Guided Meditation: What Are You Greateful For?

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So good morning, everyone, on this Thanksgiving morning in the United States, and it's a wonderful day for reframing our orientation to our life. To take from some people, it's take more time to be grateful. And this idea, this ability to reframe our orientation, how we see things, the purpose we give to our life and activity, is one of the invaluable qualities of being human that can support Buddhist spiritual life, supports meditation practice.

Because one way or the other, meditation practice in Buddhism is a reframing of how we understand ourselves, our lives, so that we don't continue framing it in ways that are guaranteed to cause suffering. An excessive concern with oneself is guaranteed to cause suffering. An excessive concern with our desires, what we want to see happen, is going to cause suffering. An excessive concern with what is not going right is going to cause suffering. All those things are okay to have, to be, but when it becomes the worldview, the very means by which we look out through the world, it's guaranteed to cause suffering.

And so, one way or the other, through meditation mindfulness, we learn that the viewpoints that we're using should not be seen as universal, should not be carried with us as the way of understanding ourselves and our life. And we begin to, sometimes naturally through the practice, sometimes by inspiration of some type or other, orient ourselves in a new way. And gratitude is one of those things.

And so, a question that can be asked in meditation—that maybe steps out of the ordinary orientation, the ordinary ways in which we think about meditation ourselves—would may not be always so supportive. And that is, what are we grateful for? What are we grateful for that allows ourselves to appreciate being aware? What is it about being aware that we're grateful for? What are we grateful about? What's possible when we're fully present to our lived life as it's occurring, as it's unfolding, that is not possible when we're caught up in commentary,

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fantasies, resentments, desires of past and future? And any of these questions maybe can help center us here in our experience.

So, to assume a meditation posture, and to gently close your eyes. And the body is a home for challenges, for sure. But what are you grateful for in your body right now that you can feel and sense? That as support for this post, this meditation. What are you grateful for in this body? This meditation posture that's reassuring for these moments, minutes of meditation.

So that when you take a fuller breath and exhale, the exhale can be a relaxing into this body with appreciation. Letting your breathing return to normal, and where in your body is it good? Where in your body is a home, a settling place, an awakening place? And to gently breathe with that place. Maybe your breathing can arise from there, return there. Maybe your breathing accompanies that place in your body that is good, that feels like home or is reassuring. A place in your body where things are settled and safe for now. Breathe with that. Where breathing is what connects your awareness to that place.

In these minutes of sitting quietly, what within you has shifted in a good way? However small that shift is, attune yourself to it and let it be a support, an inspiration. To be a little more whole, wholehearted in being here in the meditation.

And as we come to the end of the sitting, to ask yourself, what is it about meditation—the meditation you've done—that has been beneficial for you? How are you a better person from the meditation you've done, even if the meditation itself is something you evaluate as being poor or not enough? Rather than looking at what hasn't worked, look at how it's been beneficial, no matter how small that has been. With the idea that recognizing how it's been beneficial for you, that you can build on that benefit. It can inspire you. It can show you a way. It can show you what to stay close to.

And how has meditation been beneficial for you in your relationship to other people, if at all? And how might it be that sitting in meditation quietly allows you to see others in a better way, or allows your heart to be more attuned and aware and caring of others? No matter how small that is, and no matter how small the benefit is interpersonally, can you build on that? Can you be inspired by that? Can you call on that, so that when you go into the world to be with others—strangers and known people—that you can wish the world well?

That you recognize how good it is for others to be happy, safe, peaceful, and may it be that as we leave this meditation, on this day of Thanksgiving, may we wish well for everyone. May all beings be happy. May all beings be safe. May all beings be peaceful. May all beings be free. Thank you very much.

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