

2012-04-16 Letting Go Clinging And Peace

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SPEAKERS

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Good evening, everyone. And last week, I talked about letting go. And one of the points that I tried to make is that sooner or later anybody everyone is going to have to learn how to let go. You might have to do it today or tomorrow but sooner or later, you will and to be able to, to grow up to mature to be wise is involves in part learning how to let go well and how to let go wisely. So this evening, I would like to follow up that talk with two different aspects of letting go are two different perspectives that I have for right now. I practice with it One has to do with turning towards the clinging towards turning towards the way we hold on, and being present for that. And the other is the wonderful world of the heart or the mind when it has let go, or when it's not clinging. And to have a sense of that, to feel for that, to recognize that, then practice with that. So, letting go. And of course, there's many things we need to pick up, be involved in, be engaged in, be concerned with. And I came across this poem that a friend of mine had written a long time ago today. Wendy Lewis wrote, it's like this. There's this bird and you catch it in your hands. You feel its softness, warmth, its heart rapidly beating But if you keep holding it, it's no longer a bird. So you open your hands, catch it, and let it go again and again. So the you know, so the bird here symbolizes our life or things we run into in our life, that there are many times where to pick things up and hold things and, and we hold them carefully. Like we hold a bird that we somehow catch, nor the best analogy, but hold it carefully, lightly. You don't want to squeeze it too hard. Maybe there's a short period of time you get to hold it. And then you also have to let it go. Because if you keep holding on the life, of whatever you're clinging to, something about it gets, squished gets squashed, gets destroyed. And so to release, give back its freedom back its life to our life is part The movement of letting go. But it's not easy. Sometimes Sometimes it's quite hard. But sooner or later people who do mindfulness practice, have to address this issue of how we hold on how we cling. We grasp the things that we resist how we contract. Because it's when you practice mindfulness sooner or later, you will take responsibility for your contribution, you take responsibility for what you do. There's something about as mindfulness matures, that people become less and less inclined to blame other people to blame others for what you feel to blame others for what you hold on to blame others for what you're preoccupied and caught with in your mind. Because as you become more mindful, we see that the kotnis the holding on the clinging the resistance is something that we do sometimes might have done something terrible to you, or something wonderful to you. And you could be caught clinging to your resentment and your anger or clinging to your desire and your wish. And, and nothing to do with that person. The cause of your clinging, your resistance is not the person, but rather what you do inside of you yourself in relationship to what that person has done. And that's a huge leap for people to make to see that because it is such a strong tendency to project outwards into blame and to want and to put our wishes for aspiration or wishes for our well being into the future into other people into things. And so we cling and we don't let go. So to take responsibility and mindfulness, what we do is we turn around and we look at Turn in lean into our clinging.

If you can let go easily, sometimes that's wise to do. But the really what you want to do in Buddhist spirituality, the way that I understand what the Buddha was teaching is, you don't turn away from anything. You don't turn away from your struggles, you don't turn away from your difficulties. You don't turn away from how you're feeling. You don't turn away from your clinging, but you turn into it. You turn into it, and you're present for it, to see it and learn for it. Because a huge part of wisdom is to understand really well the problem rather than understanding the answer, or you can't really understand the maybe the answer is is to understand the problem. And so we turn towards it to be present to see but not to understand necessarily with, you know, with words that can explain what it was all about, but to bring our attention and really feel it and be present. One of the actions Characteristics of clinging is oftentimes, when we cling, we're separate from ourselves. The more you cling, the more a person or person clings, the more the person has really lost touch with themselves, even though they might feel lousy and terrible. Because clinging involves usually a preoccupation with something. That's not an intimacy with oneself. And so when we turn towards clinging, it's really a turn towards ourselves and come home to here, find out what's here. And one of the most useful things that I know what to do when I'm caught in something and clinging and can't let go of it easily. I have strong feelings that are going on or something is, is not there's been a lot of time thinking about it, but it's been a lot of time feeling it. So turn towards it and let my attention my presence be really close in to myself, and feel how I'm feeling when I'm clinging or cause And generally if I'm thinking or caught in something, it's unpleasant. But one of the very interesting things that's unpleasant about it is not only the unpleasant it, but also my dislike of it. My judgement of it, my wanting to push it away my, my embarrassment around, it's all these attitudes I have towards it. And so it turned towards it. This whatever the felt the felt sense the inner feeling the sensations in your body of the emotions that the feelings that the what goes on in your muscles, when you cling, sometimes you'll actually feel in your muscles that they're still holding tight, not just in the mind, but your musculature as well. Or there are certain emotions that are deeply connected to the clinging and you can feel different places in your body. And so you turn towards really close to it and get closer and closer. They need to get close, be intimate. People like to many people in the West like to be intimate. So be intimate, be real intimate with what's difficult for you be intimate with your bad feelings, how you're feeling, go towards it. And as you get closer and closer to it, one of the things that will fall away, hopefully by the more things will fall away is your, your dislike of it, your resistance to it, your aversion to it, your judgments of it, or sometimes people love their clinging and if you get really close to it, then your love and your desire for it will also fall away. Because loving it and hating it is to be removed from it. There's all this ways being separate, that happens in weakling layers of separation. So to turn towards it, and so I find that that notion very helpful, that you have turned towards feel when I'm feeling and be still be really still allow it to be there. Maybe kind of Like, you know, holding a bird in your hand, open hand, very gentle, very soft. And just hold it, you know, you can't squeeze tight. And you don't kind of let your hands to fall open. But your offer kind of presence and attention that's respectful and kind, but close and attentive to what's there. So generally, when people cling or hold on, they don't feel so good. And so there is a resistance to being present for that. And so it's counterintuitive to move into it. But to move on to move into with care and tenderness is a very important learning as we've learned to be this mindfulness thing. And so as we get closer and more tender, more present, then our reaction to it begins falling away. And so then it's us feel lousy, and it's just lousy as opposed to feeling lousy and hating it. Which would you rather have you like it complicated, so multi course. meal so you have lousy, you hate it and you're embarrassed for it. And then you try to compensate for it. You can you can get more very elaborate meals. Or you can have a very simple life very simple meal just feel the lousyness in and of itself, but actually, I think I think it feels a lot better just to feel it to be close. And then sometimes you want to take your time. There's sometimes I think when people feel don't feel good, there's often a hurry to fix it. To get better. To feel it's a personal flaw, that you should be feeling bad, a personal flaw that you're clinging, heaven forbid that you're a Buddhist and clinging. Don't come to IMC and admit it to anyone. You know, only come here when you can be relaxed and open. So, but to turn towards and admit it, feel it be present for it be

intimate, and give yourself be still video being still with it. And that The poem or be the kind of represents this being still is one of patients to allow something to happen. Allow something to unfold. Maybe you don't know what's supposed to happen to your clinging. Maybe you don't know what's supposed to happen to your sorrow, or your grief, or your greed or your desire your disappointment, whatever it might be, maybe, who knows maybe, you know, it's a little bit of a conceit I think, you know, is supposed to happen is supposed to go away or do something. So anyway, there's this poem by EQ Japanese monk poet, he wrote, break open, a cherry tree. And there are no flowers. But the spring breeze brings forth myriad blossoms. So imagine yourself in a hurry to have cherry blossoms. it's springtime. So you get out your axe, and you start hacking at the cherry tree to get those things to pop out faster. Doesn't work right. But you have to be patient to allow nature to take its course the spring breeze. So sometimes it's it works with our for our inner life as well our psychological life, if you if you learn the art of holding it in awareness, being close to it, but not reactive to it close close to it and not being for against it just close, get closer to it and closer to it and feel it that all the reactions fall away just feel lousy, or whatever you're feeling, just feel it simple. and be patient. Then the spring breeze of that attention might allow something to mature and unfold. And I can't tell you how many times I've done this. And it's a I find it every time beautiful when there is a letting go. But I'm not the one who's let go and you know, I think Many times I've been tried to engineer my letting go, you know, only I need to let go, you know, that's supposed to do here, that's the task. I know I'm clinging, and there's the clinging and, you know, I'm supposed to be a good Yogi, like go and be happy ever after. And, and, you know, there's all this conceit, all this self it's built into, it's more of this kind of separation, pulling back not being close. And but to go in there and just feel it and be present, be very attentive, very still aware. And then let it see what happens. And then it dissolves, or fades away or more, so change into something else who knows what it's going to be. So that's one whole process that I'm very fond of. Sometimes, though, it can be more involved. Sometimes you can get close to it and you can see what you're holding on to. Sometimes you can by being close and attentive and mindful to your belief system. You can see Oh, that's why I'm holding I'm holding on to a certain self identity that I thought was important. It was important to be seen as a person who's competent, or beautiful or smart, or whatever. And you see that that's what you believing. So now that I see that I believe that I don't know if I believe it anymore. As long as I didn't see it, the belief I believed. But now that I really see it, you know, maybe I don't have to believe anymore. And then sometimes people can just let go. Sometimes it's easy, and sometimes it's not.

Sometimes it takes a lot of time and effort to get to know oneself better to let go. Sometimes there is wrestling sometimes the process of letting go is not peaceful. Sometimes we know we need to let go. We can see how we're holding on to something. We're afraid to let go because just the other side of letting go is insecure as an unknown and there's fear sometimes As you know, it's wrestling with our demons to let go, you know, to sort of deal with what we're holding on to the clinging. When, after I was practicing Buddhism for I've been practicing pretty seriously for about three years. Seriously, meaning I was living in as a monk in a monastery for almost three years. I don't know how serious I was, but conventionally it looks like that, you know, you can go with the monastery. And, but at some point, I came to this edge where I could see what I have to let go of is like clinging to myself. Myself clinging, clinging to my identity and needing to be something in someone in other people's eyes. And I couldn't let go, because I was afraid. I could just quit. You know, I could see what I had to do is like, I could select being at the edge of a cliff or something and you might take that step, but I wasn't going to And, and then the variety of things then help that one was, in this particular case, I then went to Asia to practice. And I decided I'd make crossing the international dateline my ritual to let go. And so I had this idea of Okay, I paid attention to the clock or whatever. And I don't know if it helped. But I had this idea I needed a ritual. But then what would help the most was this process I described earlier, of turning towards and into the place of fear, the place of holding the place of attachment, the place where the

mind was churning, wanting to be seen, yearning to be seen yearning to get something from other people, and being present and feeling it being with it. And then letting it drop a drop into a deeper and deeper get closer until it dropped away by itself. So that's one whole process the process of turning towards turret turning towards a cleaning now I think it's counterintuitive because it's doesn't feel good and variety of ways. It's kind of sometimes seen as a problem. And, and but I think a really wise approach is is leaning towards going into being present. And then there's a variety of things you can do there. Now the whole other side that I want to talk about tonight is the was inspired by many years ago when by a teacher who said something like, the way I like to say it now is, if you have to let go, you've already missed the boat. If you have to let go, you've already sacrificed your peace. If you've already let if you have to let go. You're already separate from your what's going on. If all you're supposed to do is to always let just let go, let go Let go you haven't really gone very deep into yourself you haven't really learned yourself because the idea hopefully is to come to a time and place where you don't pick up where you don't cling where you don't contract. And so someone says something to you. Your mother has wears army boots it's not just what they say in America it's never you know, in the in the cartoons or something yeah, yeah. Yeah directed Canadian says yes. And, and so you know, and so that that time comes when someone says that and it just, it goes right through your mind right through your consciousness, your awareness and doesn't stick anywhere you don't pick up you don't react to it. There's no need to let go of your clinging to it because you didn't do anything with it. Just words that travel through. And so there comes a time there's a there's a there's a there A you know, the process of letting go is leading to a mind to heart or mind or awareness, which is peaceful, which is beautifully still which is clear, which is open, which is spacious, which is cool.

There's many ways people talk about this very satisfying, warm, intimate. at peace was my favorite, the hardest piece and enter and enter. What once you've let go deep enough and well enough to experience the other side of that that piece of the other side of it. Then the instruction is lean towards that. Get to know that get be intimate with that. Go into that and all that all that capacity have learned to be present for what's difficult in your life. We'll develop a capacity to be present for what's beautiful. And so then turn towards and feel the peace. Feel what that's like, get to know that get to know it becomes kind of a visceral memory, or something you've become familiar with. So you can start recognizing it. When it's there in the background of your day, you're going around doing your activity, and you recognize, oh, there's a stillness there. I'm kind of, you know, if I just stopped kind of being so preoccupied with doing my taxes, then, you know, there's a stillness that's kind of just kind of close by, or there's a piece so there's a spaciousness or an openness or a clarity that's there or subtleness. And to recognize that becomes something that supports us and creates a different context for how we go through our lives because then we're supported by something that is beautiful and present for us. So they do have when you're clicking You've already missed the boat means that you missed the boat of staying in touch with your peace. And there's a practice and staying in touch with it, staying with it, recognizing and being with it. There's an art to learning to appreciate that state of mind as being more valuable than your preoccupations, your greed, your desires, your versions, your pettiness, or whatever. And so to recognize what that's like so that you come to it, so that when something occurs, it doesn't ruffle you. One of the Buddhist ideas of this mind the peaceful mind, whatever. Still mind I call it is that a Buddhist classic Buddhist terminology is the unmoving mind. It doesn't move and not that it's frozen, but rather it's just so open, that there's no ruffles, there's no agitation, there's no ripples, things occur. It doesn't affect us negatively in any kind of way at all. So what does it take to have that? And what is it or say differently if you have if you've let go to some degree and have experienced some degree of peace as a result, the other side of letting go one of the very interesting ways of practicing then is to notice what you're willing to give up your peace for. Because chances are, you'll give it up you know, I've given up my piece just so that I could beat the red light driving. You know, what's more important? It's gonna you know, get to give you a ridiculous example how easy it is how quick it is, you know, just you know, to give up alone, you know, you can build you can probably want lots of examples

of things can see much more, it's much more important than monumental and, and, and things for which there's after you have absolute right to claim or just seems like really a noble cause the calling for. And so we give up our peace, but to question and doubt. Why do we willing to give up our peace? Is it really worth it is a very interesting exploration to have that debate and that exploration with yourself, what are you willing to give up your peace for? What do you sacrifice it for? And is it worth it?

So as I practice my Buddhism as I practice my my life, I see my own practice sometimes swings between these two approaches than ever A general way sometimes I cling. And what I do is I turned towards it, and practice with it. And sometimes my practice is not about that. But my practice or my life the way I am, is more has to do with a piece or the open mind or the unmoving mind or the clear mind or whatever languages. And I, the practice is to stay with that. live with that, and allow the experience of life what goes on to occur around me through me with me, as if I'm an open window or an open door, and things can just go right through. And that doesn't make me I hope, aloof or indifferent or less human. I think it makes me more human. At least I feel that that there's a great intimacy with myself and with life and with others, the more of it the doors open. And in fact, when it's so open, that I'm not standing in the doorway. That's the best. So I'll end with this poem, by lipo Chinese poet. The birds have vanished into the sky. And now the last cloud drains away. We sit together the mountain and me until only the mountain remains.

So we have about 15 minutes. And so this is your chance if you'd like to ask any questions about that or specific questions around the practice of it or you want to give you know, offer something you're welcome to do so.

Yeah, it was the other mic.

Okay, thank you.

What kind of activities in Zen are boo doesn't mean you're dealing with, like a scientific problem. You're, you're clinging into solving a scientific problem. What kind of how do you see it in sand practice? What kind of clinging is that? What kind of what is it, you're striving to solve the problem, for example, the scientist right striving

to solve a problem, scientific problems that doesn't have to involve clinging, but it can involve clinging and clinging has takes many different forms. Sometimes the clinging has to do with pleasure, clinging to pleasure, the pleasure, sometimes it has to do with success and all the associations process says, you know, if I can solve this problem, I'll get the Nobel Prize. My colleagues will like me more, I'll get a promotion. So there's clinging to some idea that connected to the success. Sometimes it has to do with, you know, clinging to personal capacity, you know, I have to prove myself I'm When asked to solve this, there's many things that we can cling to when we're trying to solve a problem. But it's possible also to strive, it's possible to, to put a lot of effort into something without there being clinging.

So the problem is

when, when judgment comes in, how are we, I don't know how to award it, but

when we are,

like Nobel Prize are we are being perceived from outside as one thing people cling to

Yes. And they contract around, how they're, how they're perceived, how they, how they think they're being perceived. And some people will do their activities and the activity that they're involved in the activity, but while they're doing it, they're very concerned about how they're seeing doing it and the expectation or what it's going to do for the reputation or and that's where the clinging is.

So Buddhism is any kind of activity which involves judgment

depends what you mean by judgment. But

you're always talking about a neutral state of mind. And not you I'm really that's the whole thing you neutralize mind. And when you're not neutralizing there is a polarization which is judgment. It comes from judgment. It can be so I just want to find out where boundaries are here.

The boundaries to judgment is an interesting word because I think evaluating things being discerning is important. So just recognize the difference between things recognize when you're clinging when you're not. And judging whether you know having a simple judgment like that You know, it's not, you know, if I if I continue cleaning soap until much I'm gonna get a heart attack. You know, I've cleaned so much, you know, I'm certainly gonna get a headache. And that's a it's a kind of a judgment call, but it's theirs. But usually when English when people use the word judgment, pejorative negative term way, and judge is being judgmental is adding saying it's good or it's bad. And there's a kind of rejection of something. A hate of it or pushing it away or version of it, or clinging and holding, desiring of it. And that movement of, of contracting and pushing away in the mind, or contracting and holding on. That's not necessary.

So you use the word discern versus judgment. So

I like the word discerned value, evaluate, discern, and we have to you know, and so that that's an important part of, of, think of a mature good life is to be discerning and wise and Evaluate what's going on to be able to distinguish between what's useful and not useful. Thank you. I saw a hand over here in the back.

Let's see, this is again, sort of like a householder issue. And usually considered that householder, also in equates to what one does in business, or as a gentleman was talking about science, you know, where you're, you're striving for some particular effect. And, you know, you start to have failure, or at least you perceive failure. And you get angry at your fellow workers or scientists and And then you're you become a less productive. You're not the anger is spread out among your fellow workers, especially if you're the boss. And this leads to even more catastrophic situation in terms of failing at the program or project, right.

So,

you know, I'm finding that what you were saying, I have a little taste for that, which is that I, I, I'm attempting, you know, to to recognize that I've already over catastrophize the issue You know, all these sorts of things can happen while you attempt to change or modify something to move forward in the project. I mean, it's not always you're not always looking for credit or, or

you just trying to be an effective in your job.

Yeah. So clink clinging, clinging is being trapped by desire. Yeah. It's not. There's many desires to be had and desire at work to success to make a product to do have the company go a certain way. And

desire is not the problem that desires when we're trapped. where the problem is when we're trapped by the desire and in the vise of the desire when there's compulsion, and that's when, when, if there's desire, and there's failure at our task, then there doesn't have to be any problem necessarily with But it's, but if there's, there's if we're trapped by the desire, there's expectation and an insistence, then we can get frustrated. Yes. So to understand the difference between having to understand the difference be discerning the difference between having a desire and, and that compulsion, the insistence that goes with the desire is a very important distinction to make. And, you know, you described a scenario that started somewhat simply and grew and grew and to become catastrophic. Part of the function of meditation is to come back to the beginning. And so to simplify this, try to simplify to relax, let go. So we can get back close to the beginning where it all starts. Because many times people are living in the catastrophe zone. But if you try if you're living too much, you know, it's gotten so complicated. Sometimes it's hard to sort it out. But if at least the mind can go sit notates for an hour and get and relax and let go of all the thoughts and stories and ideas and get quiet, sometimes you can get back down to the source, the original point where the clinging is,

and probably make the better decisions probably much better there.

And, you know, there's a gentleman here who talked about, you know, clinging in science. I mean, not that there's a fair number of great scientific discoveries that happened when the scientists stopped obsessing. You know, they were very actively involved was important part of the process. Then they went for a walk or took a shower or do something and weren't thinking about it, then there was the answer. So I saw one more hand here and then probably we should stop. Maybe we should have a woman because of all these guys.

Well, something happened this morning where I was sitting very peacefully. And then my husband erupted in my office and said something that was very react that I felt was very reactive. And, you know, I tried to stay cool and very calm and outwardly, it's I seemed very calm and not reacting to him. But then I found myself for the day getting really, really angry, and I was sitting, you know, earlier, I just felt like this really hot coal, you know, and I just, and then as I was sitting with it, I realized that what really bugged me was the clinging to the idea of peace. Oh, yeah, you know, I just couldn't stand that he disrupted my peace. And but after reality reality saying that it was really a kind of a relief because I felt that well, I don't have to cling to the idea of peace. I mean, that's unreasonable.

Yeah, say anyway, yeah, that's it destroys the peace. The, someone wants to find enlightenment as being interruptible. Meaning that to us, something can happen. That's the unexpected and it doesn't mind doesn't get agitated or caught by it. So something about you know, of course, this is how it works in life that something someone does something and upsets us. And I think that being calm is often better than being angry. So it's kind of nice to become, but you have to be wise about being calm. You don't want to pretend that you're pretending that you're calmer than you actually are. Or could pretend that you're less reactive than you are. So what I think, you know, it's but it's good to be calm and not, you know, lash out. But to be honest with you, hopefully you would say you'd say to maybe your husband, you'd say, calmly, relaxed way and say, I'm really pissed off.

You know, be be honest about what's going on, but you know, tried to do it, you know, with the way that it doesn't. And I've done that sometimes, you know, try to find the language to try to stay calm and centered. And sometimes a little bit of struggle to do it. But, but not to deny how I'm feeling. But then in that space of calm to find a useful a wise way to let people know to inform people. What's happening for me inside, you know, I mean, you know, wow, you know, I was doing my thing peacefully, it was important for me, I finally had some alone time, you burst in and said this thing to me. And now, it's

saying, I'm pissed off, maybe it's not the wisest thing, but you could start the conversation by saying, but now I'm in turmoil. They say I'm in turmoil. Most people like what? When's the last time I heard someone said they were in turmoil. And, and so it gets their attention and it goes It doesn't necessarily like you're necessarily attacking them in turmoil. You know what, let's, you know. And so then maybe you can begin a conversation. But what happened in?

Well, I actually did say something like that. But I think the source of distress was more that I did not realize the clinging Oh, yeah. When I was clinging to Yeah, yeah. And he was just like this, like that just went on when I realized that that's what was really disrupting. It was not what he was upset about, or what but he was that he had disrupted.

Exactly. I love I love that. So I mean, so I think anybody who practices a path of peace, sooner or later is going to have to learn to overcome their attachment to the piece.

And let it unfold as it wishes. So the nine o'clock so some of you may be late if you want to come up and ask me. You're welcome to do that. That way. Like we should stop. It's nine o'clock. So thank you all very much.