Thought today to continue with my occasional series on the Noble Eightfold Path. This year. On some Friday, one Friday a month we've been studying the eighth for the full path the Buddha taught and then periodically kind of somewhat some correspondence to that I have been teaching about each of the steps of eightfold path. And we've now gotten up to right livelihood. So, the talk today will be on right livelihood.

And there is an important part of Buddhist spirituality has to do with a sense of it has to do with intentionality, motivation, the intentions by which we base our life. Some people would say that a big part of his spiritual life is a lifetime intention, intentions, intentionality and motivation. And it's one thing to have intentions, wishes, motivations. It's another thing to inhabit them to embody them to express them to manifest them in our lives. And so a Buddhist spiritual life is one that both has intentionality as part of it the sense of purpose, but also has manifesting that embodying that living that intentionality. There's a phenomenon called bookstand Buddhists. And these are people who just read books about Buddhism, Buddhist books in their bed stand and things based and Buddhist. And it's nice, but don't use Buddhist life is not found through reading books. It's found by somehow manifesting it in our lives.

So one of the there's variety of ways of understanding Buddhist life unintentional aspect of Buddhist life. And each person who engages in Buddhist practice will find their own way their own intentionality on motivations of the purpose. But one very nice kind of overview kind of generalized intentionality that the Buddha taught, was the intention to both the benefit to oneself and to the benefit to others. And then that's somehow one of the possibilities of motivating one's life. Another way of talking about that is talking about liberation or freedom. They were motivated by the idea, let's consider the ultimate benefit for liberation of freedom. So the idea is to be motivated by life, we become free, we relieve ourselves we free ourselves from suffering, the causes of suffering, and then we can manifest a life of awakening or freedom in our life as we go about our life. So in order to live through that kind of a life of intentionality, Buddha offered what he called the eight noble paths they called noble noble path and eightfold path. Sometimes we talk about steps, you know, one step at a time. But sometimes it's more like the strands of a rope. And there's eight strands to the single rope. There's eight lanes is the writing. We've talked about path eight lanes, they go together, there's eight, eight facets that all work together, they're not necessarily sequential.

And the fifth of those is right livelihood. And I love it because it talks about a way of life how we're going to live our life and usually understood to be how we make a living, how we work our worker. And but I think of right livelihood is really a subset of a much bigger thing is that is what are the what are the choices, what choice you make about how you want to live your life, what is most important for you in
your life and to really spend some time reflecting deeply, what is it you want your life to be about? What do you want to really confuse your life with? It's so easy, I think in, in the kind of life of many people live, to lose and lose touch with our deepest intention, or perhaps be raised in such a way that we never even taking the time to reflect on our deepest intention. I've known people who have kind of just followed what's the course that was set for them, by their parents, for example, or society, high school, college careers, family, and then some point maybe in the 40s, or 50s, they kind of say, wait a minute, I never really thought about this, what is it, I really want to do what's really important for me, and this really, maybe has no meaning anymore. It's not so uncommon for people to get to, you know, relatively established in their life. 4050 and realize, wait a minute, this doesn't, you know, this doesn't have the promise that it that I originally thought it might have, was a vague promise of lasting happiness and satisfaction, and I'm not finding it Here, this is kind of empty. So to spend some time thinking about our deepest intentions for our life, and then appreciating that, for some people, a big part of their life is spent at work. And so if we have a fundamental aspiration for life, it makes sense to incorporate that into our work life, how we'd have a livelihood. So we're not compartmentalized. We're not bifurcating our life. between one place we have a certain direction, we're trying to go and develop another place, maybe that's taking us in a different direction. So to spend some time reflecting on what our life should be about where we want to like be about and then reflecting How is it that my work life also supports that and develops that as well. In putting right livelihood as part of the path I think the Buddha is appreciating that we want to integrate all our life on a path. If what we want to do is have a lie, a lie about a path it's possible to have a lot It's not about a path, but if you want to make your whole life a path, then the work part has to be part of that as well.

So, in thinking about work there are two primary ways of infusing meaning or intentionality, in work finding meaning and work. One way is by what we do and the other way is how we do it. And some people will focus one when both people focus on both what we do is very meaningful for some people, and some people will find the career you know, their life career there's like a soulmate or something, you know, that's they feel just perfect fit for them and they feel like just great and then some people are neurotically, under All right word books are oppressively trying to find the right career. And our society kind of passes the message on sometimes you're supposed to find it you're supposed to have it and so people will kind of be looking for how to be successful in books right? Then there's a third category of people I never find what to do in life at all. It never kind of even started looking for the perfect job you know the perfect thing to do and what's what they're their work life is very meaningful now because what they do because how they do it and they infuse whatever they're doing wherever they work has happens to be the infuse it with a kind of involvement, intentionality and meaning that is transformative is helpful. So that was our two different approaches. And some people what doesn't matter. Some people What does matter the what, what do we do.

The Buddha had various things to say when he defined right livelihood primarily by defining it in the negative by saying what is wrong livelihood? And in some ways, these are kind of maybe the outer edges of what's wrong.

He had a list of five things which he categorizes absolutely kind of wrong livelihood, wrong occupations or work to be done. One is dealing with the commerce of weapons, buying and selling guns and bombs and things like that. That just doesn't work for a Buddhist to do that, that goes against the very grain of what Buddhism is about. The other is commerce with people. It's okay to have a health warning agency. But, you know, it's like slavery, and prostitution and things like that, where you're buying and selling people.
And then there is it said that also dealing with meat, you know, involved that somehow involves the killing of animals. Buying and selling me being a butcher is considered to be wrong livelihood. It's a little bit strange in some Buddhist countries where Buddhists will eat meat, but it's not the Buddhist community that butchers but rather people of other religions, the butchers and the Buddhists just go by them between them. It seems a little odd.

And then there is not dealing in intoxicants and alcohol with toxic people. So drugs and alcohol and then there's a thing about not dealing with poisons. It's kind of like weapons poisons, meaning back in the old days, poisons which were used to kill people as kind of weapons. And perhaps back in the ancient world, that was pretty straightforward. You know, either you dealt with weapons or didn't deal with weapons in the modern world is so straightforward where the line is between my dealing with weapons or not in my in my work. Sometimes people work here in local locally working big corporations, that somehow that those corporations are also supported, you know, part one of our clients might be the Defense Department, maybe they make certain kinds of equipment. And so is it then, you know, is it supportive or not? Have you participating in that kind of commerce of weapons by supporting this?

I know that it was a great meaningful little exchange that I once had with or heard from UCL and under Burmese monk who recently died few years ago, who was a monk here for about teacher here for about 20 years. 25 years. He was, among other things, he was kind of the monk for a large part of the Burmese community in the Bay Area. In the early 90s, he was asked what his as a Buddhist teacher? What was his biggest ethical dilemma? It was a panel of different teachers. They're all going to speak about the ethical dilemmas they had as teachers and cisterns speak on the topic. And he said, my biggest ethical dilemma is that there are Burmese families here in the Bay area that I counsel. And I know back then it was really hard for these Burmese immigrants to find work they have whole families take care of it's hard to find work in the Bay Area and take care of their family. And some of them find work in the weapons industry. Which we have here in the Bay Area. And they come to me and ask me, is this right livelihood? And I know that it's not. My dilemma is that I know hard. Just going to find work. I didn't want to tell them that. And that's a struggle, you know. So sometimes it's very clear. And sometimes the lines are not so clear. And some people, it's meaningful. It's a meaningful analysis for some people to say that the government deals with weapons all the time. And my taxes support that. And so this is very meaningful for me, you know, in a difficult way, it's a problem for me. And so I've known some people who have with with hell, their taxes from the government, Robert Aiken Roshi, wonderful Zen teacher, he put his taxes in escrow. And so he didn't keep it for himself. He's kept it in escrow. And he wrote a letter to governments say, this money you can have, as soon as you can promise me that the money will not go into buying weapons and doing more. And then it just sits there in this escrow someplace until you can tell me that and I don't know the results of that. But you know, the final results and the money's still sitting there. He's not in jail. So I don't know what's going on.

So what it points to what points out is that our life is very complex. And the causal chain that our life is connected to is often quite complex. And so the kind of simple admonitions, you know, don't be involved in, in the converse of weapons, you know, becomes kind of gray for many of us in our lives. What it means for me here is that what it means is that a Buddhist life is a mindful life, which means that we ask questions, we're willing to questions look under the surface of things. And so being present doesn't just mean being present to some kind of opens, you know, expanded way for what's here now, but it also means, in addition to that, it also means inquiring, questioning, looking, what is this life I'm living? It's a conscious conscious life. What is this? Like? What's the impact of my life? When I flush my toilet? Where's that go? Do I know? Where do I did you know Where your, where your gasoline comes from? Do you know where your water comes from, you know where the inputs into your life where they come
from? Are you mindful of you’re aware of that, it’s possible to go to the store and be mindful of the here and now and have no idea that things you buy, impacting people, half a world away. So part of a mindfulness mindful life is to think deeply about what is this life I'm encountering here? And to question you know, what is my impact? What is my what's what, what is my impact in this life? Am I making a difference for the better living difference for the worse, it's possible to very casually cause more harm in this life of ours as possible very casually, to to causal benefit, to give a sense of how casual it can be or how trite or simple a difference can be.

Give you a very ridiculously simple example of the kind of difference we might make. Coming down here this morning and parking There's a little parking space right over here on Clinton street that I have a little super impressive. And there's a there's place of parking between the red zone is exactly right for this impressive give a cop video because bigger that doesn't fit just exactly right you know, but it's really hard to get in there and get the car lined up properly. You know, because you know, I can never guess it you know, because it's just exactly fits. So I'm usually like six or eight inches off so it's always a little bit in the red. And so I get a turn off the engine Get out of my car and go look no, didn't make it this time either. And so usually I get back in the car and turn the engine and move to three inches. And then I get out of the car and check again. And you know, sometimes it takes me a couple of times to get it just right.

But today I did was I got out and checked and sure enough I was off by eight inches or something. So I got in the car and released the gearshift and lowered the handbrake and got off and push the car you know? And then I thought, Oh, that's nice. So yeah, that's green energy, you know, so I didn't have to pollute the bay area here. A little bit extra America became a little bit more energy self sufficient. So that's a pretty, you know, very small example. But it's possibly not that has an impact. I would think you know, if enough people do it. So, what impact you have in your life.

And, I'll tell you another story. I love a story. There's a Zen saying I will tell you the sensing first Paul reps was a kind of a Zen student in the early 50s, I think had been maybe to Japan and during the war something in World War Two. Anyway, he was gonna go to Japan to studies in the early 50s during the Korean War, and apparently was very hard to get a visa to go to Japan during the Korean War. And so he went to the Japanese consulate to ask for a visa. And, and he says he wasn't part of the military effort and wasn't part of the reconstruction in Japan, or whatever. His visa was denied. So he's studying there, the desk his visa was denied. And, and since it's a turned over the visa application, and wrote on it, with this cup of tea, sipping this cup of tea, I stopped the war. And he handed it back application back to the guy. The guy looked at it, to do it over and said, accepted.

So that's the saying You know, with this cup of tea, I stopped the war. So the idea, the idea being that, you know, very small things can make an impact. It seems like maybe we don't want to kind of brush it off.

But anyway, so to live a life that is complicated world we live to reflect about what is the impact I'm having? And can I make an impact for the better as part of a mindful life? So in terms of in terms of work, to live in such a way, what work can I do that's meaningful.

The other kind of teaching the Buddha had about right livelihood or wrong livelihood is to avoid work, livelihood, that involves deception, trickery, of forceful persuasion, and be a little belittling people. So to avoid that, so why avoid these kinds of things. Because Buddhism is moralistic, and you know, there’s these kind of, you know, really clear admonitions, thou shalt, it's not that it's rather that these things, carved people, other people, and they also harm ourselves.
And one of the functions of mindfulness practice is to help us to understand how we harm ourselves but how we live. And as we get more calm and relaxed and sensitive, becomes clearer and clearer how we can harm how we harm ourselves. And this becomes a very interesting thing around work. Because there can be motivations around work, that are that we pursue or activities are ways of engaging in work, which is not to our best interest. So for example, the pursuit of money for the owner only for the purpose of money or the you know, to be stressed and overworking and just pushing and pushing being very aggressive. You know, you get stressed out, you start having getting ulcers, you get We heart. You know, all kinds of symptoms of stress can build up in people. There's pursuits You know, sometimes the kind of pursuit that sometimes business in America wants us to pursue the kind of values it has, are not very conducive to living a life where we're in touch with our deeper values or deeper sense of calm or ease or relaxation, the deeper, deeper kind of sense of spiritual touchstones in our hearts or minds in our being. One of the touchstones that I think is very helpful, is breathing easily. If the way you work, doesn't allow you to breathe easily, then you need to look at how either what you do or how you do what you're doing. Are you willing to sacrifice having a relaxed breath for the sake of being productive for the sake of proving yourself for the sake of, you know, all the different things that go on? I think in Buddhism, we'd like to stress that you You're relaxed breathing is one of the great resources. that's priceless. And why would you sacrifice it for money when it's priceless.

So the idea being that there's an inner life, which has has no value, it has no price, but is infinitely valuable, easy to lose touch with. And so part of the mindful life is to is to sit quietly enough, for example. So you can get in touch with that which has infinite value, which our society has no way of putting a price on.

You tell your boss, you know, I, you know, give me a break here. I need to find my relaxed breath. I don't know if that's going to go over very well. And so you have the most beautiful qualities of a heart because there's no question Well you can buy and sell it. So I think that you know, it's hard to put a monetary value on it.

So you know, parties not involved and things like this are occupations of deceit or trickery or belittling people is for hint. Another thing is hinting you're not supposed to hint. This is especially true for monastics masters isms also considered livelihood being a monk or a nun. And it's a different way of doing a livelihood.

And more things monastic since they're completely dependent on donations from other people, monastics are not allowed to hint. That's the wrong livelihood. So you can't say you know, you know, if somebody invites you over, offers you a meal as monastic, you can receive the meal things like you, but then you say, you know, thank you so much and you know, I haven't had a pie in a long time. You're not asking for the pie but you're kind of hinting. So no hinting and for monastics no asking either just kind of take what's given.

So then spending time reflecting on, you know, is my is what I'm doing. Ethical is a supportive inner life. This is supportive of a life where I try to make a positive difference in the world that I'm living here. Let it grow that I'm part of something people will spend time reflecting, going off on retreat, taking a year off, in order to really get into the depths of their minds and their hearts, to try to understand what is it they really want to do with their life? What's most important reflection of you know, in 20 years from look back, what do I want to do for the next 20 years that's meaningful for me? I've known people Who have finally found meaningful work when they were in their 60s. And I've known people who have said, you
know, Omar in my 50s it's too late now. Never too late. Anyone man who became a Buddhist monk, when he was 60 became Buddhist teacher, when he was 80. And, and then had a stroke when he was 90. And then he would have part of his rehabilitation from a stroke was, he'd have two younger monk monks, well, he couldn't walk very well. walk next to him, holding him up, and he do lots of walking meditation back and forth, back and forth, back and forth, until he sort of slowly got things moving again and working again. It is 90s an immigration great believer in not wasting time doing things which are meaningless, not wasting time that doing occupations or work, which don't feed you feed the world, some wonderful way to do work just because it's, you know, making making money. Sometimes it's valuable if you're supporting a family, and there's no other way you have to have. But, you know, just making making me having a job for security sake. You know, it's not something I could never, I could never really get behind.

And maybe it's a luxury to be able to walk away from work. That gives us security. And not everyone has that luxury. But I've certainly seen over and over again, that there's much better things to be done in life than making money.

Every time that I chose a Dharma, over the reasonable things about making a livelihood for myself dharma always took care of me. I felt always worked well. The A story I like to tell of being going to Japan to practice there. And when I left Japan, I didn't have much money. I don't know how much I had. But it certainly was not more than $200. You know, and I was going to be in Japan for a year. So the reasonable thing to do is to get a job here that will money. So I got myself set up to teach Japanese to teach English as a second language in Japan. And a lot of Westerners in Japan will teach English and it's somewhat lucrative. And so there was a two weeks or 10 days before my job was gonna start. So since I was a Zen practitioner, I decided to go off to Zen monastery during that time and sit retreat. And during the end of the retreat, I thought, What am I doing, and the Zen practitioners and priest, I didn't come to Japan to study to teach English. I can't just throw these in. And I don't know how I'm going to do that. But I'm going to do Take the risk anyway.

And then pursue that instead of work thing. And so I cancelled my teaching job. And then, you know, kind of tried to find myself into into the Zed world of Japan. And it was spent a year there. And after I, when I left a year later, I hadn't worked. But I left Japan with $100, more than that came with, which, you know, half times as much, right? So, I made a big profit there. So somehow taken care of wonderful ways that was taken care of, and people helped me and supported me. So it's a good little example of, you know, I chose a dharma. And somehow for me, the Dharma then supported me in return. Then the other whole approach around work is not what you do, but how you do it. And for some people, this is the most meaningful aspect of work, and maybe their work doesn't have some kind of group. Meaning in terms of helping other people or, or send great personal meaning for yourself. But how you do it is important.

And the opportunity is to make work a monastery to make work or retreat center to make work, a place that really is your vehicle for developing your spiritual life. And whatever your work is, whether it's being housewife or house husband, or being a monastic or there's many different things we can consider livelihood, our way of life, but to make that a way of living, something that is a place of training ourselves and developing ourselves. And I tell some times, people, please make your, your place of work, please make it a monastery for yourself. You're not going to go you're not going off to a monastery for real monastery. So make your work a monastery. And I say that with a belief that it's possible to do that.
It's possible to be very consciously and consciously intentional about how we approach work and what we do there. So that we bring mindfulness to work. Work was a place we train ourselves in mindfulness.

We're intentional about how we speak and work becomes a place of trading ourselves and right speech, work becomes a place of, we can intentionally kind of try to feel connected to others in a way that we can find vehicles to express our compassion and care. So work is a place of benefiting others. Work is a place to develop concentration and some some works better than other. You can cultivate and develop your concentration, their work as a place you can cultivate and develop your kindness.

There's a lot of things you can develop. And so part of how you do work is to reflect you know, how do I want to do it, and how do I want to take it on as a place of training and developing myself so you're inspired when you get when you get up in the morning, you're inspired not just because you're going to make some money or because you're making a nice product. But because this is a place where I'm going to cultivate myself and develop myself, make me hope that when I come home the end of the day, I've developed my muscle mindful, super stronger. I've had jobs, where it was very clear to me that the jobs I was doing was a place where I was cultivating my concentration, and cultivating my mindfulness. And it was really clear to me that like both those things were developing and strengthening over the days and weeks and months, years that I did those jobs. And I loved it, I loved it, I would go to work. And there were some jobs I had, where I would be more concentrated at the end of the job end of the day than it was going into it. And because, uh, you know, part of that involved a choice, a decision to actually enter into the work and it kind of We'll focus. It's easy nowadays, supposed to be quite easy to get distracted at work, people have computers, because just with a couple of clicks, you're on to the web.

And a couple of clicks, you're checking your email, or you have this little this ominous will tone that comes on and tells you that, you know, email has come in. And, and so some people feel compelled to go check that immediately. And maybe it's nice to check it immediately. Name is important. But if what you're trying to do is develop concentration, the ability to stay focused and present, just be with one thing at one time, then perhaps you ignore that or you turn off a little deeper. So you can just kind of do one thing when you're doing it.

I think is cultivates stability cultivates a sense of relaxation, it cultivates a lot of good qualities. So how we do things to think of About work as a place to cultivate oneself. And one of the really beautiful things to cultivate is a sense of compassion, to cultivate our, our, our sense of caring for others besides ourselves. And I think probably every fiber every work that someone does, has some interface with other people. And even people who are quite solitary sooner or later have to interface with other people because they have to, you know, some interaction of other people because no one's no one, no one's livelihood is independent of others. And so have worked a place where cultivating and developing compassion and care.

And I've known people for whom what was most meaningful about their work was not the product that they made, but rather was a relationship that cultivated with people they were connected to the fact that there was caring relationships That there in those relationships, they made a difference in other people's lives. It's been kind of gratifying that in the last, maybe the last 10 years or so the last 1015 years, 10 years, there's been a number of books published that mulvany books, publications, spirituality of work. And a number of these books are also by Buddhists talking about Buddhism and work, really trying to incorporate that and integrate, integrate those. The work as part of practice, I think has been very important because there's been a very strong tendency, there was a very strong tendency that I
saw in British circles I traveled in to bifurcate life about you know, that retreats, meditating were really at and somehow that work, work actually work out in society and out of the monastery doesn't really count. It's not really the real stuff. And I think there's been a healing of that. That Divide over the years and some of these books represent that where people actually very, very thoughtfully trying to write and consider how is it that we can engage in work as a spiritual practices and Buddhist trading.

And I believe there's a way of taking this kind of his idea, his ideas and trying to get across today very simple. And that is that if you sit, meditate or do something equivalent and are able to relax all the surface chatter and a surface tension of your being and settle into some deeper place of well being of peace, stability, of being in touch, a place of being in touch and find value in that place when value in the thief settle That piece How is it that you can work from that place? How is it that you can work? So work expresses that place supports that place nurtures that place manifests that place of deeper settling. And I believe that people when they do practice, like meditation and regular basis, they more and more in touch with values and sensibility that is not a consumer driven or greed driven or aversion driven, ambition driven, theory driven. And as we get in touch with these deeper kind of sensibilities, it makes sense to begin reevaluating our work to decide whether either to change how we do it, or sometimes actually change what we do.

So that we're honoring this deeper, beautiful place that we all have And some people that's a struggle a little bit too, when they kind of when those of you who are new to mindfulness might before warned that it's possible you're in trouble to keep doing this. Because as you settle and relax and get deeper in touch with yourself, some of your some of your values might change. And as your values change, some of your values might change and become different than some of your colleagues. And if not, a few people have talked to me about that, that that shift that's happening, the tension that arises. So now you're warned.

And then the last thing I'll say is that the quote Lily Tomlin if you win the rat race, you're still around. So let's stop big rats.

So thank you very much and I look forward to seeing you again in a couple of months and also seeing you at the potluck. Thank you