

The End of Hatred

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This poem, I call it the Buddhist poem for peace. It goes back to the ancient times. It had a big impact down through history. You can memorize it if you want. It is short:

Hate is never overcome by hate

By love alone is hate overcome

This is the ancient truth

(Dhammapada, Chapter 1, verse 5)

I hope in hearing this poem that you feel challenged by it, because how can we meet hate with love? But that is the call – that is the challenge. And I am hoping that this talk I give today is a challenging talk in that spirit, in that way. It could be challenging in other ways for some of you to hear. I am also hoping this talk challenges me. In this way, the poem is challenging. So hopefully it is okay for you to be challenged.

The ancient texts or the teachings that survive were originally formulated to be chanted, to be memorized. There were no written books in the time of the Buddha. Writing was probably almost non-existent in India. So, a lot of these ancient texts are kind of boring to read in the modern way. If you think you are going to sit down and read a novel, they are really boring. You will fall asleep.

But if you understand that they were meant to be chanted – chanted together in community, in unison – you get a whole different feel for the impact and the power of these poems, these teachings. The one teaching I have memorized, that I think was chanted together, I would like you to listen to – maybe in that spirit of it being a communal chant.

Others will be cruel. We will not be cruel. Others will be violent. We will not be violent. Others will kill. We will not kill. Others will steal. We will not steal. Others will engage in sexual misconduct. We will not engage in sexual misconduct. Others will lie. We will not lie. Others will speak divisively. We will not speak divisively. Others will speak harshly. We will not speak harshly. Others will speak pointlessly. We will not speak pointlessly. Others will be avaricious. We will not be avaricious. Others will have ill will, will have hatred. We will not have ill will, hatred.

(paraphrased from Numerical Discourses of the Buddha 4.207, AN II 222-3)

In the ancient text this comes from, this continues with 34 more of those statements. And the people who memorize it and chant it – in the way that the text is written – they will do it, each of these 44 statements, four times. So, you get into the rhythm of it. And when you get into a rhythm of a chant, it goes and touches you deeply. It touches something very different. Maybe it has a chance, sometimes, to touch the place of love – the place that really is a source for that kind of motivation to not be cruel, not be violent, not be divisive; to do it over and over again – to make that, kind of, an evocation of that place, that possibility for us. I think it is quite a beautiful and powerful thing.

And it is hard to do, just that – just the absence of those things. It is hard not to respond in ways that belong to any one of those things. It is hard not to respond with harshness and divisiveness. It is hard not to respond with

ill will, and anger, and hostility. It is hard, sometimes, to avoid being cruel or violent, even with our words. Human life is challenging.

Yesterday I learned a wonderful story about one of the great American dancers, a man named Frankie Manning. He grew up in Harlem. He was a black man. He was one of the founders of Lindy Hop and Swing. He died at the age of 94. He was born in, I think, 1914. He grew up with dancing and music in parts of Harlem, in a dance scene that was integrated with blacks and whites.

And then he went into the military during World War II. He was assigned to a black platoon with a white sergeant. The sergeant was a racist. He was not just racist, he hated blacks. And he treated them that way, apparently, with hostility, and disdain, and maybe cruelty.

This story came down to me yesterday from a man who heard it from Frankie Manning himself, who was a student of his then.

They were fighting in the South Pacific. At some point in one of these firefights, the sergeant was shot and wounded pretty badly by the Japanese. He lay there wounded in the battlefield in the line of fire. And his black soldiers were not that motivated to save his life. Some of them maybe thought, you know, he deserves this. But Frankie Manning did not think [MT3] this. Frankie Manning went out into the fire and brought him to safety, risking his own life. That is a remarkable thing to do. Remarkable not to hold a grudge, not to hold hostility, even not to have what can seem like a natural thing for humans – maybe it is a natural thing – that is why it is such a big problem: to harbor ill will, harbor a wish of cruelty to someone who has been cruel to you.

But there is another way: there is a way of love. And that is also natural. These two very natural ways – hatred and love; fear and peace – we are all capable of this. Where do we want to come from? What do we want to evoke in us? And what do we want to do for our society around us?

To be cruel, and violent, and hateful, and to steal, creates a lasting impact on so many people. It has a lasting impact on the person who is cruel. And it is painful to see that. It is unfortunate to see that. It [MT4] is hard to imagine it does not have a lasting impact on their family and their children who live in that and experience that and maybe then perpetuate it. It has a lasting impact on those who witness it. It has a lasting impact on those who experience it. Love has a very different lasting impact.

I am inspired by the story of Frankie in World War II. That story comes from almost 80 years ago. And I am inspired by that. My parents-in-law survived the concentration camps. And I am inspired by how they dealt with that afterwards, after the war – how they tried to bring love into their family and tried hard to create a very different context for their children to grow up. I have known lots of people who are children of Holocaust victims, and the harm continues into the generations.

So what causes lasting welfare and happiness is one of the core questions the Buddha explicitly asked. What is it that does that? It is hard to imagine that that happens when there is divisiveness and hostility.

The Buddha taught these ten things I just chanted from the chant in different ways. It was very important for him. And he has a teaching where he says:

What is harmful? What is harmful is to do the opposite of those. What is harmful is to be violent and to kill.

He goes through [these ten things]. Remember, it is a chanting culture.

What is harmful is to steal. What is harmful is to engage in sexual misconduct, sexual harm. What is harmful is to lie. What is harmful is to speak divisively. What is harmful is to speak harshly. What is harmful is to speak pointlessly. What is harmful is to be covetous – to want other people's things. What is harmful is to have ill will or hostility or hatred.

So, he goes through that. He makes it clear. These are harmful. And then he makes an interesting statement. He says:

What is more harmful than harmful? What is worse than doing harm? What is worse is to prompt and encourage others to be violent and to kill, to prompt and encourage others to steal, to prompt others to engage in sexual misconduct, to prompt others to lie, to be divisive, to be harsh, to be pointless in their speech, to encourage others to be avaricious, to encourage others to have hate. That is worse than harmful.

(paraphrased from Numerical Discourses of the Buddha 4.207, AN II 222-3)

Then the Buddha switches, and he uses this wonderful Pali word, *kalyāṇa*. Some of you know the word *kalyāṇa*, because the primary way it comes to us and is used in the Bay Area is *kalyāṇa-mitta*, which usually is translated as “good spiritual friend.” So, *kalyāṇa* is translated as “good spiritual.” So that is good. I am not going to argue that. But the primary, or the first definition of *kalyāṇa* is beautiful. So, rather than “good spiritual friend,” it is your “beautiful friend.”

The word is used a lot in the texts, but we miss it because usually it is not translated that way into English. But one of the meanings of this “beautiful” is beautiful integrity, beautiful ethics. To associate ethics with beauty points to there being an affect – a deep affect in ourselves and an affect in others when we live with integrity, when we live with goodness and wholesomeness.

So, the Buddha said:

What is beautiful?

What is beautiful is not to be violent and to kill, not to steal, not to engage in sexual misconduct, not to lie, not to speak divisively, harshly, pointlessly, not to have avariciousness, not to have ill will.

(paraphrased from Numerical Discourses of the Buddha 4.207, AN II 222-3)

That is nice. But then, this is where it gets challenging. Hopefully this talk is already challenging. But now, listen to this challenge. What is more beautiful than beauty? What is more beautiful than that beauty? And the Buddha said:

What is more beautiful than beautiful is to prompt and encourage others to not kill, not be violent. To prompt and encourage others not to steal. To prompt and encourage others not to engage in sexual harming. To prompt others not to lie. To prompt others not to be cruel, divisive. To prompt others not to be harsh, to not speak pointlessly. To encourage others not to be avaricious. To encourage others not to hate. That is beautiful.

(paraphrased from Numerical Discourses of the Buddha 4.207, AN II 222-3)

And in this ancient tradition of Buddhism, all these nots: not to kill, not to lie... all these nots, it was explicitly understood that this implied the positive quality. It was not just the absence. And that is why this ancient teaching is translated as, “Hate is not overcome by hate. By love alone is it overcome.” The actual word is not love. It is non-hate. But universally, down through the ages, it is understood to be more than just love. And that is one of the reasons why, maybe, calling it love is a little bit narrow and limiting even.

When the tradition understands the negative, the absence of something means the positive. There are many more positives than love that we can live by. So love, generosity, respect, dignity, appreciation, valuing human life. There are all these beautiful things we can do. But we summarize it all in love, in such a nice way.

We have examples in this society now, where all the things that Buddha was talking about – these ten things – are being enacted in plain sight. We are seeing it in all these videos we get. It is remarkable what we are seeing:

the violence and the cruelty. We have a president who is cruel – who is making America cruel again, rather than making America care again. And it is painful to see that. It hurts to see that.

It is painful to see him and the pain that he is living in. It is painful to see how ugly it is, when we know he is capable of beauty. We know he is capable of love and care. And that is what we want to see come out of this man. That is what we want to see. Can we bring it out? Can we support it? It is a tough task.

We know that the people – ICE in Minneapolis – do not have to be the way they are. They are being egged on. They are being encouraged. They have a whole culture, who knows, that has supported them to be so cruel as they are. They might even have been told they are doing the right thing, but they are capable of another way. They are capable of doing things beautifully.

One of the, kind of, beautiful examples that I was reminded of this morning thinking about all this – and it does not sound beautiful, it sounds awful: the act was awful, but what the recipient did with the act was beautiful – was John Lewis walking across that bridge in 1963 or so, 64, with the police with the baton sticks waiting for him and the civil rights marchers. He was hit over the head and knocked down. But it wasn't the first time he was hit over the head and went unconscious.

Earlier in the civil rights movement, he was in a Greyhound bus station and young Ku Klux Klan members came and beat him up, hit him over the head, and he was unconscious. But he did not have hate for them. He was in a movement that was really working on love, speaking from love, being reminded of love, having love for the people who were attacking them. That was beautiful: to not respond in kind.

Then there is this wonderful story that the man who beat him up – I think he hit him over the head with a chair, or something, when he had a concussion – came to Washington, D.C., about 40 years later. John Lewis had been a congressman for many years in Washington, D.C. That man came to John Lewis's office in Congress with his own son, to apologize. The way that John Lewis behaved and lived his life set the conditions, I think, for this man to be able to apologize 40 years later in the presence of his own son.

So, we have this horrible thing that is going on. We have cruelty and violence being done to children – witnessing it. Gratuitous violence being done to people in awful ways. We have people being killed. And if we follow the Buddha's instructions, we want to prompt and encourage people not to kill. But can we do it with love? That is the challenge. Can we stop it with love?

The Buddha's message is not a message of passivity. It is not a message of just going and meditating and wishing well. I think it is a message to go and show up. So, I am inspired by what is happening in Minneapolis. Because it is clear that what is happening there – the amazing cruelty – is not just cruelty. There is cruelty, violence, killing. I don't know if there is stealing exactly there, but the president wants to steal. It is kind of amazing to have a president be publicly saying he feels he has a right to steal. And he is going to steal. But there is another way. You don't steal from your friends. One of the Ten Commandments is you aren't supposed to steal from your neighbors.

That is not beautiful. It is ugly. It is terrible. It creates lasting harm for all of us. Can we encourage the other? Can we see the possibility of other things? Can we stand up in love and say, "No, not in our name?"

Then there is lying. It is so amazing to see so many lies come out of the administration. It is not like a political issue. Because of this amazing video culture we live in, it is obvious that what we are seeing on video, from many different angles, is completely different from the made-up stories about what ICE is doing in Minneapolis and other places. It is blatant lying.

For one of the most powerful countries in the world, to have this leadership blatantly lying – that everyone in the world can see – undermines the integrity of the whole country in the view of others. This causes lasting harm.

We won't do that. Let's not lie. They lie with hate. They lie with cruelty. We won't do this. Let us do the opposite. Let us do what is beautiful. Let us find a way with love to encourage others to change and bring out the best in themselves.

You can go through these lists that the Buddha talked about, and I think you can probably find examples of all of them. Speaking divisively. The Buddha put a tremendous emphasis in speaking to create unity. He was very explicit about it. To bring together those who are divided. To create concord. To create harmony in society. So how do we do that?

I am certainly hoping in giving this kind of talk I am giving today – that is meant to challenge all of us – not to create divisiveness in our society, not to perpetuate it. But this stuff has to be named. It has to be addressed when it is so obvious.

Of course there are differences in politics – different opinions, different values that people have – and those differences should be respected, and the people who have them should be respected. But it is not okay to do such ugly things. It is not okay to intentionally harm in such awful ways. It is not okay to bypass a whole long tradition of law, law and order. It is not okay for the administration to be, and now represent, the party of no law and no order.

I remember when I was young, Republicans were the party of law and order. But they can come back to that. It is possible. It is possible to return. It is possible to come and get the best of our country out into the public again – out into the world. And I think it begins with us. Not because we are so special here at IMC, just because you are you.

How could any of this start without it being everyone who is me, everyone who is you? It has to start with you. Can you love? Can you care? Can you meet the world in kindness? And can you do the beautiful thing with love and respect, in ways that promote and give the possibility for unity, the possibility for concord? Can you and me and all of us stand up for, and encourage, what is beautiful?

I love the words, “prompt” and “encourage.” It is really difficult to do. It is easier to protest. It is easier to go up and yell hate back. It is easier to kind of fight. It is much, much more difficult to do what John Lewis did, which was not to hate, not to fight back. But people like John Lewis, Martin Luther King, and Mahatma Gandhi, in their unwillingness to hate, change the world. And now it is our time to change the world in our way.

We go through these cycles. This happens. I grew up with this. I grew up with riot police on American campuses killing students.

I will end with a story of a friend of mine, Blanche Hartman, who eventually became the abbess of the San Francisco Zen Center, a wonderful Buddhist teacher. A turning point for her in her life, which moved her into her whole spiritual path as a Zen Buddhist, was at San Francisco State University. Back then it was called San Francisco State College, I think. Now it is called a university. The campuses were kind of the center of a lot of the anti-Vietnam movement and other things.

There was a protest, a demonstration she was at, and the riot police were there. At some point there was a long line of these riot police and their gear. Somehow, in the way she was positioned in the demonstration, with the crowd there, she was pushed up against the riot police – chest to chest almost. And she looked into the eyes of the officer who was there, and he looked into her eyes. And that changed her life. She saw his humanity, and she saw her own.

Hate is not overcome by hate

By love alone is hate overcome

This is the ancient truth

(Dhammapada, Chapter 1, verse 5)

Ancient truth for me means it is kind of encoded in our DNA: that we have this capacity to care and love and to change the world, not through violence, but through love and care and respect. That is the challenge. And it is a

challenge to learn how to do this. It is a challenge to trust it. It is a challenge to meet it. And just like some people will die with violent change, some people will die with nonviolent change. That is what happened in the civil rights movement.

I will I tell you one more story. (I have said this before.) It is really remarkable. I meet so many people when they come on retreats and at other times, and people often really want to share some of the major things that they have gone through in life. And it is remarkable that what I read in the newspaper eventually comes into my care, I guess.

So, this was probably almost 30 years ago now. There was a white woman who had been a civil rights worker in the South during the 60s. She had been in a variety of different demonstrations. She told me that she was at a street corner with a group of people with signs protesting the racism of the times. And a pickup truck came by, filled with white racists – young white men. They jumped out of the bed of the pickup truck and they started beating them up, then they drove off.

So, they went back to the same corner the next day and stood there, maybe with bandages on. The same truck came by and the guys did the same thing. The third day, they went there to stand and the same thing happened. These guys jumped out of their pickup truck, and one of them was standing over her, she said to me, and she looked up at him, and he had his fist lifted up, and he looked into her eyes, and he said, “What in the world are you doing?”

He was just stunned. Like, “Why? What is happening here?”

He had never seen anybody like this. And then they had a conversation. That day, there was no violence.

That takes courage. That takes a lot of love, a lot of believing that something like this is possible. So here we are. We live in our time of challenge. All of us, every generation – maybe every life – lives through these kinds of challenges. This is ours.

So that is my talk today. Maybe some of you came to leave with a big smile on your face, and happy, and delighted by everything, and didn't want this – it is kind of heavy. But I am pointing to something beautiful. I am pointing to something profound and possible.

I hope that it is a challenge you are willing to take on.