So welcome to the beginning of a four week series of talks on the Four Noble Truths. And I will be offering talks each week on one of the noble truths. And today this week will be the first noble truth. And today I'll say some introductory words about the Four Noble Truths in general. The four noble truths are for many people, many oftentimes said to be the core teachings of Buddhism. And when I was studying Zen in Japan, I was given a kind of a primer for may maybe High school students, I was living in the monastery in Japanese book and Japanese about Buddhism, and talked about how the Four Noble Truths were the core teachings of Buddhism. And that they claim that even a child could understand what they are. But only but even an old person who has lots of life experience might don't understand the depths of how powerful these are and how significant they are in their life. And I think that there's something like that is true because the Four Noble Truths are an ever developing growing, series of insights, ways, perspectives for understanding our life. And there's not just one teachings on the Four Noble Truths. There are many of them in the different life circumstances. In the history of Buddhism, there's different interpretations, different applications of these four noble truths, different elaborations of how they apply to all kinds of areas of our life. And that idea that there's different elaborations goes back really to the ancient times as well. And so it's a kind of a, a, the Four Noble Truths are kind of a wonderful framework within which to begin studying our lives looking at our life in a deep way. And in that regard, one of the, one of the teachings around these four noble truths are that there are tasks, this particular task for each one and, and so I'll talk about that in a few moments. So the Four Noble Truths I have to do about suffering, suffering and the
end of suffering. And maybe it's not not a coincidence that the discussion about now suffering and taking a good look at suffering follows the week last week where we talked about care, care as a kind of love, kind of compassion kind of goodwill and caring for ourselves and to be rooted in our care. As an approach to look at suffering and, and to do so in a caring way and caring for ourselves, that for human beings, suffering is a deep, I wouldn't say exactly inherent part of life, but just about inherent part of life, it's really central to the human experience one way or the other. And, and to value our human lives to value value our lives to value the lives of others, to care for ourselves, to care for others, is to care for others our suffering or personal suffering, suffering of others and our culture. Active suffering as well. And how to do it from someplace of groundedness of centeredness. So, non reactivity, how to deal with in a wise way in a way that leads to a better future freedom from suffering. It said that the Buddha when he was going to addressing his suffering and the suffering that he encountered, that he was searching, and his search was considered the noble search. And this idea that there's a nobility or dignity or worthiness, in the very addressing and meeting suffering and finding a way through it and come into their side that this is not suffer so we have become greater victims of suffering or to diminish ourselves, but there's really a kind of a kind of a growth the growth and dignity and mobility and happiness for the better I said that when he was looking for the alternative to suffering, he was looking for happiness. He was looking for a long term happiness, which we can understand to be happiness. That's not dependent on the vagaries and the changing circumstances of our life that we're kind of tossed around and the seeds of change. And so to, you know, to address this topic we're going to do for these next four weeks on the foundation of last week of care. And also, if those of you who've been doing all these seven weeks now have these early morning sittings, if you remember that the first week began on the topic of faith a whole week on faith. And, and that's also kind of considered as a foundation for looking at suffering. And that one of the meanings in English of belief, get some logic other early meaning of the word belief, which I like to research And kind of call forth as we look at suffering is that belief originally meant to have a belief meant to, to have something that you loved? was beloved, is kind of what belief originally meant. So what is your beloved What did you love? That the idea that care and love is not a is a deep heartfelt involvement with this with the topic that's really touching something deep inside as opposed to looking at opponent as a series of propositions series of tenants of Buddhism that you had you know, you have to believe you know, in terms of adhere to a creed or something, but we're talking about something hopefully that will touch us all, deeply and in in some deep. I like the word tender, tender spots within are. Our value or nobility are dignity or worthiness has a chance to really touch and feel and experience the full depth of the challenges and the potentials we have as human beings. So, the we use this word suffering a lot in talking about Buddhism and the Four Noble Truths. And it's possible it's not the best translation for the word dukkha. But it's a translation I'll use today, since it's the most common one and tomorrow I'll talk about an alternative. And the, but I want to say that some people hear the word suffering, and immediately think about the big suffering of life. And, and it just seems maybe a little bit not relevant for how they're going about their daily life perhaps, and it seems over a little overwhelming to hear the
word. The words that were dukkha translated as suffering is meant to be the full range of ways in which we feel stress and feel distress and are challenged by this life of ours, from the smallest to the greatest. And the idea being that, that if we study it and look deeply into the suffering, we can find an alternative we can find a different way of living in the world, where something about how we suffer doesn't have to be there. And what that is is part of the exploration discussion and hopefully experiencing that will do as we go through these four weeks. One of the but you know, the word dukkha saw as suffering does also point to the large, big sufferings that we have the ones that are most challenging for us that maybe it's not part of our ordinary everyday sometimes, but the The ones that sooner or later that we will encounter and we can kind of anticipate the will encounter, or the kind of things that sometimes when we’re young we don't think about so much some of us, the Buddha was said to have lived a life of privilege and protection and luxury. And he didn't really know about the large existential challenges of sickness, old age and death. And, and it was when he kind of escaped from the palace as the myth goes, and saw sickness, old age death for the first time, supposedly, as a man who is 27 years old. Imagine living protected from life for that long. And, and maybe because it was he was so protected, it came as a shock to him. And maybe for some of you, you’ve been shocked by your encounter with these things that sometimes there are sudden losses and deaths and changes and that happened. That turn our lives upside down. And I like to think that Buddhism, the Buddha designed the Dharma, not so much as a place to deal with the everyday stresses of life, certainly that it addresses. But in fact to really to prepare us, or to help us support us to really address with care with maybe love with rootedness with groundedness, with steadiness, with courage, be prepared for the biggest challenges that come and this existentially in this life. And in this regard, the Buddha said that, you know, one of the one of the kind of definitions or kind of, of suffering a definition perhaps, but when he laid out some of the I don't know if it's synonyms, the right word, but some of the examples of what he’s addressing when he talks about some Offering, he used powerful words. And so I want to read these words to you in English translation, grief, mourning, pain, distress, and anguish, grief, mourning, pain, distress and anguish. And in looking at the Four Noble Truths, we’re looking at the truths of grief, mourning, pain, distress, and anguish. And we’re seeing that these powerful things are doorways are vehicles are conduits to something that is on the other side of them. Something's something that the Buddha called freedom or peace, but not this week. suspecting these things, but rather maybe the what Dharma practices are very deep respect and acknowledgement and seeing these things to really understand them well. And, and so we're pretending we're stepping into tender areas, difficult areas, challenging areas. And so we have to do it with a lot of care and faith and stability and groundedness to really do this in an effective way, without this, you know, and so anyway, so. So this idea of a simple presence of connectivity of groundedness, as we look at this is really a central aspect of all this and not to don't talk about this in the abstract or, or as if it's easy to do all this stuff. What's interesting in this list, and in many of the lists that would have has, that somehow explicate What dukkha is suffering, fear is not mentioned. And, and, and I, you know, I don't know why, why that is, except maybe fear by itself is not always exactly a problem. It doesn't always arise out of attachment
and clinging, that there is healthy fear and appropriate fear and biological fear that exists that, you know, is not, you know, you know, the fear of survival is not necessarily rooted in greed, hate and delusion or attachment. It's kind of a core thing in human life. However, the Buddha did say that the world of clinging the world of our attachments, is something that people that gives rise to tremendous fear. So, to really delve into these deep topics of the Four Noble Truths, is also to address fear or the kind of fear That is rooted in attachment. So that's kind of not so far away from what we're doing here. So a few more minutes here, if I may. So the Four Noble Truths in the early layer of Buddhism that's described in the teachings of the Buddha, scholars will say that there's, you know, different layers of how these truths were laid out. And the earliest layer was very simple. It said, this is suffering. This is the arising of suffering. This is the cessation of suffering, the end of suffering. And this is the practice leading to the cessation of suffering. So it's very simple and direct. The second then later, the word truth was added. This is the truth of suffering. This is the truth of the arising of suffering. This is a truth of the cessation of suffering. And this is a truth of the practice leading to the cessation of suffering. Then later, and this word noble was added, this is the noble truth of suffering. This is the noble truth of the arising of suffering. This is a noble truth of the cessation of suffering. And this is a noble truth of the practice leading to the cessation of suffering. And what we find is that these wonderful statements, little formulas have no pronouns to them. And I personally am very inspired by this, that the idea of addressing suffering is not directional. It's wherever we encounter it. Certainly the suffering we have in ourselves is a place we can take the most responsibility the place we can delve most deeply into the very roots of what it's all about, but it also addresses the suffering that we encounter in the world. And that's also something that we want to attend to and understand and look at. And, and so as we go through these four noble truths, we don't want to, we want to be inclusive of the world and have our practice be part and parcel of the well being, and freedom and happiness of all beings. And so, I want to end with a statement, which certainly is, has a great value for me. And as we begin this study of the Four Noble Truths, and and whether how universal it is, you we can maybe discuss some other time but and so this is this statement. Your suffering is my suffering. Their suffering is our suffering. Our suffering is their suffering. Your welfare is my welfare. My welfare is your welfare. Their welfare is our welfare. Our welfare is your welfare. Let's care for the welfare of all. Thank you