First, thank you for being here today. And I certainly appreciate it all of you and quiet in the room and stillness here has got quite quiet and still for one of these days. And I believe that it's an act of generosity to share your practice other people. Some of you might have come for the support to being here with others. But even if you came here for support, by your presence, you're offering support for others who could use a support. And so I think of it as a gift that each of you were here and practicing offering your practice in the presence of others. And I hope that some of the things that could be shared or softened, loosened up that were good for you to shed or loosen up, were shed and loosened up that some of the things that build up some of that cross, the cross surround us that we develop, begin to fall away. And I'll tell you a story that I told on Wednesday morning. That in sometime in the last century, in Thailand, they were going to move a Buddha, there was a very big, very big, greater than life size, plaster statue of the Buddha, that they were going to move maybe from one temple to another. Not sure from where to where but me. And so they came with a crane to pick up this very large plaster Buddha. And they stood they back somehow put straps on it and sort of lifted for turned out that the Buddha was a lot heavier than it could have imagined. And so maybe one of the ropes broke or somehow it fell onto its corner, and some of the plaster broke. And underneath the plaster, there was solid gold. So then they took off the rest of the plaster. In fact, the statue was solid gold, maybe not solid all the way through, but you know, so it was cast. And what they discovered, what they were able to reconstruct was about two 300 years earlier. This statue had stood at the capital of Thailand back then. And the Burmese army was invading Thailand. And they didn't want the Burmese to take all their gold. So they plaster the statue in order to hide the fact that it was gold. And a plaster Buddha is not worth that much for you know the Burmese Mark I think plaster back. And so, in fact, the Buddha was safe from the Burmese and but then over time, people forgot there was plaster. And I mean, they forgot that it was plastered forgot that it was gold. And until they tried to move it in the last century and so now you can go see it in Bangkok, it's there and it's this big gold Buddha. So a national treasure and Thailand. And so we also build up crust, plaster alter egos, defenses, resentments hurts fears that we can kind of tight and crusted with. And part of what practice does. Hopefully they like today. If it didn't break off, you know, at least they got a kind of a crack in your plaster. And maybe you can guess that there’s gold inside and maybe you can see it a little bit shining. And eventually you'll find the solid gold that's there. So a big part of practice is shedding the stuff that builds up the extra stuff that cross the personas, the masks, the things, attachments that clings they're grasping the fears, the ways they're frozen, all the kind of things that are stuck and those get loosened, they get cracked off, they get dissolved off, they kind of get shed. And a big part of Buddhist practice is the shedding of all this extra stuff. And so I hope that whatever that built up for you this week, that was not that is not needed, could little bit he put down...
or shed. The other part of Buddhist practice is not just about shedding, but it's also about picking up and we shed To become freer, but we also shed so that we can choose what we pick up.

And it's not There's wonderful things to pick up and to live by and guide our life by. And so then what Buddhism there's such things as the Brahma vihara, as the divine abodes, the four places to live. The four kinds of love that I've mentioned today, loving kindness, compassion, appreciative joy and equanimity. There is ethics be living by the by the virtues of the five precepts. There is generosity, picking up the act of generosity, there is picking up a dedication, maybe even a devotion, if you like that kind of word, to practice, to goodness, to service to being in the world. There is picking up confidence. And part of the one of the purposes of practice is in fact, to develop an unshakable confidence. That means that in the face of challenges in the face of danger, even of all kinds, that that confidence we have is unshakable, we can sit upright, we can look the challenge right in the face. And something about it and us doesn't get afraid something inside of us doesn't pull back or shut down. And that's one of the purposes of practices develops unshakable confidence. And we pick it up, we appreciate it. live by it. and develop, we pick up sometimes the power of forgiveness, sometimes the power of truth. I think sometimes we forgive and sometimes we stand in the truth. I think that in Buddhism, I'd never heard of any Buddhist teaching. About if someone hits you turn the other cheek, give them the other cheek, but rather the Buddhist thing. I think it's a has a profound thing that teaching, it's not I want to dismiss it. But if anything, the Buddhist point of view is if someone hits you look them right in the eye. Don't turn around, don't turn away, don't offer them more. Just look them right in the eye. You know, that just look at them and see what's there. The and the art of the former apices of the San Francisco Zen Center, Blanche Hartman, a huge turning point in her life. She didn't tire talking about it. And their Dharma talks. She probably talked about it here when she came, was during the Vietnam War, going to a protest to protest the Vietnam War. at San Francisco State. She wasn't a student there. But she was she went there to be part of a protest. And somehow she was pushed up against maybe the National Guard, and the protesters and face to face just to just maybe and the two of them looked each other in the eye. They saw each other and something in the seat looking into the eye The National Gaurdman changed her life forever. And I don't remember what she said but but there was something about the compassion, the care the human contact, that changed her. Or are the story that I was told on retreat once about someone who had been in the south during the Civil Rights time and had gone to a street corner to stand in protest in a demonstration nonviolent demonstration in favor of civil rights. And with a whole group of people and pickup truck came with some that I forget how that is she described them but certainly by two people. And who didn't like what they were doing in a truck stopped in front of them and they jumped out and the people these white men beat beat them up. So the next day, they went and stood on the same street corner to continue their protest. Same people came by jumped out of the pickup truck and beat them up again. Next day they go back and stand in the same street corner. Now, is this stupid? Or is this courageous? Is this living a life of confidence standing in truth? Looking at it right in the eye? Look, this is what's happening. So sure enough, the third day, this woman told me the pickup truck that came again.

And the same guys jumped out and the guy stood above her with his fist. Ready to hit her again. And she looked up at him and they looked into each other's eyes. And the guy said, What are you doing here? What do you make your equal maybe couldn't believe it? They were they're like, ready to be beat up again. They weren't defending themselves, right? They were very, you know, they were trained and civil this and nonviolent disobedience or nonviolent protesting back then. And so when he asked, What are you doing here, that was the opening. And then they had a conversation. And there was that day, there was no beating. That said that they talked what was going on now for the rest of the store. I don't know, you know, if there was a big I don't know if that changed the South but but, um, but you know, a change something. So we look at right in the eye, so pick up the power of truth and confidence and be

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able to be there. So, I want to read to you this passage from 1753 by a French philosopher named Diderot. And he wrote, having strayed into an immense forest during the night, I have only a small light to guide me. I come across a stranger, who says to be my friend, blow out your candle, in order to better find your way. Blow out your candle to better phones, you find your way. This stranger is the Theologian. So back in 753 theologians nowadays when we say that the Dharma teacher blow up the light. So, you know, the more dark things become, the more we're allowed to see something else. So the greater the challenges that we live under, the greater things are seen. Things that sometimes for some people have been invisible. Or they've been visible, the degree to which they're, they're some of the great stresses of our society standout and highlights highlight. And it's important to see it in a way that in the past, maybe only some people saw, but a lot of people ignored it. So now they're coming out and everyone can see. But more importantly, when things go dark, and things are challenging, we can begin finding our values, finding what we think is most important, when we're asked to call upon the most important values that we have, in a way that's meaningful and consequential and important. That way, we can't ignore them. If our life is comfortable, everything's going along, you know, whatever. And it's a wonderful thing to have these important values come forth. And I think that we all have the opportunity to question our values to reconsider what we want to build our life by on what we want to pick up, and what we have confidence in what we want to devote ourselves to. And if we kind of consider this and engage in a way of practice shedding what gets in the way, actively considering our values and our confidence and what we want to work we believe in, I think that we won't get very frayed. And we won't get bitter, because we'll have agency will have something we can do. And I hope that whether things get more difficult, or things get better over the next months and years. I hope that whatever challenges we go through now that we use the opportunity to become better people, to let the bad what's better than us to come forth and live in us and help us and help our society. And I hope that this kind of sitting for the day and being quiet and getting in touch and being intimate, maybe touching into qualities of love or empathy, that this is an important part of the journey to become better people and better people for our society.

So thank you for being here. I hope all of you will have a good weekend. I hope this day is sets your weekend in a good place and that you can offer whatever goodness you have to the people that you encounter over this weekend. Because I think sharing our goodness is something that many people can benefit from. Thank you