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SPEAKERS

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So Good evening. And this evening I'd like to talk a little bit about intention. And what's in the heart of this, this idea that today is the idea of bodhicitta. And bodhicitta is usually translated into English as the aspiration for awakening, the thought of awakening, the intention for awakening and in all forms of Buddhism to arouse, to give rise to the mind, the thought the aspiration for awakening is one of the most important movements or turning points in a person's life for Buddhist life. And this is a video bodhicitta is championed is prays to no end in some schools of Buddhism because it's so centrally important. One of the reasons why it's so important is that once you have your bodhicitta, well formulated, well established your aspiration for awakening that the course is set. And then you know, it's a matter of refining and developing and growing, you're kind of like the boat. The boat is set its course and, and, and it's just a matter of, you know, time as it develops and flowers and gifts fruit. And it's my belief that that as useful as meditation is, and we're a meditation center and a meditation teacher, right? champion of meditation, kind of, I think your time is much better spent. If you had to choose between the two, it's much better spent reflecting and thinking and contemplating getting in touch with your deepest, deepest intention rather than meditating. Now, ideally, you do both, we wouldn't have to put one or the other. But I put such great importance in this kind of plumbing the depths of the meaning, the values, the purpose, that we want to organize our life around, and to, and to actually have the courage and the sensitivity to find out what the kind of deepest request is, from our heart from ourselves deep inside. And then to have the courage to live that life. To live a life that in a sense we choose, but be careful what we choose, but maybe our heart our heart chooses. I met someone recently who had chosen a very strong path of life of Buddhist practice. But there was much too much I in him, you know, I chose, I'm going to do this, I'm going to be awakened. I'm going to, you know, and like every other word was I i. And even though it's all this good, you know, from the outside look like all this good practice. You know, it wasn't didn't come from his heart. It came more from I suppose you'd say the ego perhaps. But what is it that you drop below that, you know, into your heart into that place that you'd have maybe don't necessarily think so actively about? But actually kind of feel your way out of it. What is it? How is it you want to live your life? What choices do you want to live by? There was a great free choice story, I think, from United States. It seems that in in the early decades of the United States, the post office was open seven days a week in 1830 The US Senate had a debate about whether to close the post offices on Sunday. And there were there was a senator from the south from Santa what's southern state, who was also a Baptist minister. And he got up on the Senate floor and argued that they should not be allowed, because of the tremendous sacredness of individual conscience and that to impose a Sabbath on people. And a Sabbath being that Sunday being the Sabbath was kind of a Christian idea was to impose some religious, someone's religious values onto other people. And even though he was a Baptist minister, I probably thought that that isn't it was pretty good Baptist was pretty good.

More important for him was the sacredness of free choice. So the individual conscience, and that each person should be left to choose for themselves what they should do on Sunday or Monday or whatever, and that they shouldn't be religious ideas put on top of them. Isn't that something? I noticed something, I don't know when he lost but eventually he lost. You know, his his his cost loss because now the post office is closed on Sundays. And but the idea of the sacredness of the individual conscience is kind of heavy to deep current, at least in American culture, Western culture. And, and with that comes the idea of free choice because you have people that choose to have conscience. In Buddhism, there's something similar in Buddhism. And that is that the idea of being able to choose for yourself, the direction your life goes, or say differently. You can choose how are you going to meet the life right now? Are you going to meet it with fear? Are you going to meet it with openness? Are you going to meet it with truth? You can meet it with the seat. Are you going to meet it with ego? You can meet with heart. How are you going to meet it now? Or how do you want to meet it? Do you want to meet it with your hearts with openness with sincerity with completeness? Or would you rather meet it with how what you can get out of it? You know, how you want to be? I noticed one person I met recently, it was really clear that what she wanted was approval. Lots of approval, like not just you know just now for whatever happened now but like constant approval you know, non stop approve, everything was about getting approved somehow she didn't have enough sense of maybe personal approval or sense of confidence. So she's looking outside they get approval. So you know, how do we meet our life Do we meet it to be traded we engage in life because the pleasure is going to give us to pursue a life of security because secure What we want or do we have deeper values or other values that we want to meet their life with. In on Friday, I heard a story of some Christian ministers who heard they. Recently this last year or so, someone was getting a Buddhist I know was giving a talk. And she included in the talk the story of the Buddha, before he was the Buddha, Prince Siddhartha leaving the palace. So the Buddha was inspired to kind of pursue the kind of the Buddhist life of liberation, the pursuit of liberation. He left his comfortable, comfortable life of luxury in the palace, and went forth as a renunciant as an ascetic to go searching for the truth. And so she told the story of the Siddhartha leaving the palace. And the Christian ministers are heard the talk loved it. And because I think they'd be implication I got was it part of their training was not to take stories so literally, but they take them as symbolic. And they say, yes, everybody has to leave the palace. Everybody has a palace. And everybody has to leave that palace. If you want to discover the truth become awakened or become free or to plumb the depths of your own, you know, conscience. So then the obvious question is, what is your palace? And what's outside of your palace? What is the search or the question or the intention, or the thing that's most valuable for you? I have met with another with a few weeks ago with a young person in your early 20s And you could really feel the pull and push or downsize right where the tension between living at home or next person didn't live at home anymore, but still being under the wings of our parents receiving financial support from the parents and kind of establish a life of her own independent her parents. So some people that's a smooth transition some people that's a hard transition for her the palace was, you know, the parents support and parents life.

Many people are kind of upset about the Buddha leaving the palace in his family, but if we take it symbolically that there has to be some turning, you know, in the spiritual life in a Buddhist life, turning from one thing towards another, and what can that be? And what is that then what I'd like to suggest today, that the very important step in that turning is to have to plumb the depth of your intention or do I like to talk about the deepest intention? Someone else might say the highest intention, I don't know. aspiration. I like the word deeper. Because for me, it points to the heart higher. I don't know where higher is. I'm near sighted. So deeper works better. But, you know, what is it? And also I like the idea of asking the question or encouraging people to ask themselves the question What's your deepest intention is because of my trust that if people pursue that, it gets refined and purified and developed and grows within us over time, and it's kind of like gold, where it gets purified over time. So for example,

a person might have like for me, I remember when I first went on my first retreats, where I learned a lot about diversity. following through and an intention, because we have a lot of different kinds of things we want to accomplish in our life. Some of them are not so pure, or you know, or. And so for example, I had this intention to go and follow a Buddhist life in practice. But it wasn't that pure or at least to say differently. It was mixed up with a lot of ego, a lot of self. And I was I again, I write, I'm the one who is going to get really concentrated and I was going to prove to everyone how concentrated I could get. Well, that's a recipe for disaster. And, but what happened was that when I had my intention to practice and meditate every day where I meditated for, you know, 45 minutes or something every day, and that worked pretty pretty well for me, I got calm, somewhat calm, somewhat settled, and I congratulate myself, Gil, you're doing good. You know, you're doing good. You're, you know, you're a great meditator. You know, Just because I had you know, 32,000 thoughts instead of 64,000 thoughts during that time, you know, Wow, look at that, that's good. And, and then I would go and retreat, seven days and retreats. And so there The idea was to follow through on the intention to meditate many, many hours during the day, not just 45 minutes during the day. And, and then this the weak link in the system, the strains and system came out. And after a while, the striving, the pushing the wanting to prove myself kind of became bigger and bigger barrier kind of stood out in the highlight the first day of their treat, I settled down nicely, I got calm. And the next day after that, after I congratulate myself for how well I did, I was just unwinding. You know, I thought I was doing well, you know, then this pushing and demanding and Ego that was involved, showed itself really clearly, in a way it couldn't if I hadn't been following through on the intention. So sometimes you have to kind of put yourself in a situation to really try something out and act and live by something to find out where the weak link is, or where the weaknesses in or the shortcomings that might be in what you're trying to do. If you congratulate yourself What a great person you are, and never do anything that doesn't go very far. And if you criticize yourself What a terrible person you are, and never do anything, then you haven't ever had a chance also to work through something and find something different, that there's something that is really helpful to engage. And in the engagement, we find out something important, we can work through something or clarify something. And so in those first retreats, I got to face myself it was very difficult, partly because I couldn't see it, I couldn't see what I was doing. I just knew it wasn't working. And the more I tried to get concentrated, The harder became the harder became the more I would do the same kind of self centered striving kind of approach. And the less would work less hard work, the harder I would try. So, you know, that's a recipe for short circuiting. And I didn't short circuit, but I kind of crashed, I kind of hit that up what the feeling was, I just reached bottom. And by the fourth day of the retreat, the only thing that was left for me to do was have left me to do I couldn't it wasn't even that I couldn't even do that. The only thing that was possible might have cost the most right word even. The only thing that happened

is I gave up. This is hopeless. I don't know how to do this. And when I gave up, that's when the retreat began. And in the process, I learned a lot I saw myself, you know, like pushing, you know, pushing forward by trying and engaging. So this is a long way of saying that, that there's a variety of ways in which we want to look at our intentions, work. It try to follow through on it and learn from the process. Because I think as we learn are mindful of it, it gets refined and purified and developed. And it wasn't at all my intentions are wrong, just that the way I was what I was trying to do was was cased with a lot of ego and striving and expectation and demand. But still, the impulse to freedom, the impulse to was was quite beautiful. And so with time, you know, that kind of got shed and fell away the impurities or the extras and things like what happened away, and what was left was something more pure. And so that's quite nice. And so to go down, so I find it very useful to go drop the drop down, what is your deepest intention, and to ask it every day, over and over again, and don't necessarily settle for the first answer is Oh, that's interesting. And so you have come up with one answer, and then kind of Okay, give it given that answer. What is is there a deeper intention? Or what's very interesting is if you find yourself saying

having a sentence for your deepest intention, and you find that you're saying it is a negative statement, you know, my deepest intention is to live without fear. That's pretty good absence of fear, but then turn it around or imagine, yes, you have that. If you had no fear at all, what how would you want to live as opposed to what would you want out of the way of your life? And some people find a very interesting answer, because maybe they hadn't that never taught thought about what they want, what they want. They almost think so to challenge challenge, but how difficult things are, that their intention is to free themselves with the difficulties. But what do you want and some people it's some really beautiful things can be love, can be you know, contacted the compassion. It could be to be helpful in this world. To support people, many things.

So as I said, I really trust each individual person going into their intentionality, their heart, and exploring and developing to find what's there. Because I believe that at the at the core of who we are, it's not an ego. It's not something we think about. But it's almost like it's inherent in human heart to want the very best for itself. It's inherent in the human heart, to want to be free. It's inherent in human heart to not want to have any barriers or limitations, or constrictions or contractions in it. And when the heart is not contracted and constricted, then something really beautiful flows from it. When our presence has no contraction presence has no limitation. Our presence has no boundaries. presence has no self that's present. It's quite beautiful. And it has a kind of an intelligence to it. So to kind of understand the intention, what our intention is, and then have the willingness, the courage, the, perhaps, the strength to follow through on it. And I meet people who have wonderful intentionality for for their life, but it's a bit challenging to live it. Sometimes they're the voices of their parents over kind of behind them over their shoulder saying, You can't do that. You know, you have to be responsible. You have to do you know, do what's normal, you know, you please don't embarrass me with my friends, like go to the bridge club. And I can, they asked, you know, How are the kids you know, and you you go, you know,

So whose voices you know what, what's the limitation? What stands in the way? If the human heart if the core of who we are is something really beautiful, if it's possible, if it is possible that each of us has confined within us really powerful, beautiful intention to live our life by that it's a phenomenal

pity.

Not to live by or not to find a natural search for that. It's kind of a waste to waste to this beauty. Why waste it? Why Why not touching to it? Why not live by that?

When I was living at the San Francisco Zen Center Zen student, one of the teachers there is understood understanding or his definition or his understanding of what Zen practice is. I never knew anyone else say this. But he said this to me. It was it was a process of purifying one's intention. That that's what Zen practice is. So most of you think about Zen and maybe about awakening, Satori, can show, you know, some kind of great experience of freedom, or the Zen of the moment, just really being here fully in a concentrated way. All kinds of things people think about Zen. People don't often think about it as purifying was intention. And all the all the practice of Zen are ways of refining and developing and purifying and finding what that beautiful intention is that you have and then being unfolded from that. Now, if you have an intention, doesn't matter whether you fulfill it doesn't matter whether you succeed at at that sense of purpose or aspiration. And maybe it depends on what the aspiration is. But I kind of feel that it's really beautiful, really profound, simply to live a life. It's aimed in that direction, or lives. It lives a life that tries to live that intention makes his best effort to do it. And so Suzuki Roshi is the Zen teacher in San Francisco in the 60s. He once said, someone asked him, if I practice zen, will I become enlightened? And he told us it was Lou Richmond who asked him and he told you if your practice is sincere, it's almost as good. Isn't that great? It's not as good it's almost as

good. So you know, it's and sort of follow up. So what is that? So just a bit to follow through to live that life. And I've met people who I've been actually changed by transformed by by being in contact with them and seeing them live a life where they're following through on their deepest intention. And doing it with courage is doing it in a way where they left the palace, they left a lot behind, willing to kind of leave even good things behind because they have this wonderful thing they wanted to do and pursue it. It's inspired me tremendously. It's given me strength and courage for my path to see people like that. Certainly to know what your intention is, or if you don't know, to spend some time considering what it might be. And not to settle for the first answer. And not to settle for something which is maybe what society tells you you should do. And not to settle for the things not not to allow fear and maybe even responsibility to get into Way of what that might be.

And then to consider what are your palaces? What are the things that you have to renounce? What is the things you have to kind of be willing to put aside so that you can follow a sense of purpose. And I think this is a very important thing in our culture, more maybe more than any other culture. Because it seems to me that in modern society, we are offered a phenomenal range of choices of things to do. And expectations, they wish to do them all. A lot of them more than any other society probably ever in history. And so there's so much choice in so many parts ability, so many messages and things you should do that. You know, it's too easy, I think, for somebody to get lost in that process. And what can be lost, I think can be perhaps your deepest intention. Because the deepest intention, deepest wish deepest aspiration, the thing that you want your life most to be about the thing that when you look back into if 20 years from now, you look back and say yes, that's what I wanted my life to be about. If you look back at your deathbed, yes, I did what I want to do with my life. So I don't know if this is right to talk about myself here, but I will

say it this way. To Say it, say this way. I have not known. It's not since 1972. Have I really known what is on television? I told you I had a group of 14 year olds here once I was teaching meditation to big room, a 14 year old likes, I don't know 40 of them or something. And I told them I hadn't known what's on television since 1972. And my credibility dropped. And I had to kind of kind of kind of work at getting my credibility back. So 972 I really have a known little bit, you know, Hear hear a little bit here and there. You know, you're hitting the news or something. And so I kind of had some sense of what TV programs that have been over this time, but I've never seen them and I have have no regrets. I don't feel Oh, you know, that was a lost opportunity. Well, you know, you know, that's, you know, I really kind of missed out on something really important. My heart wasn't fed in the deepest possible ways. You know, that was really, you know, and I have no regrets about that. And I feel very confident, please, during big chunks of that time, I did things that were really meaningful for me. years of monastic life years of retreats, life, years of practice, years of service, many beautiful things. And Shall I go back and, you know, I'm kind of like a Rip Van Winkle kind of person. I have a 12 year old son who's discovered iTunes. And yesterday, he was showing me a music video from I think the mid 1880s And I said, Oh, look at that. It was a Michael Jackson video. I guess it him is called thriller. Right. And I looked at that and I said, wow I think I missed something really big that happened in America. Anyway, but I have no regrets. Because I'm behind a Rip Van Winkle kind of person kind of catching up a little bit now that I have a son I have to. So what do you spend your time doing? And in 20 years and 30 years, you want to look back at all the TV programs you're watching. Great. add them all up, make a list of all the things you've seen, collect them or whatever. Things do you do? A human life is very precious. I think it's very, very precious to be human. And perhaps, I'll tell you the precious story that example assembly using Buddhism. Imagine that there is a blind turtle in the ocean. And once every hundred years, that blind turtle popped its head out into the, through the water into the surface of the ocean and going into the air, only once every I guess to breathe once every hundred years, I guess. And also imagine that there was a log floating in the wide ocean with a hole in the middle of the log, where the head of the

turtle could pop its head up through that log. When it when it surfaced the chances of that blind Turtle popping its head up through that whole log, when it pops his head up every hundred years is more likely than the chance your chances of being born as a human being. As the Buddhist way of saying it's a really rare opportunity to be born as human being. Now, probably most of you don't have a clue how rare it is because you got what you got. You take it for granted.

But it's pretty special, pretty precious. And one of the things that I feel very grateful for from that meditation practice, the practice I've done is the tremendous appreciation I have for the beauty in everyone's hearts. The beauty that good resides in everyone. And that it's such a beautiful thing to realize, to see beauty and people to see how precious each person is where they people are. And it just sometimes it's you know, makes you cry to see that people don't see themselves. And so to realize how precious it is and not to waste this time that we have, but it's better to take the time to find what is most important for you. And to trust that process of keep asking that question what is most important, what is most important? What is most important is the most important to get to new clothes is the most important to have friends on Facebook is the most important to you know, list a lot of things. What's most important? And what happens if you live a life as if what's most important is most important, as if you act on that. And I believe that if you follow that question, what is most important what's your deepest intention? That one will blossom in you? Sooner or later, we'll be what the Buddhists called bodhichitta. The aspiration for awakening desperation for freedom It's the hearts innermost wish to be free.

So that was kind of meant to be a follow up from last week's talk on taking it easy. Those of you who were here last week, so hopefully that works. Let's see we're here last week and kind of consider how those two are connected. So that's what I have to say. Maybe it's your turn. You want to save anybody want to say anything.

Thank you go. That was exactly the inspiration that I needed to kick off. 2010

Great, thank you.

Apparently because you brought it up once in this took. One of the things that's puzzling me is, how do I think about my deepest intention and at the same time,

live with itself

has a no self and

my intention come together.

You know, Buddhism doesn't teach you there's no self. And so you're you better just kind of not being so interested in that question of no self, to the most part, but the deepest intention, as we kind of refine that search or deeper in touch with ourselves through it, that you'll become more and more aware of what's gets in the way of the hearts intention. And so there's some things are really obvious. So, for example, conceit gets in the way, that kind of self being caught up in roles and entity being caught up in what other people think of you and say of you. It gets in the way of that flowering flowing of the heart. So what is it what gets in so there's all kinds of things get in the way. And a lot of the things that a lot of the self thing a lot of things are taking things as me myself in mind gets in the way. And so I think it becomes clear you can go through this process of refining and letting go of a lot of these things without being concerned about you know, is there no self. And but as you do that there's less than

conventionally there's less than self operating. Because you can see sometimes you see someone the way they live in their life. But they say that there's a lot of self in that person, and usually means they're really caught up in themselves. So as you're less caught up in yourself, then there's more access to this deeper sensitivity. It makes sense to you.

One of the dilemmas that I face on a daily basis moment to moment, is the business of being hit with one thing after another, I have a business I got 20 some employees, a lot going on and so Staying aware of intention and letting go of things like conceit and my sense of protecting myself and just being present and kindness and loving and maintaining that is especially difficult with such a busy life.

What are you gonna do about it? Well,

what I tell myself is that if I can manage this in this situation, then I have mastered it.

But I haven't mastered it.

So but that's that's what I tell myself. Is that is that is that a another thought of conceit? That it's somehow

I wouldn't I wouldn't think automatically it's concede. It could be but I don't know. It doesn't occur to me. They wouldn't come to In my mind right away, what comes to mind is that it's either a very interesting and wise experiment to see if you can pull it off. Or it's a form of delusion.

Yes. So this actually is is the issue for me. I mean, do I leave the castle? You know, give up, stop working or in this capacity stop working. Or do I mean it's it's a it's a real dilemma, because in some ways I am. It feels like I'm too busy to maintain my focus and concentration. Yeah.

Right. So I think it's great that you asked us you asked this question. Great. we're grappling with this. So in the spirit or the kind of was trying to convey here and talk today. I'm not interested in giving you the answer. But I think it's what I'm into very interested in doing is to really encouraging you to keep grappling with that question. Keep exploring it that's to explore what you're just brought up and reflect and think and talk to friends about it and just kind of, that's the process of going into your deepest intention. That's the process of going into your deeper debt. What's most important for you? And how does it really fit? What's most important for you? How does it really fit with what you can do? You know, can you really do it? What you most want to do in your life? Can you really do it in the way you've set yourself up? I've known people you know, so it could be that a company of 20 people doesn't quite work for what you really want to do in your life. If you were to maybe a company of 10 would. You know, I don't know what you do exactly. But, but are there some choices and if you made that, that makes a match between your intention and how you live your life, your attention to what the conditions are. So to grapple with and consider and questioning spend time you notice Go away and be quiet for a while. And you really kind of explore and keep asking the question, keep exploring and questioning. That's a beautiful thing to do. And I have some confidence if you keep you keep yourself focused on that question and that grappling that you'll find your way. Are you What do you think? Or you think you've done a lot? One of the things you might if you do if you've been doing this grappling for a long time, at some point, you have to question the assumptions behind your grappling. You know, if you if you're always always questioning, can I do this? Can I do this right or something? But you've been doing for 35 years. Maybe it's time to try something else.

Okay. So I hope that It's meaningful for you to spend some time some quiet time some some kind of creative, creative time, more than quiet times and creative time with yourself with friends, exploring the issue of intention, your intention, what's most meaningful for you how you want your life to be oriented. And if you can have conversation to other people about it, it's very interesting to talk to other people and share and talk about it. Not just not just make it something very personal, private.