

## Finding hope in what's hard

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Good morning, everyone. Welcome. And on Thursday, I think in the afternoon, I received an email from a journalist, so I didn't know, saying she was writing an article about how faith leaders in different religions can offer hope at these times. And... you know, I really didn't. They wanted some quotes, some passage, something. So I didn't really have the time. I have taken care of an ill relative, had programs to teach. So I didn't really... So I sent something, but I never heard any reply. Just something that I'd already done.

But it kind of stayed with me, this idea of, you know, faith leaders offering hope at these times. And so if I had more time, what would I have said? And I would say that we don't want to look for hope outside of our own hearts. That's the source of it. And Buddhism, it's really kind of finding out the source of hope in our heart. That's where it begins.

And it goes along with this idea of not looking in the wrong place for our well-being. If, you know, I think that the *Dharma* practice is kind of a paradigm shift, that's not unique to Buddhism for this big, big shift in orientation that is suggested, is offered. And the suggestion is not to find the solution to our life in our external life, not to find our capacity for happiness and peace in our external life, but to find something very profound in our own hearts and our capacity, and to see that as the way forward. It's kind of a summary of an outtake of Buddhist teachings is that the world begins with you. And the word *loka*, the Buddhist word for world, is often used by the Buddha to refer to your own personal world that radiates out of you.

Each of us lives in our own kind of world of our own experience, our own seeing, our own interpretations, our own orientation, in a very profound way. It's very hard to get out of our own immediate world that we live in through our senses and our experience. And so to appreciate how much each of us lives in a kind of personal world that's certainly quite intimately connected to the world around us and to other people, is to understand that the world begins in our own hearts. So we have these monks now who are walking to Washington, D.C.,

and inspires a lot of people. And so I think they're arriving next weekend. And so it's kind of nice.

And today, at the afternoon, in kind of an honor of them or in support of them, the San Francisco Zen Center is doing a March for Peace through San Francisco. And I think that there's, they started two, I think. So I think it's a great time because there's not going to be much traffic on the streets. So it's a kind of a, they chose a good time. And I would have, I would go, except that I have to go to my, see my relative who's sick. And... But so I came down here today, and I was walking up past the library, and on the library table, coincidentally, maybe, was this book that I read years ago called *The Peace Pilgrim*. And some of you might know it.

It was a book that was made available for free for many years, and maybe still is. And it's about a woman who spent, I don't know how many years, 25, 35 years, a long time, just starting with the Korean War, walking across the country with almost no possessions. She had enough possessions to fit into her sweatshirt, sweat jacket kind of pocket or something, and toothbrush and a comb maybe. Yeah. And she would just walk and people would take her in mostly or feed her and she had no money. But she had this message of peace.

And so in her book, a lot of it is her quotes that was taken from different interviews she had and speeches she gave wherever she came. And sometimes she wasn't given housing and she had to sleep someplace outside. And then she had tennis shoes. There were no hiking shoes in the same way we have now. So people would see after a while that her shoes had holes in them. The soles had holes. So then someone buy her shoes. So that's how it went for all these years. And she was an inspired person.

And so what one person can do was something as simple as just walking. She had big letters across the front of her chest, Peace Pilgrim. And that was enough to get people's attention. They'd stop. And now these monks are walking across the country, and they're getting lots of people's attention. I learned yesterday that the head monk in the procession has kind of like a, I don't know, like a little robe or something over the left shoulder that's full of sparkly silver things. It's kind of like dramatic, apparently, to see.

And so someone, what is that? It's kind of strange for a monk to have all this silver kind of jewelry or something down there. Well, turns out it's a whole collection of sheriff badges. What is a monk doing with sheriff badges? So what I was told is that as they were walking in different counties across the South, there are Thai police officers and police sheriffs or Cambodian or something. And I saw a little video of one of them. It's really moving for them to see a Thai monk walking in the streets. I mean, this is like one of the most sacred things

for someone who's Thai sometimes.

And so the police offered a full uniform. We'll do what they do in Thailand. Well, God went all the way down, put his head on the floor bowing to the monks. And I guess enough of them, there's enough type sheriffs and police officers in the South. And then they gave them their badge. Is that legal? So, you know, it's quite something that these messengers of peace carrying a badge of a peace officer. It's kind of nice. Right.

And anyway, so this book was there in the library, so I thought, oh, certainly if I just open up any page, I'll get a quote I can use for the talk. So this was the first one I opened. This is the introduction, the person, the editor, I guess.

The simple yet profound message of Peace Pilgrim's Life and Words is urgently needed in humankind's search for peace. She has given us renewed hope in the future of this world, hope that enough of us might gain inner peace to make world peace possible. She has given us an example of a person who has lived in inner peace and was filled with a boundless energy that grew rather than diminished with age.

So here, someone who knows about peace begins in one's own heart. One finds its own peace, and then one can spread it. And so, you know, in Buddhism they have this idea that if you want sesame oil, don't try pressing gravel. And so you have to know where you're looking for. So one of the ways to try to get the sesame oil from gravel is to expect that there's someone else in this world who's supposed to make the peace for you. Someone else is responsible.

The people in government, this and that people, the religious people, the faith leaders like me, you know, there's people out there. They're supposed to do it. You're not going to get peace that way because you're not touching your own heart. It has to begin with you, each of us. Some people live a life of being a consumer. In this living from the heart, we're actually the producers. Right? Live a life of being a producer, not a consumer.

The consumers always want something done for them and receive, receive, get something, as opposed to let's offer, let's produce. It's kind of like you're a little room heater that's cold. Someone should turn on the heater in the house. Someone should turn on the furnace. Someone should get something going here. Someone should do this for me. But the little heater can turn itself on, in this fantasy world, you know, as a metaphor.

And the little heater can produce the heat for itself. So produce our own heat. And then our own heat then spreads so we could do it for others. And don't underestimate how significant

that could be. And there's people in Minneapolis now who a month ago... had thought they would have no role. They would be ordinary people. They're just living their lives, and they're just kind of, you know, other people are going to take care of things.

And then it came to their neighborhood, and they've stepped up, and the neighborhood groups that are, and they're very proud in Minneapolis for their Minnesota spirit of caring for the neighbors, protecting their neighbors, and doing all this wonderful work there. And just ordinary people that never would have thought they had a role. Yeah. Our politics might be very different, but can we take care of our neighbors? And so you might be asked to do that. You don't know what's coming in any kind of circumstance and situation.

It doesn't have to be political. It could be something else that's needed for you. Are you ready to develop your own heart, to find your own peace? And let that be the source of how we act in the world. So here's another quote from, this is a quote from the Peace Pilgrim herself.

There is no glimpse of the light without walking the path. You can't get it from anyone else, nor can you give it to anyone. Just take whatever steps seem to be easiest for you. As you take a few steps, it'll be easier for you to take a few more.

So this is very nice for Buddhists who have this whole metaphor of walking the path. And so no one can walk it for you in Buddhism. That just like no one can pee for you. You know, there's certain things you have to do for yourself. And you can't, you know, contract out meditation. You know, I don't have time for meditation, so I'm going to pay someone else to do it for me.

You know, that doesn't help. Some things you have to do for yourself. There is no glimpse of the light without walking the path. What light? The light in you. I, I, one of the songs they're singing, and, you know, it goes back for many decades. Is this little light of mine. I'm going to let it shine. And it's a civil rights time. It became a kind of a civil rights song that was used.

And I was told yesterday that in the 1960s, before the Civil Rights Act was passed, the Democratic Black Caucus in the Congress was not really given much chance to speak in front of Congress. The racism was such that they wouldn't get a voice. So they started singing that song on the floor until they were given a voice to speak in front of everyone. This little light of mine, I'm going to make it shine. So we all have a little light, and to make it shine...

So, in the teachings of the Buddha, there's a remarkable little discourse that describes a story of when which the Buddha kind of teaches something similar to this and how it can be done. It's a story of the Buddha was walking along a river and there was a Brahmin, kind of maybe

a priest kind of the Hindu religion kind of going into the river. Had this notion that if you go in the river, the river will purify you of all your evil karma, bad karma. And so he said, hey, Buddha, you know, you should come into the river.

Or the Buddha said to him, you know, what are you doing there? Well, I'm trying to clean my karma. And the Buddha said, that's not how you clean your karma. That's not the river to flow in. So then he gives us teaching. And that's kind of an alternative. And what's remarkable about this teaching is that it begins by talking about challenging, kind of afflictive, painful emotional attitudes, relationships we can have in our social world with each other.

And this is where we're looking outside of us for something. We're engaged with objects out there. Rather than understanding our own hearts and caring for that first. And so sometimes that object out there is things that we want, we want to have it. Sometimes it's things we don't want. And, you know, we hate it. We want to get rid of it. We have aversion.

Sometimes there's ideas of revenge and there's idea of resentment. There's covetousness, envy, jealousy. There's all these complicated worlds of relationships we have. So the Buddha names, I think, 17 different social relationships, emotions, attitudes we could have. And he says that it's important to see those. We have to know and see when these are arising in ourselves.

And that's hard to do because these kind of social attitudes usually have an object outside of ourselves. That's the object of concern. And so we want to change that or do something with that. And so that sometimes prevents us to turn around and see ourselves well enough. So the Buddha says, you have to stop. We have to stop to see this. But then he says something that's extremely important.

He says, you also have to see when they're not there. Maybe because you can let go of them if you're lucky. If you do a lot of practice, you'll learn to let go. And you don't have to let go deeply. And if you really let go of these things deeply, you see something that's really significant in Buddhism. You see it's possible to have a heart without those. That's not a small thing.

So if I'm always holding something in my hand, if I think the purpose of having a hand, the whole purpose of the hand is to hold something. God will always hold something. That's nothing else, right? So whatever, you know, so if I really don't like that porcupine, then I have to hold it. You know, and that hurts to hold the porcupine, but, you know, of course I have to hold it. And, of course, I prefer to hold, you know, soft, you know, soft cotton yarn or something, a ball of yarn. That feels so nice and soft and cuddly to hold.

And I prefer that, but unfortunately, I don't have enough of that around. But there's all these porcupine things to hold on to. And so those are kind of, you know, the world I live in. And sometimes there's holding something that has no, you know, no value. So I'd just let it drop and find something else to hold. I'm always holding. And if I'm not holding, I'm looking for what to hold. That's, you know.

So if you watch your mind, your mind is kind of that way. And he said, it wants to think about things. It wants to, it's focusing on what to think about next and the concerns and preoccupation. And some of us are talented multitaskers, you know, thinking many things and jumping around and picking up the next thing, picking up next thing. And I've let go of what I thought, what I was thinking. You know, sometimes I could do it pretty easily. It's amazing to watch my mind. It immediately looks for the next thing to think about. There's no pause. Yeah.

Kind of like the fist, the hand that's always grabbing. At some point, someone teaches me, you don't have to be grabbing all the time. You can just hold your hand open. There's no need to always grab things. And then I say, wow, really? Wow, look at that. It's peaceful, it's at ease, it's restful, it's kind of nice. I feel the breeze across my palm. I didn't even know there was a breeze.

I didn't even know my... It was so nice. It could be so nice. And then I said, you know, maybe I don't have to grab so much of things. Wow, I can do this. So I probably should write now, get a pen, grab my pen, write a letter to the government and sell them. You know, we need to pass a law that makes it okay for me to have my hand open. Because no one else has their hand open. Everyone's holding things, and we need to pass a law for everyone.

We're still, now we're grabbing, you know, and the very thing that's, you know, so if your hand is open and it's so nice, you know, the obvious thing to do, right, is to, it's so nice, so you grab it. As soon as you grab your open hand, you've lost it. You can't. You have to keep it open. So it's like that.

If you see that you're caught in revenge and hostility and greed and lust, and the mind is caught up in all these things, even sometimes caught up in fear and preoccupation of anxiety, and you see that it's possible not to have it. It's not inherent in the heart. The heart can breathe and be open and available without that. That can be a very powerful lesson.

And for the Buddha, the hope is that with enough spiritual practice, enough meditation and mindfulness, that the lesson of the open hand, the lesson of the heart free of these things, even temporarily, is so impactful, so powerful, that it's inspiring. Wow, it's possible. Now this is a different message than you're supposed to have some kind of great cosmic experience of

oneness. Or a great experience of bliss, a great experience of something that is different.

It's a powerful appreciation of what it's like to have the hand open, not to grab bliss, not to grab some cosmic experience of oneness, but rather the profound peace of a heart that's at ease with itself. And to really feel how valuable that is, the Buddha describes, it gets to a point where it brings inspiration. Inspiration is something that flows from the inside out. Inspiration is something that we're the producers of, or our inner system is the producer of.

There's a feeling of well-being, a feeling of being uplifted that comes from the inside out. And from that, then we have this, starts opening up the store, of a lot of goodness, qualities that can begin flowing from the inside out that's not dependent on the external world and, you know, holding onto the right thing. It's kind of like the open hand. At first, it's been so used to grabbing things, it actually aches a little bit to open. It's like, wow, this is how...

Then slowly it thaws, it relaxes. And after a while, it feels like there's a nice flow of energy and a nice flow of openness. And it just feels kind of very restful, contented. Imagine that finally the hand feels content. It feels kind of delightful. Right? And has all these wonderful feelings that come, just simply for the hand being open and appreciating it.

So the same thing happens to the heart. So there's this inspiration. Wow, this is possible. This level of peace in my heart, this level of kind of freedom from afflictive emotions. And so inspiration arises, and the Buddha says, with that inspiration, there can come gladness. The language he uses, gladness is born. Born is something that, almost like organic, is something that, biological, something that emerges from inside of us.

It's not something that we make, and it's not something we acquire from outside. So something can be born. And the fact that our hearts are capable of this birth of gladness, and from gladness there's the birth of joy. And when there's joy, for this kind of joy that the Buddha is talking about, people who practice... then the body becomes tranquil, becomes peaceful. As the body becomes tranquil, then there's a certain kind of sublime happiness that can come.

And from that happiness, the mind gets unified, the hearts gets unified, gathered together. So that's nice. But what happens next in the Buddha's description of this, I think, is also very inspiring. Remember, we're supposed to be producers, not consumers. We're not looking for the world to provide answers for us. We want to become the answer for the world.

And so what kind of answer do we want to provide? More anger, more hate, more greed, more conceit, more selfishness. So, this process that's waking up in people, because they realize the fist can be open, the heart can be free, and all these wonderful qualities of joy and

peace can arise, this creates the conditions for the heart to begin to sing, to smile. That's my language, Buddha didn't say that.

In relationship to others, to this world of ours, we have the capacity to love. And love is not transactional here. Love is not something we have to drum up. Love is not dependent on how others are. Love is something that heart can do, kind of for no reason, just because it's at peace, at ease, and because it's now open and available.

The open hand... can now put it likely on our troubled friend on their shoulder. I'm here with you. The open hand can hold a newborn baby. You don't hold a newborn baby with fists. That doesn't work very well. You don't convey the love, the care, the tenderness to a newborn with a fisted hand to try and hold them. The open hand is what's needed, gentle and soft.

You don't please the cat. By rubbing your fist across the top of the... You know, there's something about the open hand that conveys so much. And so the Buddha then says that from this... Now he's talking about practitioners, people who really know how to be settled in themselves and at ease with themselves, really discovered how to be at ease with this the open heart, what gets produced, what flows from there. We're allowing something to begin flowing.

And those people who do this, they end up sitting, meditating, spreading a heart full of goodwill towards the east, towards the south, towards the west, and towards the north. Above, below, horizontally, and everywhere, in all directions, they pervade this whole world with a heart full of goodwill. Abundant, expansive, limitless, free from hatred and ill-will. I mean, this is a phenomenal description of what is capable of human being.

This is not a fantasy. But the fact that it's kind of like this unadulterated or unconfused, unagitated, unperverted kind of flow of goodwill that has a feeling that this is what all there is that's flowing from us. We pervade our world, the world of our experience, in all directions, no directions untouched, as far as our kind of personal world extends, without goodwill. Somehow the agitation of the mind, the preoccupations of the mind, the mind that jumps around, the mind that's constantly preoccupied by something, scared of something, lost in something, is quieted enough. And opened enough that the heart is clear and the heart can flow.

The heart can, again, be the small heater that gets turned on. And the heat pervades outwards. That's possible. And then he goes on and describes the same thing. It's worth repeating maybe because I think it's so inspiring that this is a capacity for our hearts. They're meditating, spreading a heart of compassion to the east, the south, the west, and the north.

Above, below, horizontally, and everywhere.

And all over, they pervade the whole world with a heart full of compassion, abundant, expansive, limitless, free from hatred and ill-will. They meditate spreading a heart full of rejoicing, sometimes called sympathetic joy, rejoicing to the east, the south, the west, and the north. Above, below, horizontally, and everywhere, and all over, they pervade the whole world with a heart full of goodwill, abundant, expansive, limitless, free from hatred and ill will.

Last one. They meditate spreading a heart full of equanimity to the east, the south, the west, and the north. Above, below, horizontally, and everywhere, and all over, they pervade the whole world with a heart full of equanimity, abundant, expansive, limitless, free from hatred, in ill will. Equanimity is the word, it means to, kind of to watch over, to watch over in a balanced, non-reactive way, to attend, to accompany.

It's not equanimity that's indifferent or aloof. It's an ability to be present, available as needed to respond in other ways, with love, compassion, or rejoicing with people. Oh. So the ability to find hope for this world in yourself, that's where it begins. If you're looking for hope by looking for... I'm inspired by things that happen in the world, but it inspires me to really come into myself and let it flow for me, my love, my care, my response to the world.

I like to see what the good in the world is a mirror to what we can do, each of us. Many of you might know one of those American saints, Mr. Rogers, who was also a great teacher of peace. And he tells a story that when he was a small kid, he would read in the news these horrible things that happened. I think he grew up during World War II and things. And he would ask his mother about this. And she said, oh, look for the helpers.

So rather than being discouraged by how terrible things are, look around for the people who help. And there's usually lots and lots of people. The more the tragedy, the more you can see there's so many people that are coming to help each other and support. And not to turn a blind eye to the difficulties, but to turn a real open eye to how much goodness there is in the world, how much people help. Not because you, now there's hope out there that they're going to figure it out for me.

Let it be a mirror for you. I believe that the call in Buddhism is for each of us to take responsibility for ourselves in a very deep way. So deeply that if there's hope for your world that you live in, the world that begins with you and extends out across the globe from you, you have to find that hope in yourself. You have to find something in your heart that's worth shining into the world, this little light that you have. Maybe it can grow.

Maybe if you're ready with it and you know it, then you can join together with other small

lights and create a big light for this world. Perhaps you don't know what you're going to be asked to do. I'm asked, I'm not asked by the universe to go to do the peace walk in San Francisco this afternoon. I'm asked to go to the hospital. So different things at different times.

So I don't know if I responded to the journalist's request to offer words for hope, because I don't know how you feel about your own heart. But whatever your heart is, whatever difficulty you have, in this teaching that the Buddha gave, that's the alternative to going to the river and getting the river to clean you up, your karma. The idea is the river is the river of your own heart, through your own life inside. That's where the work is.

And the Buddha was very clear he began this teaching. By naming all these very difficult emotions, challenges that humans had back in the time of the Buddha, that are probably no different than our challenges, in our own hearts. He acknowledged that, and it's possible to take a deep look to practice and to have a qualitatively special experience of a heart that's free of those. You'll probably, if it happens to you, you'll go, wow, I had no idea.

Not because you were distracted from everything. But wow, a heart that's clean, a heart that's free. And that's just the beginning. Then something can flow. Your love can flow. Your little light can flow. So those are the thoughts for today. So thank you very much.

We have a little bit of time before this usual ending. If anyone wants to ask any questions or comments or anything, I'd be happy to hear from you. Alex and Matt are up here. Hi, Gil. Is there the tea today? Yes. Okay.

Hi, Gil. I have an unusual question. Do you have any tips or suggestions how to find friends in this community? Friends? Yeah. How to find friends?

Well, I think that I would love to have the question be different. Yes. How the question is not how to find friends. I appreciate the question a lot, understand why there's a need and value in it, but I'd prefer the question, how can I be friendly in this community? How can I be a friend in this community? And if the question is turned around that way, what difference does that make? What change comes from that?

Well, I guess what is the thing here, two halves, a dozen, two, two, a dozens or two six or something like that. I'm not hearing one of the words. It's either a dozen or two sixes or something like that. Oh, a dozen tips. You want... One, two, six, six, six, six. Where is it? What is it? Seven, six, six, six.

Yeah, everybody asks. Sounds like, or maybe like it sounds like two sides of the coin. I mean, it's two separate questions, and we can't look at one, but can we answer mine? The... I would like to first hear your answer to the first. To my question.

My mom told me it's not polite to answer the question with a question. Have your mother talk to me. She doesn't speak English, but yeah, and also she's in Russian, you know, the apps are blocked and stuff like that. But yeah, we can do that. People offer spiritual care will often answer a question with a question. And you know, if we were doing spiritual care together, I would be asking you lots of questions, Alex.

That's great, yeah. Well, thank you very much for all – can you hear me? Those comments. There are those who have said that hope itself – can be a form of grasping. Yes, hope itself can be a form of grasping. And so I'm wondering what your reaction to that feeling would be, the quality of... I mean, I don't technically believe that myself, but I've heard it a lot.

Yeah, I've heard that often too. I've heard that people who, some spiritual people, some Buddhists, who want to ban the word hope because hope implies some kind of attachment. Or something that, and again, we're looking outside of ourselves or something like that. And there might be, I think there's some truth to that, that hope is sometimes blind, hope is sometimes a kind of wishful thinking, and hope is not, you know, maybe it's based on fear, and what needs to be looked at is the fear itself and oneself. So there's a lot of interesting care that goes around looking at the word hope, for sure.

But... I think there's also very positive forms of hope that's beneficial and helpful. Maybe when hope is inspiration, hope is a warm-hearted desire or a sense of purpose, sense of value, sense that this is what's important for me, and this is possible. That could be hope as well. It's a little bit of a semantic issue, exactly what's being talked about here. So I beg for all of you to, my use of the word today, to interpret it in the best way you can.

Is this an okay answer? Okay enough? I think so very much, yeah. I think... Sorry? To me, for some people, I think hope is a form of wanting. Longing. Wanting. Wanting, yes. And to that extent... If your sense of hope is only that, I think you could be very frustrated. Yeah. Yeah. Go ahead.

Maybe we'll take one more, and then those of you who have your hands up, if you want to come and talk to me afterwards, I'll be here. I think... One of the ways that we get tangled in this right here is that we're relating to English words, and they came from *Pāli* words, and Ticknot Han was addressing that. He preferred to translate it as persistence, which is much more internal. But it can look much like hope. Anyway, the point is that it's a clean kind of a hope, I guess I would say. Like, I still believe this, and I'm still doing this.

Yeah. Yeah. Yeah, there's a question. Yeah, so it's a past question. There's a wonderful... There are two wonderful words in *Pāli* that relate to this. *Samvega*, which I think I'd like to

translate it as inspiration to practice. And then *veda*, which means it's based on the word to know. So it's sometimes translated as inspiration when it's translating.

So may you find the inspiration in your own heart? Yes. You all have good hearts. You all have a little light in there, and you can make it strong. Find it, trust it, and the world will need it sooner or later. So we have tea today, so everyone's welcome to stay, and because it's kind of tea, it's maybe nice just to take a moment with maybe a couple of people next to you. Say hello, introduce yourself, and if someone's new, just offer them a special welcome. And then we can go to tea. Thank you.