So good morning. And this is the third talk in a series of five. To discuss the first of the Four Noble Truths, the noble truth of suffering. And the task of this truth is to understand suffering. It's a call to stop and take a good look at a bumper sticker for Buddhists could be I stop for suffering, in the sense that this is really something to look at and to be with and look But it can seem that this emphasis on suffering lends itself to despair to discouragement because you know that which pushed you to just suffer more just look at the suffering which is so difficult to have a good number of years ago I learned of a woman who when she was a teenager, she lived in this general area, I think maybe in a place called Menlo Park near here in the 1960s. She grew up there as a teenager in Menlo Park was one of these centers for the Grateful Dead, Ken Kesey, the merry pranksters kind of the went part of the bubbling up the origins of the whole psychedelic movement? So I don't know if it was connected to that but her and her high school friends two other young women had heard that there was a Zen teacher in San Francisco who could teach them how to get high without taking psychedelics without taking drugs. And so they took traveled up to San Francisco was about 35 miles I think, up to San Francisco to see shouldn't Rio Suzuki Roshi, the founder of San Francisco Zen Center, Susie, Susie rushy at when he was in Japan town, little temple in Japanese, for the Japanese community and part of Jeff of before he started Zen center. So maybe it was 1965 or something. And, and they came, he would receive them and they told that told him why they were there, they, they'd heard that you could teach them how to be happy how to get high without taking any Drugs. And he sat down, welcome them in. And he proceeded to give them a teaching about the Four Noble Truths, the truth of suffering, the truth of the arising of suffering, the cessation of suffering, and practice leading to the cessation of suffering. Well, this was not what these young women had gone to San Francisco to learn to get this lecture about suffering. However, this Zen teacher as he was talking about suffering, he was just so happy. And in Congo, in Congo, Congo good grew with the heat of suffering, talking about suffering and being so happy was the reason why one of those three this then went on to become a Zen
student and was a Zen student for many, many years. So yes, Buddhism does emphasize suffering, looking at it honest assessment of it to real kind of of turning away, not shutting down not pretending it's differently or, or making some kind of romantic view of reality that doesn't really recognize the severity, the seriousness though scale of suffering that human beings experience. It's not sense Buddhism is meant to be quite realistic. And at the same time, the Buddha also emphasized happiness was known to be a very happy person and refer to the people who had engaged in the practice of freedom from suffering as the happy ones. And if you read the teachings of the Buddha, the instructions that Buddha gave for a path to the end of suffering, that path is a happy path. He emphasized doing the things that cultivated happiness, gladness, joy. Some people call it rapture, variety of forms of well being. And that, in that cultivation of well being of happiness, that creates the conditions, to be able to really be with suffering, look at suffering in the deepest kind of way. It prepares the ground for a person to be able to see suffering, in its depth and its fullness. the suffering of human beings has layers and layers and layers. And often what we see on the surface and what we can identify is kind of our immediate suffering, has deep tentacles, deep roots inside and to really go deep deep down inside to feel the core, central suffering of our lives. That which may be has been our companion for lifetime, that which doesn't come and go with. But you know, really, if you're really quiet and still can really feel the deepest attachments, the deepest things that we care most about are most scared about or, or most resist that to really go down that that's the task of practice. But to do that in a deep way, the idea is to do it from a place of well being of tremendous stability, being grounded, and having happiness and joy as part of it. And that certainly was true for me and some of the biggest insights or biggest kind of encounters with suffering I've ever had in my life, which was in deep meditation practice. That it was kind of a paradox because I had so much happiness and joy at that point, that that happiness and joy became the condition Hainer The, the, the ground, the foundation, with which to be present for suffering. Now, I don't say this with the implication is easy, and that it's accessible. But I'm saying this as an encouragement, that with this Buddhist practice is not only about sitting with suffering, there's In popular culture, there's often the idea that the first noble truth, it says that life is suffering. And the Buddha never said that that's not really a Buddhist teaching. Unless the teachings are understood as being within life, there is suffering. And maybe you want to put in parenthesis or put it in bold, and there's also happiness. And that's why translating dukkha as painful. Life is painful for many people, lends itself more to the idea that that's only Yes, of course. It's painful in certain times and places in ways. But there's much more to that agitate much more to that aspect, that characteristic character of life, life can also be happy. And the Buddha not only emphasized that the path to freedom from suffering is a happy one, he also emphasized that those who had gone through to your side to the end of suffering, they were the happy ones. And he used the words sukha through the sukha. They were the happy ones. And so some people have a certain kind of contentment, happiness, a feeling of rightness. That knowing that there is a path, there's a way there's a practice that can where we can be honestly present for how difficult life is for us. And just to know that this is possible. This is so there's a path. This is a well known people have been doing this since a time but the Buddha, the sufferings that we have today are maybe a different scale because we have so many more people in the world and the time of the Buddha. So in that sense, the aggregate perhaps feels bigger. But it's the same suffering as the time of the Buddha, in some ways is not much
different than before. And the Buddha lived at a time of much suffering. The historical analysis of what happened near the end of the Buddha's life is that his social world was collapsing. Kingdoms were being usurped, and countries are going to a war and his senior disciples were dying and he was an old man with a very bad back quite sick. His world was kind of falling apart, and he died peacefully. He died at peace, he died happily. He died in a very deep, wonderful state of meditation. He was able to find a happy way a peaceful way that could coexist with the suffering of the world. He wasn't burdened by that suffering, but he was realistic about it. He didn't take it on his shoulders as being that he's responsible for it. But he was responsive to it, addressed it. So, this idea that, yes, there is suffering, and there is happiness. Now to hear that life is suffering, can be distressing, discouraging, and as I said, that's not really a Buddhist teaching. But to hear on the other side that the path to the end of suffering involves happiness and joy can also be distressing. Because sometimes happiness and joy is not accessible. Life is so difficult so overwhelming. Life experiences have been so amazingly challenging that just, you know, the pain that we live in, and the fear that we live in is so overwhelming. And so but so yes, we recognize that. But then to prepare ourselves to do the deeper work of Buddhist meditation practice, we have to prepare ourselves, we have to get ready to know that, yes, we're going in that direction. That's the North Star, to cultivate a sense of relaxation, peace, happiness, and what does it take to get there. And often, it begins with a very simple grounding, a care and a tenderness for ourselves and taking into account what our challenges are, and figuring out a gentle way, a kind way, a supportive way to be present and learn to be with what is there and there's no hurry and Buddhism. We're not supposed to dive in and address suffering immediately. But to begin kind of maybe on the edges of it and get away from the edges get a kind of realistic assessment of what we're up against. And then to do the things that are supported the creative foundation for addressing the suffering at the right time. So one of the key things that part of the Buddhist tradition, key foundations is to live an ethical life and, and really work carefully, at not only the obvious ways of being ethical, but the more subtle and nuanced ways with how we speak, to speak honestly and speak kindly not to speak harshly or angrily to practice generosity and start being generous. I’ve known people who were really friend of mine who was very, very challenged psychologically with difficult psychological states of fear and distress. And her Buddhist teacher gave her the practice of being generous. And she in small ways she started going around and wherever she could, she would help a little bit, do things for people, and just small waist. And it made such a big difference for her. And so you develop you do, what they think about ethics, the sila, it's actually things that you can do or not do. And it doesn't really require your interstate to be any different. It just means behaving differently. And behaving differently makes a huge difference. Some people go and volunteer at an animal shelter or at a homeless shelter or anywhere, some people so this idea of that our behavior, generosity, kindness, ethics, these are the ways to begin gently on the side, to begin laying the foundation. And the Buddha talked about when we feel really confident if that were ethical, that then there's the bliss of blame lessness a certain kind of happiness, about at least our behaviors, okay? Even though inside things are hard, and then to cultivate contentment, to learn the art of being content with what we have, of course, there's sometimes we have less than we need less than maybe we ideal and challenged in poverty and out of work and things like that. But even so, can we moments of the day cultivated contentment, contentment with this moment, contentment with this, this particular activity we're doing
and not be wrapped up in it has to be different anger and resistance and fear, to cultivate some realistic kind of contentment with what we have as part of the path that begins laying a foundation, Foundation, foundation and Then to practice with the hindrances, to understand something about how the hindrances operate in us, and how we get caught in them. And as we stop getting caught in the hindrances, our core suffering might still be there, but we're not adding more suffering on top of it. And then there can be a certain kind of joy, contentment, gladness, that we're not always being caught in our reactivity. And then there's mindfulness of the body, to keep getting grounded to get our sea legs and really stand here and be balanced. Here present, to begin allowing, trusting the flow of our experience to be here, not resisting, not wanting, not so caught up in the, in the reification the solidification of self around that thinking keeps doing and to do it in small dosages. Just to begin opening Meaning opening. So when suffering is big, then this is the medicine when suffering is when not so big or when, when we have the foundation already, then we keep practicing and cultivating and looking for the places where there can be well being looking for how to grow well being in a realistic way. And part of that is to recognize how often there is some sense of well being. If you walk out of your home today, and if it happens to be a sunny day and a nice day. It's possible to be so preoccupied and caught up, we don't notice. It's also possible to walk out and take some moments to appreciate the nice day to appreciate the clear air appreciate, perhaps the sun, the warmth that there is, look for opportunities to appreciate life you have not as a denial of suffering, but so that happiness and suffering can coexist. Finally, I'd like to say little saying, if you want to address suffering, if you want to address suffering, call on the support of happiness. If you want to support your happiness, address your suffering. So those two together, I address suffering with the support of happiness, support happiness by addressing your suffering, and they go back and forth. And with that, I hope that you'll go deep to the end of suffering. So thank you for this morning and I look forward to our chance to be together tomorrow.