

2018-10-08 Caring For The Earth Caring For Oneself

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SPEAKERS

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So good. Can you hear me? Okay? loud. Okay. A little bit louder. So is this good now? Okay. So starting the first Sunday of October, for this next seven days is what's called Earth care week. Some years ago when there was an international meeting of insight meditation teachers. We were talking about environmental issues, climate change issues and various things. And one of the things that came out of that was that, let's celebrate one week a year earthcare caring for the earth, and in October, so, yesterday was a start. And in that regard, I will somehow talk on that topic. And kind of there's a couple of coincidences that have come into play with this date. The first is that a few days before on Wednesday, we finished completed putting in solar electric panels on a roof upstairs here. And so and got plugged in and got started and offer running. And a few days later I was shown the report we get into regular reports with and it told us how much carbon we were not, we did not put into the atmosphere, which was very nice to see reducing our carbon footprint. And so as I admit, I'm very happy about this and say a wonderful thing that not only for our sake and for the environment sake, but it's To some degree, being a Buddhist center being a, we're a little bit ideally religious groups would be a little bit of role models for some good goodness in the world. So maybe in a small way, we're a role model versus something good. So that was one a coincidence. The other coincidence was the headlines today or the news today from the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change. And it was quite dramatic, that news, what they've come up with three years of studies, I guess, all the data on climate change, and apparently a fair amount of debate amongst different government organizations looking at this issue, and to do agree on a report. And the report is that they say that we have 12 years to make an important difference in this whole climate too, because there's clearly the earth is warming up. And, and apparently the limit is still bad, but the limit that they want to see it go is that from pre industrial times to, to modern times, they want us don't want to see the average temperature of the globe go up more than 1.5 centigrade. And, but right now it's they say it's on track to go above that up to 2.0 unless big changes are put in place in the next 12 years. And if we're not able to do that in 12 years, and we get up there to a two degree temperature raise, there's going to be major already there's going to be huge changes without that but if it goes out that 1.5 degree rate, it's going to be pretty dramatic what's going to happen and they, you know, talked a lot more about the rising sea more rising sea levels even higher. They talked about salt the ice caps melting more. They talked about, you know, there's they predicted some, like 10 million people who live close to the coasts would be seriously affected by flooding and all kinds of things. And I don't remember all that detail and data, but it was pretty dramatic what they said. And as you know, some of us have been hearing such things for a while. And, and it's certainly for some people quite concerning this should happen. And some people care enough about this, that, that they're changing their lifestyles and trying to promote greener uses of all kinds of things and trying to reduce the carbon. The biggest impact on this is carbon in the atmosphere.

And so the idea is to try to get that down and reduce that. And so how do we live in this world with these kinds of news?

How do we live with the emotions we might have the feelings, we have the confusions, we might have It's I don't know how it is for you all. But you know, I'm not a climate change scientist. And it's kind of invisible to some degree, we have all kinds of see in the news, all kinds of climate, things are changing and fairly dramatic. But this idea of 12 years from now, somewhere in the future, I believe that I believe the they have to take this data seriously. But a kind of little bit belongs to kind of the, the world that we who do mindfulness practice, don't live in so much don't emphasize. We emphasize living here and now in the present moment, no direct experience. And now we're talking about, you know, years from now and something that can't be completely certain. How do we live with that? How do we relate to that then on that? So the Buddha didn't only live in the press The moment he told stories, any tell stories about the past and what kind of past that was. We don't know I mean, I kind of think of it is fables, you know, tales, myths and things like that. And there is a Buddhist myth or story that the Buddha tells of the origins in beginning like Genesis, Buddhist Genesis. And, you know, every good religion should have a Genesis story, and so will will accommodate the requirement. And so the Buddha tells a story, and, and remarkably, it's a story of how people live effects the environment and the environment changes dramatically depending on the ethic ethical behavior of people or people or beings. And there's a direct correlation between the ethical behavior of people and the deterioration, the unethical behavior of people, and deterioration of the environment. And, you know, and this is a story that was told 2500 years ago, where they didn't have the benefit of the inter governmental Panel on Climate Change, to come up with the data. So I wanted to tell you read some of this story, this Buddhist Genesis origin myth, and what you should know about this is that it seems that the kind of understanding of the universe that this comes out of is belongs to the yo yo theory of the universe, that the universe expands and then contracts and expands and contracts and does this endlessly. We're just right now in the middle of one of these expansion contractions that are just suited for human life and, and climate change. And all these things, it was right where I missed this particular zone. But then it's got this got to change. And when things expand, and go outwards, the universe expands outwards, then planets don't exist anymore. Stars don't exist anymore. And physical embodied beings don't exist anymore. And what there is is beings who dwell, mind made, feeding under light, self luminous, moving through the air, glorious. So there's these non physical, mind made beings that are kind of floating around somewhere in some very high heaven, there's all these levels and levels and levels of heavenly realms that Buddhism posits kind of in this mythology and the very highest realm is where all beings end up for a very long time when the world has expanded. And then at some point, you know, the universe contracts, the yo yo comes back, contracts. And so then things begin kind of, you know, coming back to kind of the, what we recognize. So here's a story. There comes a time, when, sooner or later, after a long period, this world, this universe contracts.

At the time of contraction, the beings their dwell, mind made feeding under light, self luminous, moving through the air, glorious They stay like that for a long time. But sooner or later, after a very long period, this universe begins to expand again. At that time of expansion, those beings having passed away from there are most to be born. Here in our particular world. Here they dwell, mine made, feeding on delight, self luminous, moving through the air, glorious, and they stayed there for a very long time. at that period, there was just one mass of water, and all was darkness, blinding darkness. Neither moon nor sun appeared, no constellations or stars appeared. Night and day were not distinguished, nor months nor four nights, no years or seasons, and no male and female beings being reckoned just as beings. And sooner or later, after a very long period of time, savory Earth spread itself over the waters. Where those beings were, it looked just like the skin that forms itself over hot milk as it cools, it was endowed with color, smell and taste. It was the color of fine ghee or butter, and it was very sweet like pure wild

honey. Then, some being of a greedy nature said, I say, What can this be and tasted the savory Earth on its finger. In so doing it became taken with a flavor and craving a rose in it. Then other beings taking their cue from that one also tasted this stuff with their fingers. They too are taken, taken with a flavor and craving a rose in them. So they said to with their hands breaking off pieces of the stuff to in order to heat it. And the result of this was that their self luminous, luminosity disappeared, and the result of the disappearance of their self luminosity, the moon and the sun appeared. Night and day were distinguished months and four nights appeared, and the year and its seasons. To that extent the world re-evolved. And those beings continued for a very long time feasting on the savory Earth, feeding on it, and being nourished by it. And as they did so the bodies became coarser and a difference in looks developed among them. Some beings became good looking, others ugly, and the good looking ones despise the others saying we are better looking than they are. Because they became arrogant and conceited about their looks, the savory Earth disappeared. And at this, they came together and lamented crying on three. And then, when the savory Earth had disappeared, a fungus cropped up in the manner of a mushroom.

It was of a good color, smell and taste. And it was the color of fine ghee or butter. And it was very sweet, like pure wild honey. And those beings said to an eighth, the fungus, and this lasted for a very long time, and they continued to feed on the fungus, so their bodies became coarser still. And the difference in their looks increased still more, and the good looking ones despise the others. And because they became arrogant, conceited about their looks, the sweet fungus disappeared. You Next, creepers appeared shooting up like bamboo. And they were very sweet like pure Wild Honey, and those beings said to and fed on those creepers. And as they did so their bodies became even coarser and the difference in their looks increased still more. And it continued this way. Then, after the creepers had disappeared, rice appeared in open spaces, free from powder and from husks, fragrant and clean grained. And what they had taken in the evening for supper had grown again, it was ripe in the morning. And what they take in the morning for breakfast was right, it began in the evening, with no sign of reaping, and these beings set to and fed on this rice. And this lasted for a very long time. As they did so their bodies became coarser still, and the difference in their looks became even greater. And the females developed female sex organs and the males develop male organs. And the women became excessively preoccupied with men. And the men became excessively preoccupied with women. And I'm sure there are other options.

Owing to this excessive preoccupation with each other, passion was aroused, and their bodies burnt with lust. And later because of this burning, they indulged in sexual activity.

And those beings who in those days indulge in sex were not allowed into a village or a town for one or two months. Accordingly, those who indulged for an excessively long period in such immoral practices began to build themselves dwellings so as to indulge undercover. Now it occurred to one of those beings who was inclined to laziness. Well now, why should I be bothered together rice in the evening for supper in the morning for breakfast? Why shouldn't I gather it all at once per both meals? And he did so. Then another one came to him and said, Come on, let's go rice gathering. No need my friend. I've gathered enough for both meals. Then the other following his example, gathered enough rice for two days at a time saying that should be about enough. Then another being came and said to the second one, come on, let's go rice gathering. No need my friend. I've gathered enough for two days, and that one decided to gather for four days. And then the next round someone gathered for eight days. However, when those beings made a store of rice and lived on that husk, powder and husk began to envelop the grain, and we're was raped did not grow again. And the cut place showed and the rice grew in separate clusters. Then one greedy natured being, while watching over his own plot, took another plot that was not given to him, enjoyed the fruits of it. So they seized hold of him and said, You've done

a wicked thing, taking another person's plot like that. Don't ever do such a thing again. I won't, he said. But he did the same thing. A second and third time. Again, he was seized and rebuked in some hidden with their fists, some with stones and some with sticks. And in this way, taking what was not given, and censoring and lying and punishment took the origin then those beings came together and lamented the arising of these evil things among them, taking what was not given, censoring lying and punishment. And they thought, suppose we were to a point a certain being would show anger when anger was do censure once and censor those who deserve it and banish those who deserved banishment. And in return, we would grant him a share of the rice. So they went to one among them the most pleasant and capable and asked him to do this for them in return for a share of the rice. And he agreed, and he was called the People's Choice. And then it goes on little bit more, but that's basically up to date. The People's Choice and so the kind of the moral of the story is that crazy Greed has bad impact on on beings. And people get coarser and coarser and one thing leads to another. And it you know, and eventually we have to have governments and people that have private property and all these things happen that weren't really necessary if people hadn't been so greedy and craving and wanting and all this stuff. So this kind of ideal, you know, may be kind of a little bit harks back to the monastic communities that the Buddha created, where there was everything was held pretty much in common. There was no private land and private buildings and private food, it was all shared together in a collective kind of way. very different than how the rest of society sets itself up. So here, this is, you know, it's a story of human greed, craving, stealing and all kinds of things. Taking what is not Given affects the environment and things change and change and change. And so the Buddha connected this to the ethical life to life of craving, the life of selfishness, of conceit, of stealing and all kinds of things. And I think that it's not a too difficult exercise to consider that manmade climate change. A big part of it can be traced to something like not greed, no one wants to admit they're greedy, overconsumption, wanting more.

And now we see the impact. And we see the impact all around us of what goes on. Even here in California, you don't have to go very far to see the impact of all this and how people live and how it affects the environment and It's pretty damn pretty dramatic in some places. So the Buddhist analysis upon this is twofold, I think one is to look at our own ethical behavior, ethical here means how our behavior affects the world around us. And how the quality of our intention, the quality of the, of the motivation for this behavior, what's the quality, to take a really good, serious, deep inner look to see what's really in there. This emphasis emphasis of really taking a deep look inside is something that Buddhism has champions to a great degree, almost like taking an inventory. Go and really look and see. Is there anything that resembles greed, hatred or delusion within? Is there anything that resembles craving greed? aversion Is there anything that that that is selfish inside of us. Mostly in Buddhism, the encouragement is if you can find that in you, you'll discover that it hurts. You'll discover having those dwell inside those forces inside of you. It's not healthy for you, you'll feel incense, you don't have to take anybody's word for it. If you're able to do the mindfulness exercise, or really going inside to tap into the quality of your heart, you'll feel the problems of having those things inside of you. And that's the usual analysis. But every once in a while and these kinds of texts and this mythic story, they are Buddhists, and we'll talk about how that also has an effect in the outer world. And it's not you don't you're not free. You're not you're not kind of like a you know, it's not it's not, you know, stuff like our lives have no effect. In the world around us. And when we have 6 million people in the Bay Area 36 million people in California 300 and 60 million, maybe people united states, what is its population of the world now 7 billion, something like that, give or take a few. And so the collective impact is so huge. I was struck, I said this yesterday that when I lived in the mountains, and lived in the wilderness, I used to marvel that the wilderness didn't need us that, you know, I was living there for years and walking the grounds and, and, you know, if we weren't there, our monastery, I wouldn't, you know, I don't think the wilderness you know, would have noticed but we, you know, but now we're We are the creatures In the

world of making the biggest impact on the environment around us. So how do we care for that? What do we do? What's our role? How do we do something? And I think that coming from Buddhism, what I think is nice is to consider how that the interrelatedness, the close interconnection between the quality of our heart, the quality of our inner life, and the quality of the environment that we live around us. That, that if we want to care for the earth, for the environment that we that we live in, that we share, and that we don't have to see it as a diminishment of ourselves or a, a that we have to, you know, somehow burden ourselves with restraint. burden ourselves now with guilt or shame that we know we're not allowed to have these things. Now I'm supposed to be less I have to be an ascetic or I have to kind of reduce my, you know, simplify my lifestyle and it's a burden, you know, all these pleasures that I have is you know be given up and my security all kinds of things will be given up and it's just a drag. If that's the attitude, that's the understanding it is a drag, and who's going to be motivated for that a lot of people are going to just kind of blow Blow it off. But Buddhism has this wonderful emphasis on the interplay of the invite outer environment, and the inner inner environment.

And, and to feed that is to discover how simplifying our lives, how caring for the environment, caring for other people, is a way of caring for ourselves is a way not of diminishing ourselves or decreasing our joy. But there's a way to do it, that it enhances our life enhances our inner life. and enhances our joy. In Buddhism, they talk a lot about what's called the bliss of renunciation. I think for a lot of people, those two words shouldn't go together. It's just like the no it doesn't compute. But the bliss of renunciation so the task is to discover how is it that we actually are better off simplifying our lives. That is a powerful exercise. And that's an exercise I think, that can make it sustainable and inspiring for people to simplify their lives. So how to drive your cars less how to switch from gas to electrical cars, how to hang your this into is a great name, inter government pen on climate change, suggest that you hang your clothes to dry on an outside clothesline instead of a dryer. I mean, you know if it's just you, it's not gonna make it Difference who's going to notice one way or the other? It doesn't matter, right? So might you might as well, you know, you don't know, you know, it's not gonna have any negligible any serious impact anything if you do do it. Right. So why bother? But we start having millions of people doing that the impact can be huge. And we've, we've seen big changes this way. When I grew up in Los Angeles, there was a vote in the 1960s. about whether people in Los Angeles were going to separate out the trash. One can for trash and one for recyclables. And you know what, the people voted? No, they voted against doing that 1960s and there were so little consciousness and awareness of the environment and these kinds of issues back then. But now, you know, we were we have three trash cans at our house, and how many counties in the Bay Area have three crud trash cans. Now, you know, we have trash and recycling and compost. And it's, you know, wonderful exercise to figure out you know, sometimes you know, what kind of plastic is this? And, you know, I don't know what number is this and where does it go and, and the but I certainly delight in separating it all out, I kind of find a kind of a wonderful, wonderful kind of, I probably shouldn't say a game. And it's such an important topic as climate change and environment. They call it a game but I kind of the kind of the light this idea of seeing and imagining how little trash we can produce. And I marveled and love the stories of people who figured out how to have no trash at all, or they were they their trash every week or every month or something. It's like the little You know, you know, it can fit in the palm of their hand or something. I think it's fantastic. So it's like me, it's like fun and what a nice game. You know better that than poker or other things people can do Sudoku you know. And so they also talked about this intergovernmental panel on climate change to the reduce the amount of animal foods, they're eating meat and dairy and eggs, cheese and all these things. They produce a lot of methane, a lot of carbons a big impact on the environment, the production of meat. So that's a drag for people who are meat eaters. How do we make this not a drag? How do we find how do we find a way that this kind of switch and change actually feels like an improvement in it Boy it does take some work it does take some figuring out but I mean that I mean to figure out how to be happier isn't that kind of what we're doing Buddhism for anyway every week or is it magic thinking if I just sit here I'll be happier and out and I don't have to do anything to be happy there would be

convenient I got to do things he you know and then not taking planes airplanes as much not driving as much the last two days when I came down time See I walked down here and I delight in this walk.

I you know I'm okay driving and you know in principle you know, I mean nothing principal but I'm okay you know, the driving the whole thing down steering wheel and coming down here. You know, I don't I don't mind it. It's okay. I love walking down here. Just walking down the sidewalk. Looking at the trees, getting my body moving, what a great thing. However, it's really the inefficient use of my time. I mean, it takes about an hour of my day to walk back and forth from home. I mean, imagine all the websites I conditions. I mean, look at all the things I could do. Like, I could stay home and read about the environment. If I drove more, but I get to exercise which I love, I get a sense of vitality, I get fresh air, usually just the density and the light. So what I'm trying to get across is that in Buddhism, there's a clear sense that their inner landscape and an outer landscape are closely connected. And it's not hard for us to see that now as the outer landscape. If the other world changes, it's I think it has a lot to do with the inner landscape of some people who have greed, hate and delusion invested in their, the amount of greed and the amount of you know you know that you know, you might not be greedy but in the chain of some of the things that you use there was greed that product to someone was chasing after well and money, someone was cutting down rain for someone who were mining things you know what's virtually slave labor someone was thoughts all this intensity of greed and wanting and getting and having that someone had to have it in this human race that we have. So Buddhism points to the interface, the interrelatedness of the inner landscape in the outer landscape. Take care of your inner landscape. And as you take care of it and enhance it and develop it and do it, figure out how that can be done, so that you can actively take care of the outer landscape better. Don't let that be an independent effort. Don't let your Buddhist practice your mindfulness, your attempt to try to resolve your own suffering, discover a spiritual life, whatever it might be. Don't leave it isolated and separate from the wider world that we live in. Do this inner work in a way that enhances and develops and improves the lives of others and the world around us and the environment. Care for the world, care for the earth, care for everyone. If you want to be really happy, you can't really do it without having some care for the world that you live in. So if you want to be happy, care, offer your compassion or for your kindness, or for your console for your attentiveness. to this world we live in, so that we can figure out a way to live, that benefits the world. At the same time that we benefit ourselves, figure out a way to benefit yourself at the same time that you benefit the world. That's the task. I think that's a noble task. It's a beautiful thing to do for this earthcare week, so that's for the week. So it's, you know, to the degree to which we're all sharing this insight meditation movement. It's your week, two. So maybe this is a week, particular week in which you can kind of give a little more thought and emphasis and education around the issues of the environment. And maybe if the message I gave today, you took it to heart, maybe you can figure out through the exercise through the reflection, about how you can change something about the way you live, simplify, use less, live more likely on this planet, but do Do do the exercise to do it in a way that you feel enhanced, you feel improved by it. That would be great. And that would be a great model. Great example for others so we can all learn to change Great. Thank you.