So, today is the fourth talk on the third noble truth. And the talk is going to be really a primarily I think about the inconstancy. The alternative translation for the word anicca, often translated into English as impermanence. But impermanence can imply just the things end, sooner or later they end. But inconstancy implies more that things are not constant, but they still might have some kind of existence. They arise and they pass away. They come and they go, come in and go, and so they don't quite exist in a permanent way. But they also don't not exist. They have this kind of dynamic process aspect of them they appear and they disappear. In the ancient discourses, there was a person who came to the Buddha and asked, "Is it possible by traveling to know or to see or to reach the end of the world, where one is not born, does not age, does not die, does not pass away, and is not reborn?" So, most likely this person was pointing to transcendent state where the self, some kind of core aspect of the self is unchanging. But it's no longer you know, it's kind of Immortal in a certain way. It doesn't come and go doesn't die, but that somehow really beyond the edges of the world. And you can you travel there, so, you can be safe from birth and death and all these things? And in answering the question, the Buddha in is often typical way, redefines the terms, he redefines what the end of the world means. The Buddha treats this end of the world as a metaphor. And so he says that, without reaching the end of the world, there is no end of suffering. So, he also redefines the goal, whereas the person says, place where there's no birth and death and all these things, the Buddha simply does something much more simple and immediate and identifiable in our experience here, that's not dependent on ideas of rebirth or not rebirth or getting some place that's transcendent. It's just here in this lived experience, the end of suffering. So then he says, you won't reach the end of suffering without reaching the end of the world. But then he defines what he means by the world. He says, "The world is this two arms long body, and its perceptions and its mind." So the world is really and then Bhikkhu Bodhi who translated this back as passage, in his footnote explains that the world here means the world of our experience. So the world of personal experience. And it doesn't take a lot of consideration to realize that the world...
can be defined not by the earth and the real objects out there, but rather how our minds construct the world. How the mind kind of makes much of the world that we live in. Not the entire thing. But if you're meditating or listening to this indoors, probably anything, your eyes will fall on looking around your room - just about anything, unless maybe it's a plant or an animal or something inside with you. But all the objects that have somehow been constructed are made by human hands or through machines by human design. If you took someone, if you'd brought that object to someone who lived 10, 20, 50,000 years ago, they probably would have no idea of what this object is. They wouldn't have a clue what to do with it. They take off a door from your house and put it out next to a tree and 50,000 years ago, would they know it was a door? A chair? A computer? Would they know? They probably nothing that they would understand. They would be scratching their heads and wondering what it is. But for us, it's obvious what it is. But it's what's in that obviousness maybe, we don't realize how much it's a product of human thought, ideas, constructs - ideas of what it is that we overlay on top of it, or we associated with it, so that we can find our way with this world. And these associated concepts are nothing wrong with them, but they're part of the human world that we have constructed. And then we move about in the world, that in some senses, for the most part, is a manifestation of what some human beings have thought about in the past, invented and made and put in place and all kinds of things. So this world of our direct experience, is not a ... it's a constructed world in a sense it's mental formations, and ideas that we have. And much of our suffering has to do with how we participate and how we relate to this inner world of mental constructions and concepts and how they are projected or how we associate them with the world around us. And we don't think we're responsible for seeing a chair as a chair. But in fact, we are also participating in this huge enterprise of agreeing that a chair is a chair, a door is a door and, and all these things. And again, there's nothing wrong with that it's actually kind of wise and appropriate, but our mind is constructing. And so the Buddha when he says, we can't end suffering without coming to the end of the world, he means that to really get down to the heart and the root of our clinging and our craving, the source of our suffering, we have to somehow step away from the stickiness, the involvement, the excessiveness of living in this world of concepts and ideas that we're swimming in so much so that we don't see it - like fish mostly don't see the water they swim in. And so the idea of the end of the world, it's a frightening idea - you know, the way it's been stated. And tomorrow I'll talk about the happiness of it. So it's not just depressing. The Buddha wrote as the end of his teaching on this topic, he said he had a poem, "Who has reached the end of the world has fulfilled the spiritual life, the peaceful one having known the end of the world, has no wishes for this world, or another world." So the peaceful one. So this idea of not clinging to anything, and that part of what we cling to unconsciously, is a stickiness of our concepts and our thoughts of experience. And our resistance and our clinging to these thoughts, ideas, experiences we have whatever it might be, is kind of like coming up to the edge of a river, watching the river flow by, and dipping a bucket in the river, and then carrying around the bucket of water and saying, "Here's the river." The river is no longer in the water in the bucket. It's just water. What the river is, is the flow. There's no river without the flowing and moving. And so when the Buddha said over and over and over again the Buddha emphasized that to really release, relax, thaw the fist of clinging, the holding, the resistance that we have - the stickiness we have to all these concepts and ideas, that the idea is to settle back in a very deep, peaceful, calm, contented place in meditation mostly. So you don't to live your life this way. That
would be silly not to live without the concepts of the world that we have. But in meditation, to trust in such a deep way that we can put down the burden of all these thoughts and ideas and concepts and reactivities and wanting and not wanting we have, and just settle in a very, very peaceful place where concepts are no longer operating, but direct experience of the world - our experience of life is still happening. And what we see is things arise and pass; they come and go. We see that what gives a sense of continuity is often our ideas of things. But in the direct experience, things are flashing in and out of existence: appearing, disappearing, much more frequently, incessantly. And we find that in the Buddha's teaching, this is the primary insight, the liberating insight over and over and over again, in the suttas the Buddha is pointing to: the insight into inconstancy that comes from this very deep, peaceful, settled, focused mind. And to give you some of the ... he had all these different words that he used: synonyms, you know, arising and passing, appearing and vanishing, arising and cessation - cessation, nirodha, the third noble truth. And so one of the meanings of this Third Noble Truth is not that it's the cessation of the craving that leads to suffering. But rather it's to see the cessation of whatever is happening, that it comes and goes. It arises and passes; it's not constant. And certainly we can see that craving itself comes and goes. But the Buddha lists many things that comes and goes. He talked about in this language of things arise and pass - the core insight. He talked about the factors of dependent arising, which include craving and clinging but also feelings and sensations and birth and death and consciousness and mental formations. All these things - to see them come and go. He talked about the five aggregates coming and going, that sense perceptions come and go, that views come and go. And he just goes on and on. He has all these lists of things. But the way that he talks about it, again, this very common way he talks about it is in a formulaic way, that he lays out in four statements, and those four statements can be understood, "This is x (x as a kind of a blank for fill in with this) This is x. This is the arising of x. This is the cessation of x. And this is the practice leading to the cessation of x." And so here, the second noble truth is the way it's formulated, understood in this way, is a core insight that Just seeing things come and go, and noticing that they're gone, they're ceased. And the phenomenal thing to see that even for a moment, something is not there. And to appreciate that. Often the mind just latches on to ideas. And, you know, we, we flash in and out of our preoccupation with our thoughts. But it's kind of feels to us it's continuous. What we're asked to do in mindfulness practice, is to notice the discontinuity. So you might be thinking about something that's important, like thinking about what you're going to have for a meal, and you're hungry, and you really want the meal. And it just seems to you you’re thinking only about food. But then there's a sound outside, and for a moment, you wonder, "What was that sound?" And then you're back to thinking about food. And then you notice your bladder is full. And, and you say, well, "Where's the bathroom?" And all these things flash in briefly, and then you're back to thinking about food. So it seems like you're thinking about food all the time. But in fact, it comes and goes. Your emotions as well. You might feel like your emotions are continuous. But in fact your attention, your awareness probably is flitting in and out, arising and passing too on different topics. So this is one of the key insights that the Buddha taught. And to really appreciate how profound and meaningful it is, is really not something to really kind of work with and live with in daily life so much. It can be very helpful in daily life, but the deepest experience of this happens in meditation, in deep concentrated meditation, where it can feel like one of the best things going like the mind is concentrated, peaceful
and nice. And feels like you're can be really in the flow of experience, the flow of arising and passing -
the flow of arising passing that's so thoroughgoing that even any idea or sense of me, myself, and
mine disappears into that flow, into that arising and passing of phenomena. And the value of being in
this arising and passing inconstant experience is not in and of itself. It's not like we're supposed to live
there. But rather it's powerful medicine that helps us to relax the clinging, to let go. Nothing
whatsoever is worth clinging to. We realize that nothing can be clung to, because things are flowing
and moving. It's like putting a fist into the river. And you really want to take the river home, and you
grab a fistful of water, and the hand can't hold the water. It just fades away and after a while, you
realize that's not the way to hold on to water. So we can't hold on to the flow of experience. And so we
begin to relax and settle back. And in the deepest situations, the mind lets go of itself - very deep
release. With that release, that person never is the same again. And then when they come back into
the world of experience, they really have an embodied or deep sense, deep understanding, deep
connection to this idea that nothing whatsoever is worth clinging to. They might still cling some, but
they know that that's not the way forward. So I hope this makes sense. And then we'll finish this
discussion about nirodha tomorrow. And I want to remind you that tomorrow, after we finish at 7:45
that we'll do, we'll switch over for those of you who want to a zoom meeting. To do kind of a, you know,
community meeting for those of you who have been watching on YouTube for all these weeks or for
since today, and in order to check in and say hello and we'll break into the little, small groups, so you
have a chance to meet other people in this YouTube community. And then we'll come back together,
and maybe take some questions and some discussion, maybe for about an hour. And, and we'll post
tomorrow, both on the IMC website on the What's New section, the zoom link, and then a separate
entry there will be the password for getting into the Zoom Room. And the password is going to be the
Pali Buddhist word for loving kindness, the five letter word that begins with M. And you'll find that there
and we'll also post this information on the chat box for tomorrow, so that you can also find it easily
there. Hopefully, it'll be pretty easy to switch over to zoom, and if you've never had done zoom before,
you might want to upload for free. It's very quick on your device, a zoom account. So thank you very
much,