful. The freedom is almost like it's something which is kind of like, pulling us or, or inviting us or to itself is a Chinese tradition said, When famous Chinese teacher he said, awakening beckons us in everything is a beautiful thing. It's everything in everything you find a point of beckoning to come here, come here and be free. And what is it to find the freedom and everything you encounter? So another kind of way of talking about this, this tutorial Perhaps his idea of going up a mountain and down a mountain, you go up and you have to go up to the top of the mountain to be able to go down. But going up the mountain is hard work. And once you get to the top, then it's relatively easy to go down. Gravity is in your favor. So at some point, with liberation, with practice, the gravity is in our favor. And when this is in one, one, clear marking of this juncture, is called stream entry entering the stream. When you enter the stream, some things it's a remarkable moment, remarkable experience, because you'll never quite be the same again. After that. Even though you might kind of still be sliding back and forth. Once you really have a taste of being the stream garden really wet in one stream. Even if you slide back to the other currents. You know, you've been changed by that experience, and it becomes easier and easier to slide back into the current again When the currents of peace or freedom when a person has entered the stream, the stream of the Dharma stream of liberation. It said that they've been changed in three ways. And this is a very important idea of change. Because many people when they think about Nirvana or freedom, they think that it's experience. And it's an experience this post, you know, really have an experience supposed to have this experience and then you've been verified, or I had this perfect experience. And therefore I can have a badge. And, you know, I've, you know, I've been to Disneyland and the value of Nirvana, the value of liberation is not in having the experience but rather than fail In how the experience has changed us. It has transformed us. So in that sense, it's not so important to know exactly what Nirvana is, it's a little bit difficult to describe exactly what the experience of liberation is. And its kind of profundity in its deepest sense. But it's not so important to know what it is even though you can experience it, as it is to allow it to change us to be changed by it. So stream entry involves three different changes. And the first one that usually lists three and then there's other ones that are also
often listed. The first change is, once you have once you go into the stream, there's a sense very clear sense that the self as an identity as a personality is not something that as absolute reality substance anymore, there's a feeling that there's a clear seeing, understanding that the usual things that we take as self, my personality, my body, my thoughts, my feelings, my emotions, my biography, my history, you know, my family, all these things which have some sub certain kind of reality are not really so interesting or not so valid as as claiming this is who I really am. I don't know if this works as a as an analogy or as a pointing to this, but I'll try I'll try without the help of a mirror you know, we don't we can't see your eyes better Eyes function. If you tried to turn your eyes You're on really quickly so you can take a look at your eyes. But if you kind of use your eyes to try to get a sense of your eyes, what happens? You can't quite get there, can you? Maybe a little bit like touching trying to touch your right elbow with your right hand? You can't quite do it right. You know, your right hand? No, there's an elbow there. But so, you know, you know, there's eyes there. But you can't quite see them. But if you try to see them, how much space is there? Behind your eyes? Does it make sense to talk about space behind your eyes? Or your eyes? As you try to look at your eyes, are they transparent? Are they invisible? Are they do they kind of disappear? They're there but you can't quite get to them. So it's similar with the sense of self. If you try to find the self it's kind of like trying to look for your eyes, you won't find it. Does that mean that there is no self or there is a self that you can find? back there's like their eyes, right? So therefore use the same analogy with it must be itself, it just can't get to it. Whether there is yourself or not itself is not so important. What's important is that if you try to look for yourself, you won't find it. And once you get a sense that the self is kind of like the eye that you can't find, then you're not going to take Oh my, my face, that's my true self. Or my emotional life is my true self or my history is my truth, my job, you know, my, my status, that's my, you kind of realize that when you turn back to look The self. It's not as a transparent kind of empty phenomena. That kind of doesn't work to pin something onto. It's kind of like you try to do water painting on water. You know, you're not going to get much of a painting, especially if it's flowing water just as a stick. So it has some sense that there's a that there's nothing that the self there's no there's no self, upon which you can pin anything onto. It's transparent. It's translucent. It's transparent. It's empty. It's spacious, it's peaceful. It's a vast It's nothing. It disappeared. It's still it's quiet. And this sense that sometimes it's said to the first transformation is overcoming the personality view or the belief in a solid, substantial self. And I bet many of you have overcome or grown out of certain growing out of the tendency to take certain parts of who you are as yourself. This is who I really am. And, like for me, I can remember really well. How I really wrapped up or how incredibly closely bound my sense of self was to was connected to the presence or absence of zits. It wasn't so long ago. But that's why it doesn't really get much anymore. You know, myself is not tied up with my sense of self, you know, I couldn't care less. So, you know, there's all kinds of ways things we grow out of, you know, maybe some point, success and failure at work or perhaps having a particular job is like the be all and end all of your sense of self and success. At some point, it loses its appeal. We realize that you know, you're gonna tie your sense of self to that. Or you know, there's all kinds of things that change you know, people who get sick. Some people get, you know, chronic deeps illnesses and You know, there's certain kinds of preoccupation with trying to present themselves in a good way. That doesn't work anymore. After one woman I know who's had I don't know. I'll probably at least 20 surgeries. One more surgery that the scars this disfigures her face
or something. Her sense of self is not tied to her face anymore. Disappointing through all these years of surgery just well, she's just glad to be alive. A friend of mine was meditating in India and a teacher was giving a Dharma and looked right at him and said, You are not your face and the whole world vanished for him, everything dropped. And that was one of the most important kinds of experiences he had in his meditation life was having everything the whole world self everything is dropped away. So, no the shock of someone being told you are not your face, somehow just kind of helped his mind just let go. So, the first transformation is the kind of giving up of a certain kind of belief or clinging to self. The second transformation that happens is giving up a clinging for a belief in the efficacy of Religious ethics, precepts and religious practices. Isn't that strange? After all, there's all this huffing and puffing people spend a lot of time practicing and practicing practicing living an ethical life. And then the first kind of experience of realization, you kind of is giving up the belief in that. Well, that's party time, right? Finally, you know, finally, I knew this Buddhist practice was kind of, you know, a little bit off and finding God is it. That's not quite what it's about. But it does point that there's a lot of clinging, a lot of attachment around religion. There's a identity that people have to religion, you know, and I've known people who've Warren religious outfits. When I was at first came to the San Francisco Zen Center for practice there in the late 70s. There was a kind of a uniform, that unofficial uniform of those people who really, really cool Zen. It's important to be cooler than if they were these fat pants, these big, bulky pants that you can meditate in. And then there is kind of Amish vest and a Danish school back. Then you could always, you know, add a few things. There a few of them were to kind of boost personnel you could add to really do it well. And, you know, it kind of seemed a little bit you know, there are kind of practical things probably made sense, the first person who discovered all these things, but when they became a uniform, they got a sense of detachment people had to proving their identity as a Zen Buddhist. You know, all kinds of all Buddhist traditions, you know, I know people get attached to identity, you know, being a certain kind of Buddhist, I'm a Buddha. Thank you so important, everyone sees that. So that's one form of attachment to the identity. Another attachment is kind of attachment to security to being right. Buddhism is one of the great world religions. It has a great authority, prestige and power. You get nonprofit profit status in America. And, you know, if the government takes it seriously, so you know, when, when I was a new Zen students, my mother didn't know much about Zen or Buddhism. But somehow rather she picked up that the governor of California back then hung out in Zen circles. So the Zen stuff couldn't be all that bad. So I'm sorry. The so the so you had great religion right? So you have the people feel like I finally got it the truth. This is it. I don't quite understand it yet but we cling to it is going to save us because now I know I'm right. So again being clinging to being right. clinging to religion because it's going to save us you know, in particular the clinging to rights you sometimes it's translated as claim to rites and rituals, which is a kind of Victorian way of translating this. The actually Pali is sila, which means ethics or virtue, and bhakta Vata invitae means practice practices. So, the it's the belief that somehow in doing the practice, some of the practice itself or are adhering to ethics itself is liberation is going to do it. The ethics and practices are a necessary part of the path, we can't dispense with them. We can't cling cling to them as being the only thing necessary to say simplistically, there also has to be a profound letting go that happens. If you hold on to mindfulness practice, concentration, practice or virtue as being it, that's going to be a barrier to integration. They only take you so far. And so the experience of entering the
stream shows you that something different is needed. It's above and beyond just doing the practices. The third transformation is a transformation of giving of, of no longer having uncertainty about what is and is not the path. And it said that it's kind of does it kind of discouraging me but it said that You don't really practice Buddhism, until you've had the first experience of liberation. So people practice Buddhism for years and years without any real experience of liberation. They're still practicing, but you don't really know what it's about until you've tasted it for yourself, when you might know, you might know In theory, what swimming is about. And, you know, it's possible to learn to swim. And you can even read books about it and take lessons in it. But, but when you really learn to swim yourself, then you have no more uncertainty about that it's possible to learn to swim because you've really learned it. So in the same way, when you really have experience with integration, then there's no more uncertainty about what it's all about. And there's no more uncertainty about what the path is about what it takes to get there. The work that needs to be done, the inner things has to happen. So those are the three the three primary markers of health Persons changed by this first for this entering the stream. There is a couple of other minor things that are mentioned. One of them is that the person is prone to or seriously prone to being ethical that the person who has entered the stream is very unlikely they're going to do something seriously unethical anymore because of what's been how they've been changed and transformed some inner sensitivity. It's a locum and the other maybe in the corollary to that is the idea that once you've entered the stream, you'll never get reborn again in in hell. So, this is a traditional Buddhist idea having to do with the idea of rebirth. that once you have stream entry, you'll never get reborn in hell. For those people who don't adhere to the idea of rebirth, it can be understood that you're not going to be find yourself in hellish mental states in this lifetime anymore, that you're saved from serious bouts of anxiety, depression, despair, kind of very kinds of hell realms that people can go into. No matter what happens to you, no matter what happens to your external world or your health, that somehow you're saved from the hellish mental realms, that might happen. Another thing that happens when I come back if I'm a man, to you know, if you're a captive audience, right. I get, I get this for me, this profession where I can just have the monologues No one interrupts and it's a rare thing right? I tried to do this at home it doesn't quite work there's a little bit of maybe a paradoxical this idea of giving, letting go the belief in a self substantial kind of self or taking some things my personality because you could say well, I'm the kind of person has given up the belief itself. And, but with liberation comes the kind of not caring so much in a certain way about whether you are in anok liberated. You know, your time your sense of self to it so much once upon a time in a Zen monastery, In Japan, there came a young man to practice there. And he was quite an exceptional man. He'd been raised with good, very good education. Parents were well to do. He was extremely smart, very talented, with a lot of different capacities. Things are relatively easy for him in his life. Maybe because of that. And because of his great intelligence and perception, he had actually studied many of the religions of the world, because he felt that something more was needed. He weren't the unseen worlds, I mean, more than this world that was kind of idea of pursuing money or status or the many things that his parents wanted him to do just didn't have much meaning for him. So he started studying religion and he settled on Buddhism and into the Zen monasteries in order to get enlightened. And he had he really impress people because of all this capacity that he had. And certain certain When I entered the monastery, he his practice unfolded very quickly he practiced. He was very diligent. He
was very disciplined. He was very perceptive, astute in his practice, overcame a lot of the hindrances pretty easily got very concentrated pretty easily very quickly. And the other monks were amazed at who's this guy. We've been practicing here, sweating ourselves for a long time, and we make progress really slow and this guy just seems to be breathing along. And then within a few months of being in the monastery, he had his first experience of realization of stream entry. At which point the abbot kicked him out of the monastery out wouldn't even let him kind of protect their time to protest is kept up kept up. And in Japan, when you'd be Coming monk, it's a very dramatic thing to do socially. Because Japanese culture is very, very, say it. The Social Network is very powerful in Japan, where you fit the social network. And if you ever step outside of the social network that you born into, or you're raised in or something like that, it's, it's very hard to come back in again. So in Japan, in America, if you could ever get ordained as a Zen priest, you can do it for a while and then go back and get a job and you know, don't tell anybody, it's fine. But when Japan if you step out of the in become a Zen priest, it's like you've stepped out of you've disconnected yourself from society. And society doesn't open his doors again up to to let you in, and to really step out so this man was kicked back out on the street, out out with no support, anything and the other monks were amazed why Do that and this guy has all this promise. He was so capable. He had his first experience of realization Why did you kick him out? And the abbot said he hadn't suffered enough. He hadn't hadn't suffered enough. He had to realize he had he had to somehow develop or discover a greater degree of humility. Or had to somehow be able to whittle away at his conceit. And the place where conceit was gonna get away was not here in the monastery. He had to go back into the world to have that experience. Even though a person gives up the belief in itself there can still be conceit. The difference is one is it's more of an insight, the first realization for entering the stream is is a is an insight and understanding a cognitive shift that happens. But a cognitive shift as difficult as it is, is much more difficult than an effective shift, a shift in our effect a shift in our emotional motivations and what drives us. And conceit belongs to the world with an effect not to not to kind of understanding. So once a person has entered the stream, the next kind of level of work that needs to be done, has has to do with the effective level of human human being. And this region talks about, then beginning to lessen and finally do away with greed, addiction, the forces of disease Desire, lust, as well as the forces of ill will and anger and aversion. So as as as we kind of get find ourselves deeper and deeper into stream going flowing along. There's a lessening and lessening of these forces. But the forces of greed and hate, don't don't disappear. With a with first entering the stream. More work has to happen. And as as this as greed and hate lessons, lesson, function points, they're supposed to disappear entirely. Then one of the things that's left to do is to overcome conceit a tendency to kind of compare ourselves self and others various ways or to take it as I'm the one who's enlightened, thank you. The sense that, you know, there's a one here so the path to liberation begins with mindfulness. It's strengthened with concentration. The doors to liberation are opened with it by insight. Mindfulness brings concentration, concentration brings more mindfulness, mindfulness and concentration together, bring insight. Insight opens the doors for the possibility of liberation. It can seem like a long path. But liberation freedom is only as far away is as close to you as your own breath. It's as close to you as the experience of your eyes, looking right now. It's not something that is so far away. is close to you as the space that surrounds you. And the stillness that's in that space is closest to you, is as close as the blinking of an eye. And I believe that's well before
entering the stream, that some people can have an intuition or a sense of a possibility of being free being without compulsions without contractions without clings of the mind or the heart, or the heart in the mind set free or at peace, or become boundless or become transparent or become still or become empty, or disappear. There can be as a kind of intuitive sense of that or a feeling of, it's right here. So far away. Awakening beckons us within everything. And perhaps it's in stillness, that you can get a clearer sense of freedom for peace. And so there's a poem by the by Bashar the Japanese poet. That goes the tempo Bell stops. So drinks you hear the ringing the 10 Phone bells stops, but the sound keeps coming out of the flowers. What is that? After the after the ringing stops? What is it that comes out of the flowers? What is it that comes out of everything? liberation, the path of liberation begins with mindfulness. No remember, no moment of mindfulness is ever wasted. A moment of pure mindfulness, partakes of liberation through an echo a resonance of freedom in one pure moment of mindfulness
And one of the meat one of the meanings of that is that one of the implications of that is that the, the means the goal is found in the means that even though the goal liberation can be seen as something as far away, it's also something that's supposed to be found in the very means towards it. So is there some way of practicing mindfulness? So that moment of mindfulness is a moment of being free of greed of hate, reversion or clinging. Just seeing what it is just this moment, just this. Just this feeling, just this thought just to sound very simply, this moment. And whether a person has entered the stream or not, the practice of mindfulness is the same and what's very important Is after entering the stream is continue practicing. Some people will start practicing after the event industry that tastes that experience. And I think it's a great waste. It's not uncommon for Buddhists and hear stories of Buddhist teachers. Someone comes to Buddha teacher and says, oh, I've had some great realization experience. You know, it's funny got it. And the teacher will yawn or say, oh, oh, just something else you have to let go of now. somehow be dismissive of it. Because the tendency to cling to that, hold on to that and they're doing a clinging, not continue with a practice, moment by moment. realization entering stream is a really beautiful thing. phenomenally beautiful experience event in life. But at least as beautiful and profound is a moment of practice and the commitment to practice, the dedication to make practice a central part of one's life. And to do it, moment after moment, do it before realization during realization after Realization. Just coming back to the practice is moment by moment, almost as if, you know, the realization of almost incidental if it happens, because what's important is just keep doing the practice. Keep doing the practice, keep it going, keep it going. If you keep it going that way, just focusing on the practice. Maybe the average will have to kick you out of the monastery. Practice, practice, practice. They all of you love to practice. Thank you very much

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