

Hatred ends with love

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So good morning everyone. Welcome. And for today I'd like to begin by reading a Buddhist prayer for peace. It begins, this piece, with a quote from the Buddha, and the quote goes, Hatred never ends through hatred. By love alone does it end. This is an ancient truth, the Buddha.

So the prayer goes, begins this way. Only love can end the pain of hatred. May all beings everywhere be freed from the sufferings of war, violence, and hatred. May those who are injured be healed. May those who have lost their homes and countries become guests in every home in every country. May those who are devastated be fed, clothed, loved, and elevated.

May those who are scared be given safety. May those who fight learn that killing an enemy does not create peace. It makes enemies for future generations. May fighters learn to fight with truth, love, and respect, which is how lasting peace is possible. Love is the best way to kill enemies, because then they are transformed into friends. May we do what is more complex than war.

May we create peace through intelligent and strategic non-violent means. May we call on all our goodness and goodwill to contribute to the end of war everywhere. May we contribute to everyone's welfare and happiness with no exceptions." So, By the end of this talk, I'd like to address the situation in Gausam. And maybe I'm addressing it already with this prayer. And so maybe the whole thing is, but to explicitly be kind of near the end.

And the, so I grew up in a living in many countries, many places, moving around quite a bit. I went to change schools 12 times in my first 12 years of school. But one of the consequences of that was, and I was then, I was a Norwegian citizen, and my wish when I was 11 or 12 was to not be a Norwegian citizen or an American citizen, but I wanted to have a United Nations passport. Because I wanted to belong to the whole world. I didn't want this thing of being,

you know, it seemed kind of too narrow or too restrictive or too nationalistic just to belong to a country that way. And that was my wish.

And I loved the idea of living in a cosmopolitan area with lots of diversity from all over the world. And when I moved to San Francisco, the area here, in my 20s, it was a lot less diverse than it is now. I mean, certainly there was plenty of it, but, you know, I think it's changed dramatically. And certainly this area, the peninsula, Silicon Valley, become dramatically more diverse. A place like Fremont and different places of the Bay. And I treasure it. I find it's fantastic. This is the case.

And I kind of, I myself love the idea that immigrants from all over the world come here to this country and find their way and are included. And I'm one of those, right? So of course I would, I kind of like that. But then what happens when there's so much diversity from all over the world, it's also a recipe for more conflict. And I was asked to somehow address an issue that happened recently with right here in our neighborhood, not here, but in San Jose, State University of San Jose.

I don't know if some of you saw the news a few weeks ago that the police were needed to be there for a professor who was going to give a public talk, a professor of Jewish studies who was going to talk about the history of the conflict there and the history of a two-state solution and someone who was opposed to the violence that there now in the Middle East. But it seems that there was a call out from Hamas that this should be disrupted right here in our neighborhood. And so people were informed about this ahead of time. So the police were called in to be prepared and they decided to change the venue of where the talk was going to be given. And in fact, there were 100 people who came to demonstrate. And the way it was reported to me by people who were there, there were calls for killing Jews.

And then it was impossible to give the talk. And people who were the speakers of it had to be taken out under police escort. There was a large group of police and city police waiting nearby because they were expecting that there was going to be some problems. So, I mean, the Middle East, Gaza is not just in Gaza. What's happening in this international world we live in, it's spilling over, and the divisiveness of the Middle East is also becoming divisiveness in our communities here. And So somehow it's coming home. I felt like, oh, it's here in our communities as well. And so how do we address it?

How do we live with it? How do we take it into account? How do we understand it? So one way to understand this, and I don't want to diminish the suffering, intensity, difficulty of this, but there is an analogy that's used that comes from sports. And that is that there are fans of teams that are playing a sport, like baseball or football, where there are referees or um-

pires who have to make the call when someone has, you know, done a foul or stepped offline or something. And sometimes the people making that call, referees, umpires, make a bad call.

Or sometimes it's a little bit ambiguous, maybe, depending on the angle that you see it or something. And the phenomena is that if the umpires make the wrong call, the opposing team, the fans, get furious. Even if it's ambiguous, they're furious if it's against their team. But the team that got a favorable ruling you know, that's the nature of the game, you know, it's, you know, they, no, they didn't really do it, you know, that wasn't, you know, the umpire got it right, and you know, there's never, and never, never, you know, it's always kind of allowing for it, or forgiving it, or it's okay, you know, and so there's this bias against the opposing team that elicits a kind of anger, but there's a kind of hypocrisy in that, because for the home team, on one's own team that people are willing to forgive them or see it differently or don't see it. It's not as a big deal or it's not so serious. It's not an ethical thing so much.

So this happens with politics. It happens with war between countries and people. And there the issues are much more intense because it isn't just simply the winning and losing of a team. but it ties into people's core feelings of safety, core feelings of identity, of who they are as a people, core issues of the suffering that they have gone through for maybe generations. My father-in-law, who was in the Nazi concentration camps, Jewish man, who was a teenager, was in the camps and with his parents. His parents didn't survive, but he survived. Bergen-Belsen. And barely survived. And that was pretty challenging for him the rest of his life. And he died 70 years or so after being released from the camps.

And I knew him right up to the last day of his life. And the intensity of that experience was with him 70 years later. It was carried with him to his death. So the suffering that goes on, and you know, I don't know how much is carried over into his children, my wife, my children have a grandfather who was in the camps. I wonder, sometimes I wonder if it's more intense for them to have heard the stories than it is for me because I'm married into the family. I don't know if it's a little different or not. And my kids are relatively young. So the suffering that we carry for so many years, and so the suffering of Jews in Israel, I think, you know, what happened in Germany, now it's what, 80 years ago and more, is still alive. But the suffering of the Palestinians, for now, for maybe almost as long, in some ways, is very alive.

And one of the, as I've told this story before, one of the formative experiences in my life was being at the Zen monastery, where we were isolated kind of deep in the Las Padres National Forest here. where the news was always late. Back then there was no internet, there was just, the newspapers would come in, and news magazines would come in, and they'd always

come in to, you know, some days late. It was very interesting to get old news, because fresh news is alarming. But if you read the news two or three days later, it has a very different feeling. And it's more like it doesn't elicit in me at least the same level of present moment alarm. It's serious, but it has a different feeling.

But anyway, there was a Time magazine that came in. And I was in the middle of a three-month retreat. So I was pretty open, quiet, receptive in a very different way than you are running around town. And I opened up the magazine, and there was a spread of photographs, like, I don't know, four or five pages of the magazine, of the Israeli bombing of a Palestinian refugee camp in Beirut. And I told that story here once, and a man who was sitting over in that corner, turned out that he lived across the street from the refugee camp at that time. And he was one of the first people who responded to bury the dead and help the wounded. These things are not so far away. And innocent people were killed. Children were made orphans. That was 40 years ago.

And so, you know, that suffering in the Palestinians is still there. And that's just one example. And there's examples on both sides. They're pretty dramatic. So the idea that you're rooting for your own team and willing to overlook what your team does, I think, makes more sense when the stakes are so high. And so And I've been to Israel, and I was stunned to hear the animosity that some Israelis had for the Palestinians. Stunned. I went into the government tourist agency in Jerusalem, and that person behind the desk called Palestinians dogs. I thought, wow, how could this be? And I've been stunned by the hostility of Palestinians and Arabs towards the Israelis. It's just unbelievable that people carry so much hatred.

And hatred doesn't work. Hatred produces more hatred. When you hurt people, through violence. They will hate. It's so easy. It's so obvious, almost as a way of protecting oneself or wanting revenge. And so it continues, the cycles. And I think the Middle East, isn't that the representative for centuries, millennia, of the cycles? Sometimes I'm so surprised that they haven't learned the lesson. It doesn't seem to have worked. violence. It just goes on and on.

And so is there an alternative to hate? Is there an alternative to demonizing other people? And as long as people buy into this demonization that the politicians do, that societies do, they can't really find a way forward. It's not going to be possible. It means you just keep, it's annihilation, pushing people away. So this, you know, and so this phenomenon, this sports phenomenon, I've done this thought experiment in my mind of wondering if the Palestinians somehow or other magically had the upper hand right now. And we're doing to Tel Aviv, doing to Israel what Israel is doing to Gaza. I think many people in the United States would

be absolutely horrified and angry and upset, would probably be justifying the United States coming in with soldiers and defending Israel. But the level of alarm among the general population of what's happening, the level of violence in Gaza, is pretty tamped down, given, you know, You know, it's just phenomenal. I mean, it's just unbelievable that over 30,000 civilians have been killed. And they say that something like 40% of them maybe are children. It's unbelievable. I mean, that's like astounding. And so that's the context of where we're at, right? Somehow.

So what does Buddhism have to say about this? I study the teachings of the Buddha and I'm very interested in it. And he has some things to say about beauty. And then he has this interesting statement that what is more beautiful than beautiful? That doesn't make sense, right? Certain things are beautiful, but what's even more beautiful? And the contrast for that is what is harmful and what is more harmful than harmful. So that's a kind of interesting statement. So this is what he says.

What is harmful? Killing. Taking what is not given. Sexual misconduct. Speaking falsely. Speaking divisively. Speaking harshly. Speaking pointlessly. Being avaricious. Having hostility. These are all harmful.

And what is more harmful than harmful? Encouraging others to kill. Encouraging others to take what is not given. Encouraging others to be involved in sexual misconduct. Have others speak falsely, speak divisively, speak harshly, speak pointlessly, be greedy, be hostile. So any encouragement, being a catalyst, support for other people to be this way, that's even more harmful. Maybe because the harm grows. maybe even expands exponentially at some point.

So then the Buddha said, what is beautiful? And the word for beauty, *kalyāṇa*, also can mean excellent. But it's a moral beauty, it's a moral excellence that's being talked about. You'll see that. So what is beautiful? Abstaining from killing. Abstaining from taking what is not given. Abstaining from sexual misconduct. From speaking falsely, speaking divisively, speaking harshly, speaking pointlessly, being greedy, and being hostile. So that's, so now you know probably what's more beautiful than beautiful.

Abstaining from killing yourself and prompting others to abstain from killing. abstaining from taking what is not giving and prompting others to abstain from taking what is not given, and so forth. So this idea to prompting others, encouraging others, the Buddha is kind of championing this. So Buddhism sometimes is seen as a non-violent religion that's often interpreted as being a passivity. But this is not passive. The best thing to do is not just to be ethical yourself, but encourage others to be ethical. There's nothing in here about proselytizing Bud-

dhism. Like the best thing you could do is make people Buddhist. The Buddha over and over and over again emphasized being ethical, not causing harm. That that was a highest value for this tradition, this religion, for what the Buddha was about. over and over again. That was a reference point when he talked in public to people.

And one of the important things about being ethical on this list is not being divisive. He ascribes that wrong speech as being divisive speech, where people love factionalism. They love creating divisions between people. What the Buddha wants is a language which is unifying, that brings people together, and supports those who are already unified to be more unified. So how do we do that?

When I talked about Gaza here in October, I spoke a little bit about it. They offer kind of a Buddhist point of view, which was not to take sides, but offer kind of, I don't know if a middle way is the right language, but offer an alternative way that didn't involve taking sides. I got emails from an Israeli and a Palestinian Remarkably, they both had almost exactly the same language to each other. The Palestinian criticizing me for what I had said, and the Israeli criticizing me for what I said. And I thought, wow, I think I hit the sweet spot. And, you know, maybe what was at play there was the sports analogy, right? That these people hear it different way and, you know, and are waiting to hear something that's for their side, really explicitly. But is there a way of not taking sides? Is there a way of, and I talked about back then about the example of Thich Nhat Hanh, who was a peace activist during the Vietnam War. He wouldn't take sides in the division, literally, geographically between the two opposing war sides, Northern and South Vietnam. And neither side trusted him. They were all angry with him, basically thinking that he was part of the other side. If you aren't with us, then you're against us. And so this is so hard to have this middle line. when people think they have a tremendous need to maintain the division so that to really defend themselves, or protect themselves, or to be able to somehow defeat the other.

And the Buddha said somewhere else, he said, Among the types of beneficent conduct, among the best is prompting, settling, and establishing an unethical person in ethical behavior. So again, this emphasis on being ethical. So in terms of Gaza, and many people are calling for a ceasefire. Some people are demanding it. And I think of course we want the killing to stop. Of course there's another way. Of course something else can be done. Of course all these people should stop being killed. But can we ask for a ceasefire? Can we encourage it? Not as a demand, but in such a way that the Israelis become inspired themselves. They realize this is not a good deal. There's a better way of doing it. Because to come down with a demand, it's maybe even more the divisiveness. So I myself would not

like to be in a situation, people have asked me to sign things and stuff that are more like demands. And that's not what I think I want to do. But of course they should stop doing it. I have no doubt about it. I want to encourage Israel to stop. But the way that, how do we do this in a way that is effective, maybe for the long term or effective for the short term, And so, but it's an act, you know, for some people it's very difficult to imagine in an alternative way. The imagination, it challenges the imagination that there's any other way besides violence for some people. That's the only way you can get your way and it has to be that way. And is it really the case? And is it to the degree, the violence to the degree that's what we're seeing it is in Causa right now? I mean, these are really important questions. And it's really important to look at ourselves. What we defend, what we feel is right, how we buy into some of the rhetoric. And what's motivating us to take sides, for example? Where does our sides come from? And what is our belief system? What's our understanding about social change? And what's our understanding about impact that violence has on our societies? Maybe Israel will get something of what it wants by destroying Gaza? My father-in-law was impacted for 70 years, the rest of his life, by what happened in Germany. What's going to happen to the Palestinians? And how long in the years are they going to be impacted by this and not forget? And so calling for peace, of course, we should do that. But we shouldn't just do it. We should also be available.

So in this situation at San Jose State University, I was asked to write a letter to the president of the university. And I did. A Jewish man asked me to do it. And so I wrote. But I said to him, I'll write the letter, but I don't know if it's what you want. But I'll show it to you first. And, you know, the short version of what I said was I asked the president to not be... I asked her to be impartial, to be concerned for the welfare and happiness of everyone on our campus. and including the ones who she hadn't been caring for yet. But then I said, I presented myself as a local minister, and I said that, and if I could be of help to you in this process, let me know. So how do we help? What do we do?

The final thing I'll say about this is that there's been times, very important moments in my life, that I was changed by what happened in the world in fundamental ways. So the time at Tassajara when I saw the bombing of the refugee camps in Beirut, that was a huge impact on me, partly because I was in the monastery on retreat. Partly because I'd been to Beirut as a child, so I knew the place. Partly because I grew up, part of my growing up and my cosmopolitan moving around was I lived on the edge of the Mediterranean in Italy. And so it's just down the corner, around the corner, you know, Beirut, and you know, it's just kind of part of all the same world. So to see my own world being bombed was such a big impact on

me. And it changed me. And part of that change is why I'm here today. Part of that change was I decided I was going to use my life to address suffering in this world through Buddhist practice. And for me, this was the way that I wanted to do it because I felt it was the only thing I knew in my life that touched the root causes of suffering in a human being. And I was going to do other things to try to support the world. But I felt that if I did the other things, I wouldn't actually be able to touch the very root of suffering in human beings. And I didn't think I'd be effective as a Zen priest, Zen monk. But at least I was trying to address the core issues of suffering, the attachments, the deepest attachments we have. So that took me in this direction.

Before that, the big impact on me was When I went to my first two years in college, I was at the University of California, Santa Barbara. And I was there right after there was this huge oil spill, maybe one of the first biggest oil spills in the country. And that had a big impact. And going to school right after that, and taking classes in environmental studies had a big impact on me. And that was a catalyst for me to really want to live a life, adult life, of trying, again, trying to address some of the problems of our society. And I was going to become an environmentalist. So I got a little bit sidetracked. A different kind of environment. And then the next one that had similar impact on me was 9-11. And so I want to tell you this for a particular reason. So that was huge for the country, for those of you who remember it. It was huge, a big impact. And I'd seen similar things, not of that magnitude, happen where it kind of seemed like everyone went back to business as usual. You know, things didn't really change. And I thought, this can't happen this time. This is so big that I have to be different. Something has to change. I felt like I would do violence to myself if I wasn't changed by 9-11. So I spent about nine months thinking, how am I going to be different? What am I going to do that's different? And then I decided that what we would do, we would create a Buddhist chaplaincy training program. Didn't address the issues directly of 9-11, but it addressed the issue of addressing suffering in our society in a very different way. And so the Satya Center of Buddhist Studies, that I helped founded in 1997, was mostly doing classes in Buddhist history, philosophy, practice. We said, that's not enough. We have to do something that addresses the conditions of our society. So we created a Buddhist chaplaincy program. And that's been going on now for 22 years. And we've trained hundreds of people in chaplaincy. And I call it a pyramid scheme for joy. Because all these people go out into hospitals and prisons and hospices and homeless situations and do this wonderful, compassionate work. It's really, really a great thing. And that's growing and been very successful. It's actually doubled in size in the last year, and that's going well. So that was a change.

The reason I'm telling you this story is because, for me personally, I feel what's happening in Gaza right now is of the same magnitude. And I feel I have to be changed by this. I can't respect what the impact and the value of this and just go back to this. But I don't know what to do. I mean, I can give a talk about it now. But that's not enough. So I'm wondering. But it took nine months last time to know. So some people demand that I do things. And that's not how I operate. So I don't know. I'm watching, listening, being present for all this, seeing what will I do? How will I be different? Something has to change.

So now you know what's more beautiful than beautiful. Maybe it's complicated, ethically, what's going on in Gaza for many of us, for many of you. And exactly what the ethics of it are and how you understand it is maybe a difficult thing to sort out and figure out. But even so, the Buddha thought that the most beautiful thing to do, more beautiful than being ethical, is to promote ethical life in others, to encourage it, to support it. Not to demand it, not to proselytize for it, not to make anyone feel belittled by it, but it's much more difficult work. The work of somehow inspiring others to live ethically. I think that's the movement for the Buddha. He was never in a position to demand anything of people or assert or be aggressive about it. But how do we inspire it in the more ethical world that we live in? And I think it can be done, but I think it's a very sophisticated thing to do. It takes intelligence, it takes strategy, it takes care.

But most important, if we want to inspire ethics in others, we have to be ethical. If we want to have an ethical world that we live in, we have to feel that this is important. And one of the biggest ethical principles in Buddhism is to avoid causing harm. And this contrast here between the most beautiful verses, the Buddha doesn't say what's ugly and what's more ugly than ugly. He talks about what's beautiful and more beautiful. But what he says is what's harmful and what's more harmful than harmful. In another place where he talks about similar contrast, he uses a different word for beauty, for good states of mind. But for bad states of mind, the ones that prompt unethical activity, he calls them unskillful. So it's very polite, you know, because you're not trying to create division, not make anybody feel bad about themselves. And how do we do that? How do we really inspire goodness in all of us? How do we inspire in some different way? How do we inspire unification, unity? How do we inspire that people respect each other, dare I say love each other? How do we inspire people that they don't want to spend their life hating? What does it take?

So to end I'll read this poem by the Buddha. Hatred never ends through hatred. By love alone does it end. This is an ancient truth. So may you love. May love be at the center of our practice. For yourself, for others, and even for your enemies. And this prayer, I think, is a very

powerful statement for me. That yes, if you want to fight and kill your enemies, there's a way of killing them. You love them so much they become your friends. They're no longer your enemies. The enemy has been killed. But you didn't kill the person. You transformed them. We transform our enemies into our friends in this process. So, thank you.

So we do have a couple of things. We do have the tea now for about half an hour or so. So you're all welcome to stay and have tea. And then we have at 11.15 we'll have this community meeting talking about the state of IMC and where we're at and answer questions of you about our community. And also aware that this topic of bringing up Gaza one way or the other and all these issues, it's pretty intense for some people. And I don't know the impact this has had for you. So what I'd like to suggest, and the transition from going from this to tea might be a little awkward, even. So you can leave when I finish speaking, just matter-of-factly. No one's required to stay. But as we often do here, I think it's nice that you say hello to each other and just break the ice a little bit. And maybe if there was something inspiring about what I said, maybe one little piece. something that was beneficial for you to hear in a good way. Maybe share that part, just a little bit. And just kind of break the ice and say hello and introduce yourself. And when you do that, I ask you to look around for two people around you so that no one's left alone with everyone turning away from them, because that's the way it just works coincidentally. So everyone's included. And then at some point in a few minutes, we'll ring a bell, and they'll be ready for tea. Thank you.