Again, greetings. So for this week, the theme of these morning talks is going to be the roots, the three unwholesome roots and the three wholesome roots. And in that sense it continues the topic of last week where I looked at early ethics from the point of view of the Buddha or early Buddhist ethics. And I wanted to begin with, well first I'd maybe say for those of you are new, what we’re talking about here is that one of the closest approximation to the English word ethics in the teachings of the Buddha is the word it's translated either as wholesome or as skillful. And it's very quickly if those are the words that are closest to our English word ethics, maybe that suggests that it has a very different, we're talking about something somewhat different a different species of human concern than what we often think about by the English word ethics. It's still concerned with the same domain in the area of human life and how we relate to each other and behave in relationship to each other. But perhaps it has a different orientation than many times comes along with the word ethics where that can have a little bit of a sense of burden and obligation and the authority of some absolute commandments or something. But to do what skill for the wholesome has a very different feeling.

The Buddha taught that there are three roots to all unethical, unskillful behavior in English, we might say all unethical behavior. And those three roots are greed, hatred and delusion. And it's a phenomenal teaching that these, that everything unethical has these roots. All wholesome things have as their roots, non greed, non hate non delusion, which I'll talk about more later. And these three roots for the unwholesome are sometimes also called the three fires. And what's interesting about a fire is that it burns the fuel that it depends on. The fuel that it is burning. And so the same way, these three unwholesome unskillful tendencies that humans have, greed, hate and delusion, are kind of a fire that we can have that hurts, that burns up, that exhausts the source that they're burning on, what they're depending on, us, ourselves. And so the Buddha said that these forces are self harming forces within us. And so he puts a lot of emphasis on seeing, understanding greed, hate and delusion and becoming a free of it. In fact, it's probably one of the most common ways that Buddha talks about awakening as the destruction of greed, hate and delusion. And as I said last week, it's very easy to start glossing over, glassing over, ignoring kind of, when Buddhist teachers keep saying greed, hate and delusion, because it's so repetitive and we get habituated to it, and so here we go again. But the repetition of this emphasis points to how important they are. It's kind of like you go to architecture school, and teachers keep talking about how important the foundation of a building is. And after a while, you say, Oh, they keep talking about foundations, foundations. And so we ignore it and then we don't learn about the
foundations, what we need to keep the building safe and upright. So it's more like that this is a foundation, these things to look at.

And to give you a sense of how important this is in the early Buddhist tradition, and kind of fascinating ways in which it's referred back to, a person came to Ananda, one of the Buddha's main disciples who was with him for a long, many years and really knew all his teachings well, and the person belonged to a different religion and came and wanted to ask the Ananda whose dhamma is well proclaimed, whose teaching is well proclaimed. Who in this world are the ones practicing the good way? Who in the world are the fortunate ones? So I guess he's kind of a test. There's all these different religions in the time of the Buddha in his area, and he wants to know who has the best thing, the best religion, the best teachings, who are practicing the good way, living that good life the best way, and who are the fortunate ones? Now in Buddha's answer, he makes no reference explicit reference to Buddhism or tries to champion Buddhists way, well we have it here and our specific dispensation, our religion. We have the best teachings, we have the people are practicing the right way, we have the people who are fortunate enough to to attain the goal of the practice. Instead and what he says is this The teaching of those who teach abandoning greed, hatred and delusion is well proclaimed. So at the reference point for the teachings that are well proclaimed, there's not so called religious teachings, but the reference point is in ourselves in the terms of greed, hate and delusion, something human beings have. So the teaching of those who teach abandoning greed, hate delusion is well proclaimed. Those practicing for the abandonment of greed, hate and delusion, are practicing the good way. Those who abandon obliterated, abandoned obliterated greed, hate and delusion are the fortunate ones. So in these answers there's no metaphysical, supernatural, philosophical or existential claim about the Buddhist religion or what's important. There's no claim at what is ultimate truth, which is what religions often do.

For many people, this answer that the Ananda gave is not particularly controversial. Maybe. I mean it's that the value of not having greed, hate and delusion, for many people seems good. I would like to say Ananda is pointing to basic concerns of mental health, well being inner goodness. Even if there is an ultimate truth that's different than the ending of greed, hate and delusion, even though there might be some great religious experience that's greater and more wonderful than the destruction of greed, hate and delusion. Still, the destruction of greed, hate and delusion should be appreciated as valuable. What good is an ultimate religious experience or ultimate truth? If a person still is filled with greed, hate and delusion. From the Buddhist point of view, become free of greed, hate and delusion. And then maybe we don't have to talk about the ultimate truth so much. Maybe we don't get caught up in religious truth so much. If we're free of greed, hate and delusion, this is a synonym to the Buddhist idea, that the goal of practice is to end suffering. But with a common teaching that the Buddha was teaching the end of suffering, the cessation of suffering, has no obvious ethical quality to it. In fact, it could lend itself to idea, just go someplace in your little cave and meditate and be free of suffering and forget about the world. The ending of greed, hate and delusion are very much having to do with clearly about our relationship to the world. We have greed about things in the world, we have hatred towards things, often greed and hatred towards people and delusions to people. And so in the Buddha over and over again emphasize the destruction of greed, hate and delusion. It's not just that this is the well proclaimed teaching. Not that this is, you know, a good idea. It's really about how we live in the world in a better way. In English, we would say it's an ethical teaching, but not the ethics of rules, but the ethics of personal transformation where we're no longer being driven by greed, hatred and delusion.

So these three terms greed, hatred and delusion, can be seen as umbrella terms for a wide array of emotions, it is kind of like three families of different motivations that we have. And I'll just read you a
small list of these that the Buddhist tradition gives, some of the commentaries give. That greed includes things like lust, longing, attachment, clinging, craving, relishing, being an avaricious, expectation. So the whole long list, you can probably come up with a much, much longer list, if you take greed is to be involved, not just intensity, greed, because it's a strong word, even the smallest little movements of greed.

And maybe I'm running out of time, so I won't read the other ones today. But I want to say that greed in the one of the ways it's characterized, is any place and it's sticky. It's any place where desire is weak, it's sticky with desire, we get caught in it. Sticky like the sap of a tree, put your hand on it, it's really sticky is the metaphor that's used. And based on what I said, in the meditation today, greed always diminishes us. Greed always narrows us or harms us, it burns us, even the smallest little form of, you know, excessive desire, contracted desire, sticky desire. And that is a fascinating reference point. To be mindful enough and clear enough to notice and see that stickiness, to see how greed diminishes us. That is an exploration.

So you might want to look at that through the day. And don't make up desires. The clingings, cravings, greed for the purpose of this exercise. But as you go through your day, if it just happens, maybe accidentally you have some greed, then maybe stop and take a good look at it, then see if you can see what I'm talking about. That the presence of greed is a kind of suffering, presence of greed is a kind of diminishment of who we are. And if it is, what's this, what's the opposite? What's happiness? What is it that's enhancing us, makes us more expansive or something?

So thank you. So I'll go into this a little bit more as we go through the week and I hope that this week is wonderful for you and I hope your study of greed will help support you understand and value when I talk about non greed. Thank you