

2018-08-20 When Thoughts Stop

Tue, 9/1 9:37AM • 38:40

SUMMARY KEYWORDS

thoughts, people, stop, poem, open, life, space, dying, zen, emptiness, stepping, called, sit, meet, peaceful, moment, empty space, wonderful, hear, japanese

SPEAKERS

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You might want to stay if your eyes closed you can take in. So this poem is called for freedom. As a bird soars high in the free holding of the wind, clear of the uncertainty of ground, opening the imagination of wings into this into the grace of emptiness to fulfill new voyages. May your life awaken to the call of its freedom as the embrace of the earth welcomes all who called that all be called they're taking deep into itself. The right solitude of a seed, allowing it time to shed the grip of its former form and give way to a deeper generosity that will one day send it for a tree into springtime. May all that holds you fall from its hungry ledge into the pregnant surge of your heart. As a bird soars high in the free holding of the wind, clear of the certainty of ground, opening the imagination of wings into the grace of emptiness. To fulfill new voyaging. May your life awaken to the call of its free

So this afternoon I visited with a man who is dying and as we were talking we had a beautiful talk and this man is quite peaceful and clearly Looking his death right in the eye. And he, he spread and we were talking at one point he spread his arms open, kind of like the wings of a bird. Opening the imagination of wings into the grace of emptiness. He kind of opened his arms like, you know, like spread them wide. And I don't remember what he said. Exactly. But he was talking about his kind of opening up to this death that was coming. And there was this beautiful gracious kind of, and it's very hands kind of open, they created this empty space in front of him and his kind of openness and stepping forward or receiving or it's quite a beautiful thing to sit with.

We have this expression in English sometimes, you know. gives us different versions of everything, stopping in your tracks. And, you know, pausing in mid sentence stopping in the middle of a thought. And sometimes we encounter situations where we stop our thinking stops, we stopped mid thought, the middle of our tracks kind of and what's it like? What is it? What does it take for you to come to the place where you your thoughts stop. But it isn't just because you're afraid or isn't that you're somehow blank, but it's more like your stop your thoughts stop. And it's like you opening up your wings into the empty space. Grace of space kind of like, willingly opening late kind of. And certainly there are times that some people experience when they enter into certain occasions when past and future kind of are not that relevant as I was when you sit with someone who's dying and can be and that seemed very pregnant. That moment there of sitting being with him talking with him. And it didn't know the past and future didn't matter. You know, just here. But you know, I've been glad that I had a busy day doing lots of things with people and meeting with people and I stepped into this really peaceful room, but I stepped into his room. wasn't sure if he was meditating or sleeping, sleeping in a kind of hospital bed and so he said quietly something like you know, are you sleeping or any opened his eyes right there so it was clearly he wasn't sleeping He said no, no, come in.

And remember once that will visit this today I reminded me of some years ago as an a baby, a sunny day, warm day, nice day, blue skies sitting in the backyard of someone who was a gardener and lots of vegetables and plants and garden, you know, the kind of you know, a little bit lush with wonderful plants sitting on the porch Looking out and visiting this woman to talk talk to her about making about the plans or the plan to design of the memorial service for her son who died. young son of you know, certainly it was a time that's kind of things going in the moment stopped. There wasn't past and future and there wasn't. There wasn't many thoughts. It was kind of like my wings open wide and things got very still. And it was kind of, you know, kind of powerful on the stillness of sitting there and looking at the plants in the garden and the blue sky. Clearly The moment a beautiful day. But you know, her son had just died. And, you know, we were just felt like you could hear, I don't know, they could say they can hear a pin drop by but you could hear a teardrop, maybe you could, you know, just like everything was stopped, everything was clear there was a clarity, there was quite something. So what does it take for you to have your thoughts stop, mid sentence mid thought, but to it, you know, to just in a very full way pregnant way to be here and open and present. And to kind of feel the lightness of this moment as if this is it. Or this whatever was happening now. So just now that your wings open, wide open opening the imagination of wings into the grace of emptiness As a bird soars high in the free holding of this of the wind, clear the certainty of ground. Someone read this to me this poem I didn't know this poem is by john Donoghue. Read it to me, to a group of us after having breakfast together. And folks kind of, you know, you don't usually read poetry after breakfast. But when I heard those lines, I also had the same feeling as the, as this, there's a line goes, opening the imagination of wings, opening the wings into the grace of emptiness, spreading of the wings and opening and stepping into this moment. I could feel myself with these lines being read, just kind of this lifting and freeing and just kind of like I could feel my heart almost so And in the space of the moment, the freedom of here and now, it was kind of lovely to have a little poem for this and I asked for a copy of the poem and then I thought about what I was going to think about what I was going to want to talk about here. I didn't really want to talk about anything. But I did want to open it I very much want to sit here and be with you.

And, but I wanted to somehow try to share convey or something, this feeling that I had when I saw this poem and then later in the day met with this man who was dying and then later in the day, still a lake for trees and around the lake, ducks floating around a little bit of sand on the edge of the lake. And they just swam back and forth across the lake. The evening sun was getting going down quite lovely. Just for a while there other people swimming in the lake, then there was just one person and then on the other side of the lake kind of it just you know, is that a moment also something stops swimming there, my back and forth. Then what is it? What is it that is possible in the moment that doesn't require much that doesn't need much from us or from the world where thoughts stop, the heart opens where we feel that just dismissed moment is for just this moment is enough. But this moment is enough because there are no thoughts to tell us stories that it should be different. No thoughts that say, tomorrow Oh, tomorrow is dangerous are no thoughts tell us stories about what happened yesterday. But this moment has no the kind of no thoughts or thoughts that don't fill the space.

So to somehow somehow try to convey I guess is the best word rather than speak what was For happening for me, it was intimate for me here. I kind of had these very different poems or quotes that kind of thought. And there's a wonderful thing that I received from English marketing Ajahn Amaro, or he doesn't know the source apparently, but it has to do with his teacher in Thailand. Ajahn Chah. And there was a visiting Zen student who came in Thailand to visit us on Ajahn's famous Thai meditation teacher. And the fact that this was a Zen student has some bearing I guess, because kind of the way the exchange went. Because then you sometimes ask simple questions, kind of, but the present people they don't ask us any instant questions is like, you know, How's the weather? They might ask, how's the

weather, but they're asking something profound, like I had a Zen master in Japan, who said It was really hot weather. And he said to me,

I don't remember us anymore. But he said something simple like, do you like the hot weather? Or what's the what's the hot weather like for you? And I made it's almost I don't know what I said, Is it nice? It's nice. And he looked at me like, intensely like, and he said, That's 20% answer. I got graded. You didn't know because he said people don't ask simple questions like this is profound and you know, you just missed the boat. So the Zen student asked Ajahn Chah, how old are you? Do you do you live? Do you live here? Hear all year round. So, you know, you innocent question, you know how old are you? And you live here at this monastery all the time. But you know Zen student Zen person, you know, like you have to kind of like ah, maybe. So this is what Ajahn Chah said as an answer. I live nowhere. There is no place you can find me. I have no age. to age, you have to exist. And to think you exist is already a problem. Don't make problems then the world has none either. Don't make yourself there's nothing more to say. And probably he just sent them off. I got sent off by a Zen master in Japan. He pointed to the doors clearly times, I believe, because I went to pay respects to his teacher who's quite elderly. And after you've been paying respects, we sat and had tea together. And my Japanese was rudimentary. But we were talking in Japanese, and there was a translator and be American who could translate with me. And we're having tea are sitting there at the table talking and, zen master was talking a little bit and he said, some point, he said, made a statement. And it was kind of a powerful statement. And so I want to make sure I got it right and He said people cannot become enlightened. So I wanted to make sure I heard it right. So I thought I was repeating it back to him and repeat it back. He said he pointed to the door and said, Come back 20 years before and so the man I was with who spoke more Japanese, he said, Do you mean 20 years later? And he said no 20 years before it was clear we had to leave right then it's like he was like, you go well, what had happened was that he said people cannot be enlightened but the word for people and carrots Japanese is almost the same. So you know, I was trying to repeat repeated so but what I came out of my mouth, not Much Japanese was you saying carrots cannot be enlightened? And so, Matthew go So, that was that was the different kind of thoughts stop. But here, but you know, I got this distracted so what what does it mean? What can it mean for you? How could you say this? How could you be? What reference point you have of how to exist is any circumstance in your whole life where this kind of makes some sense what Ajahn Chah says, any state of being or being at ease walking on the beach or waking up from a nap or being with an intimate person in some kind of way that time stops or being with someone where they're dying and everything falls away and meditating or what, where it makes sense to say something like this I live nowhere. There is no place you can find me. I have no age.

To age you have to exist. And to think you exist is already a problem. Don't make problems, then the world has none either. Don't make itself. There's nothing more to say. What is that? There's nothing more to say what's the most loving thing said in the most loving voice. The most caring like this is the most caring and important thing that anybody could look to you and say to you, there's nothing more to say. What if their wings opened up as they said it or your wings open up the wings of your mind. Thoughts stopped and you just hear things big. Still are open or vast or infinite? Yes, it's true. Nothing more to say to say just makes a mess of it just breaks it up.

And I thought about this. This is not a poem, but it almost could be. This is actually a very important little passage for people who are chaplains. It was written by a Christian minister who worked as a chaplain a bit and so I think wonderful statement about how to be together with people. We are all healers. It's kind of nice. We're all healers. We are all healers who can reach out to offer health We all our patients are in constant need of help. And when we look at healing, as creating space for the stranger is clear that we should be willing and able to off offer this as offer this so much needed form of

hospitality. Therefore, healing means, first of all, the creation of an empty but friendly space where those who suffer can tell their story to someone who can listen with real attention. Our most important question as healers is not what to say or do but how to develop enough inner space where the story can be received. Healing is the humble but also very demanding task of creating an offering a friendly, empty space where strangers can reflect on their pain and suffering without fear and find the confidence that makes them look for new ways right in the center of their confusion. We are all healers. And then the healing that this passage offers is the healing of hospitality of offering a friendly empty space to receive someone and hear them and receptive receptive receptivity. And this also works best this Creating a friendly empty space. If something inside of us gets quiet or still stops the incessant thinking and comparing and worrying and wondering and ambition and desires and wishes and hopes and us, just think that'd be still quiet. This wonderful meeting I had today with a man who's dying, you would not have been wonderful. If I couldn't meet him in the space that he was in, he was in this beautiful base of friendly emptiness. Clearly, he was very peaceful for him. He was kind of looking forward to dying. He was clearly dying. He stopped he stopped eating and he was he was quite sick, is quite sick. But he was welcoming idea for him. The letting go into his space. He was a for him was kind of like a coming home to What had been what were the things that have been most important for him his whole life, his spirituality, his awakening, his clarity that he had on this, this was kind of like that always coming together as all when he lived his whole life concentrated, it wasn't like he This was his purpose of his life, but it all kind of came to a head or came concentrated or became rear itself up, there was nothing else anymore. There wasn't, you know, the car needed to have oil change or honey, we're out of milk, you know, or it's like, he was just here. So he was in this wonderful base of like, you know, connecting something that was without thought and peaceful and empty. And to meet him and to connect with him. I have to be the same way. So we could share that. That's perfectly why he wanted me there. To share that we meet that and this passage about who are all being healers and offering a friendly empty space for the stranger. It's possible to have a very deep connection to a stranger in two minutes.

And some of you may have had that. I mean, to me give a dramatic example. If you're walking down the sidewalk and somebody else is walking and there's no one else around and the person suddenly Falls is dying, and you're the one their horse or maybe not dying, but suddenly, you know, as some terrible condition and you call the ambulance, they're coming. Ready, take a few minutes. It's just the two of you and they look at you with appreciation and love. Everything's taught with a time maybe your thoughts stop. It's just you. And it's like now you they're the most important person in the world. And the contact and the connection and looking and caring is maybe as deep as it would be for almost anyone that you've ever met and you know that you've been close to for our lifetime. What are the circumstances in which you see a stranger? And you allow yourself the possibility of seeing beyond the surface. When I was 19 eyes when I first learned, I noticed in myself, I don't know when it started, but I noticed that I had the capacity to go and be in a place with lots of people and have most of my thoughts be commentary and judgments about the people I saw to to to to do. It was I mean, I was kind of shocked. What am I doing? In and also that made my mind my entire to do with when I started we saw how much desperate which is why and what separation and what waste of time to be judging people and commenting upon their hair or their clothes or their, how they're walking or you know, all kinds of things about them. Isn't there Don't we have better things to do as people, we meet people and we have an amazing capacity for caring for each other for connecting to each other, to be present for each other, to be healers for each other. To be here to be present for this person that's here for yourself. So another poem. This one is by Roger Keys. It's called a Hokusai Says. Hokusai says, looking carefully. He says, pay attention. Notice. He says, keep looking. Stay curious. He says there is no end to seeing. He says, Look forward to getting old. He says, keep changing. You just get to be more of who you really are. He says, get stuck. Accept it. repeat yourself as long as it's interesting. He's he says, keep doing

what you love. He says Keep praying. He says every one of us is a child. Every one of us is ancient. Every one of us has a body. He says every one of us is frightened. He says every one of us has to find a way to live with fear. He says everything is alive. shells, buildings, people, fish, mountains, trees. Wood is alive. Water is alive. Everything has its own life. Everything lives inside us. He says live with the world inside of you. He says it doesn't matter if you draw or write books. It doesn't matter if you saw wood or catch fish. It doesn't matter if you sit at home or stare at the ends on your veranda or the shadows. The trees and grasses in your garden. It matters that you care. It matters that you feel. It matters that you notice. It matters that if life lives through, it matters that life lives through you. Contentment is life living through you. Joy is life, living through you. satisfaction and strength is life living through you. Peace is life living through you. He says Don't be afraid. Look, feel that life take you by the hand that life lived through you. Well, that was too good to be true that it stopped working because I was going to say again What happens when thoughts stop? What happens when the words stop in your mind?

So we sit, practice mindfulness. But it's helpful when we practice mindfulness. for it not to be another activity of more thinking and more planning and more expectations and more trying to attain something and get something keeping my mind busy. To really settled into meditation is to kind of begin stepping into that place where thoughts were the wings of our heart or our mind open and fly. So we're being carried on the wind. Have a space of goodness of freedom of love. Because we know how to get quiet, or thoughts of the past or thoughts of the future self preoccupation. So that we're ready to meet the Stranger by creating an open, friendly space, who knows when you're going to meet someone who needs you the most? Who knows when you're going to meet someone who's dying. knows when you meet someone whose young son just died. They don't need much from you. They have to be smart to figure out complicated things say wonderful things. Sometimes what they need is presence. And to be able to Meet with someone who knows how to have their thoughts stop their worry and their inner chatter and their sphere and they're trying to figure things out all stop. So we're just here with this. And so mindfulness is kind of a, a, you know, it's kind of a, a willingness to step into dying in the best possible terms of our way over and over again, into that peace into that letting go into that freedom and space. That this man that I saw today was clearly opening to lunch. Stepping into and in the kind of fulfillment of a life rather than the end of a life. So I'll read one more poem, this is by the Buddha.

Don't chase the past or long for the future. The past is left behind. The future is not yet reached right here with what is have insight into whatever phenomena that has arisen not faltering and not agitated by knowing it, when develops the mind ardently to what should be done today. Who knows? That may come tomorrow there's no bargaining with mortality whoever dwells ardent active day and night is says that peaceful sage, one who has an auspicious day. So here so this emphasis on really being present here is a powerful thing to do. And then none of what I've ever said this yet today but so that you know had all these wonderful, wonderful events today in the course of the day. A lot of it had to do with how these different events situations open the heart, open the situation, and there was just a lot of love. That was possible. Love with the person who's dying love with the person who read the poem. me this morning. Love with people at breakfast. It was just wonderful to feel the connection, the space. That was directly possible. Because certain way of thinking had stopped. There was a pause, there was space, there was openness, there was a willingness, willingness to put aside so much of the static that we have that we carry with us. And just here, just here. So here we are. And I apologize for speaking so much. Because I didn't really want to speak about something. I wanted to be here with you this way. But I didn't have to do it without saying some words. So this is how it's how it was today. So I hope that inspires you. I hope it gives challenges you to consider stopping in the middle of your thoughts and opening the wings of your mind. wings have your attention wide into a vast space and let yourself be carried and lifted and open to the possibilities of meeting yourself, the person you're with the world

around you in a way that is profoundly peaceful and loving as well. It's a beautiful life we can live but to really feel the beauty and the great value of it. That does make require a willingness and ability to some degree. Pause in the middle of your thoughts. Because the thoughts, chances are that this possibility I'm trying to point you today is not going to be found by thinking your way into it. But you got to stop in the middle of your tracks. You stop in the middle of your thoughts and find what's on the other side of your thoughts just beyond them. Thank you all