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SPEAKERS
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With this talk, I begin the five part series on the fourth noble truth. So we've already done now three weeks, one week each on the first four noble truths. And in a sense, the fourth, you know, builds on the first three, is a continuation of the first three. And I would like to begin with this metaphor of the mind being like water. And it's an ancient part of Buddhism is to refer to the mind in different ways as if it's water. What's nice about water is that it's not ice. What's nice about water is that it's also not invisible gas, you know? As the water evaporates. That water has beautiful clear water has this wonderful quality that you really you see the water, but you also can see through the water to what's in the water. And this way of kind of being in the mind, being part of the mind, and having the ability to see through that clarity of awareness, we know we're aware, and in that clarity, see what's there. And the way it's expressed as a metaphor and the ancient texts is, is a person standing on the edge of a lake. The person who has good eyesight and is able to look down into the Clear Lake and it's so clear the water that down deep down you can see in the bottom of the lake, can see pebbles and snails moving around and also can see the fish moving around in the lake slowly. In the same way, when the mind is clear, it looks deep into the mind deep to our experience. And it sees the things that are kind of stationary, that pebbles and sees the things that are moving and coming and going. And it's just all seen in clarity. This metaphor of looking into a Clear Lake and seeing the fish and things in it is used for a mind which is prepared for full awakening. That somehow when the mind is settled and calm, unagitated, where the mud of the hindrances have all settled down, then the mind is ready for a very deep letting go. Is perfectly a freedom a releasing of the deepest forms of attachment that are there. And these four noble truths are central aspects to this movement towards this freedom and release. And, and there are Different estimates saying these weeks there are different interpretations for what these four noble truths are. But the earliest predominant understanding that we find in the ancient teachings of the Buddha are different than what we expect those of us who've learned the Four Noble Truths from, you know, modern teachers or modern books. The Four Noble Truths predominantly are
the deep insights into seeing what is there, seeing it's arising, seeing it ceasing. You're really seeing the coming and going phenomena. Now this is a you know not you can see that in ordinary life. It's the metaphor I like is being on the riverbank we leaning against a tree and just watching the river go by. And of course, you see the river float, you know, flowing and flowing. That's what a river is, it's flowing. And, and so it's clear people some people get very relaxed and very contented, just watching some like a river flowing and flowing and you can do it for hours sometimes and there's something very captivating and relaxing about that kind of. But what we're talking about here, at least there earlier, you know, the Buddha is his deep meditative experience, to have done the work, the inner work, inner clear clearing of the mind, settling the mind, settling our issues, meditating long enough that the mind gets quiet and still enough that the mind becomes more and more like a Clear Lake, the mind becomes more and more able to just see the fish and the scales and the pebbles of our mind, just see the details. And at some point, seeing they're coming and going, because what we're seeing at this level is deeper than the experience of our stories, and our concepts, and the ways in which we sew together our reality, through desires and aversions and wanting, which is allowing things to be kind of at the, at this, at this sense level, at the pixel level of experience, the individual kind of data points that arise and pass and experience. And it's a very, very, can be a very, very pleasant, meaningful, inspiring state, to have the mind with that level of clarity and subtleness, and seeing things come and go and come and go. And when the mind has that kind of openness and clarity and room for things, leaving things alone, there's a sense of freedom in that. There's a sense that you're allowing things, we're granting everything it's freedom. In a sense, rather than we becoming free, the deeper freedom of Buddhism is we give everything else it's freedom. Everything's allowed us to be as it is. Now remember, we're talking about a very deep states of meditation. We're not having to contend with the social complexities of life at this point. And in this very deep state, we can just grant freedom to everything that comes with thoughts and feelings and sensations, whatever. And that sense of freedom is there, without understanding the cause of our suffering, without the stories about why things are. There's no need to ask the question why? Or to have an explanation or to have an understanding of things per se, except that we understand that things are constantly flowing and moving and developing. And the way that this is expressed in the ancient tradition is that one understands in terms of suffering, one understands suffering, one understands the arising of suffering, one understands the ceasing of suffering, and the fourth statement is one understands that this is the practice leading to the ceasing of suffering. And so this is the practice that leads the ceasing of suffering. That this, this practice is pointing back to or explaining that it's this seeing of the arising and ceasing. In that clarity of just seeing things come in the Clear Lake of the mind. And the freedom that comes with leaving things alone, just seeing the things can come and go without our involvement, without our engagement, that we're free of it and it's free of us. Here there's freedom. Here, there's no involvement in entanglement here. There's no greed or wanting for it. There's just a, there's a very deep cessation not only of the things coming and ceasing, but also a cessation of our clinging, craving and wanting of it. And here is where freedom is found. So, this is the practice. And this is the practice then we see do over and over again. And if we take me back to this level of practice and really experience to be saturated by, the conditioned by it, be relaxed by it, keeps opening us and freeing us more and more. More and more we discover the deeper holdings, the places leftover, were still
clinging and attached, begin to dissolve. begin to let go. Sometimes dramatically and sometimes slowly. And at some point, when this process becomes steep enough, then the letting go happens in a very deep, very thorough way. That at that point, these four liberating insights no longer become what we understand. But what we really awake, fully awaken to so the language In ancient texts goes from understanding to becoming fully awakened to. And when we're fully awakened to these, then the texts refer to them as the noble truth of suffering, the noble truth of the arising of suffering, the noble truth of the ceasing of suffering, cessation of suffering, and the noble truth of the practice leading to the cessation of suffering. The full awakening. This is what it is to the deepest, letting go the deepest releasing of things of full awakening. And so this is a very different understanding of the Noble Truths than Noble Truths point to the cause of suffering and that craving is the cause and we let go of craving. It's actually something I would say deeper understanding and the craving idea of four noble truths. We'll talk about later. That's a kind of a later application of them, but at the heart of he talked about the early Tradition or the tradition, it's really this very deep experience insight into inconstancy seen over and over again until leads to awakening. So it's a kind of a two step process. First, there's a very deep understanding Ah, this is the way. Now I know what to practice is. And followed by as sooner or later it maturing and growing and developing. Matures into greater and greater release and freedom. So in this regard, the word noble that this talked about here doesn't refer to the truths, but it rather refers to the people who are have become ennobled, people who become certain kinds of dignity or value or I don't know exactly what to say how we translate noble The ancient word is ariya. And, and you know, it's a little bit unfortunate what happened historically with this word in the 20th century in Europe, but this is an ancient Indian word originally for for an a class of people who are considered kind of the nobles or the, you know, certain kind of, in some ways that conquers parts of India perhaps. But the Buddha took it on to refer to kind of a certain worthiness or fullness or value of someone who's fully freed and awakened. And rather than, technically, the Pali, the ancient language, doesn't say doesn't really say four noble truths, even though it's how we keep translating it over and over into into English. The most likely way that the grammar of the word means it's the truth of the noble ones. And this is very important because Buddhism's focusing on the transformation of people, not the idea of abstract truths. It's the truth. It's the insight. It is the realization of those who are realized, of the noble ones. So this is the background, to go deep more deeply into the fourth noble truth, that we're going to talk about this week. And we'll see tomorrow, how this relates to the Eightfold Path. Because traditionally, the fourth noble truth in the subsequent interpretations of the Four Noble Truths that goes down through the centuries that comes to us today and the most common understanding the Four Noble Truths. The fourth noble truth is the Eightfold Path. But the Eightfold Path is also in the early tradition very different than how it's come to us. And it's more intimately related to awakening itself that has been often presented, where it's often presented as the beginner's path, to do these and that leads to awakening, but it's actually an expression of awakening itself. It's an expression of this deep cessation, this deep fulfillment of the arising, of the rising and passing of phenomena, leaving things alone, the mind becoming really clear and peaceful. And in that great clarity, peacefulness, ease of the mind that is where we find the Eightfold Path. So we'll talk more about this tomorrow. And thank you very much.