There was a monk from Thailand, who would come to Spirit Rock to teach sometimes to retreats or different teachings. And many people would come to hear him in the meditation hall, there would be full. And he would enter into the hall after everyone was kind of they already there and enter from the back of the hall and walk up the aisle to the front. But as they enter the hall, he didn't know much English, he knew some. But as you enter the hall walk down the aisle, he would exclaim in loud, booming voice. Happy, happy, happy. That wasn't the usual way that things began at Spirit Rock and him saying it, I think, everyone kind of perked up and kind of smiled and we're kind of delighted at what he was saying.

And in the time of the Buddha, the Buddha was recognized as being the happy one. There are many titles that Buddha had. One of them was he was the happy one. And his community of monastics, were apparently recognized by people around about as being happy, joyful, smiling. And you can read that in the ancient texts, but it's easy to read those ancient texts and especially an English translation, and not get the sense of that pick up the how much joy happiness well being is integral to certainly the Buddhist teachings but also the kind of spirit of what the Buddha was trying to do. There's all these words in Pali. That are words of well being that are integral to the path of liberation. Last week and these 7am sittings, we talked about the gladness pentad, gladness and joy and happiness. There's also contentment and bliss, the bliss of blamelessness. There's also contentment and bliss, the bliss of blamelessness. There is I think, I love the topic of contentment and contentment is a wonderful feeling of well being. And there are words that are not or concepts or experiences not automatically associated with well being or happiness, but provide a tremendous sense of well being. tranquility, the embodied tranquility that comes with practice, is like a healing force within the body that feels so good to experience the embodied peacefulness that's possible to feel, feel so good. And some of these experiences of joy and happiness in this in the ancient texts are described as being quite intense.
And you know, some of the most intense forms of joy, rapture and happiness a person can experience come from doing this Buddhist practice. Here in the modern world, there many, many people have an ambivalent relationship with happiness. There are some people who are afraid of it, and are reluctant to feel too happy because they're afraid it's a setup, that if they're really happy, they're going to really be disappointed or be betrayed or have to experience something the opposite in some difficult way. So better not to be happy to begin with because then you won't be disappointed. There are people who feel that they don't deserve to be happy that other people are suffering so much and so in that context, you know, it's it feels wrong to be in happy when other people are miserable or challenged a lot. And sometimes, there are certain social situations, some families that love is conveyed by worrying for each other, and only by worrying, or only by sometimes occasionally, only by being angry at the world around us, is there a bonding and connection within the family and, and so you have to participate in the shared, complaining the shared, even hostility to the world around because then we create our tribe we create, you know, our consensus of being united or something. So there's many forces many more than I mentioned, of why happiness is not prioritized or not allowed.

And Buddhist practice and teaching I'd like to suggest is a challenge to all of that. Is a challenge. It challenges us to maybe take a risk, take the chance to cultivate well being and happiness. Sometimes it takes courage to do that. Sometimes to develop happiness goes against many of the currents of what's expected and what's wanted and what's valued, or what we think is important. There's also a lot of negativity bias that many of us have, where we tend to notice what's wrong, we tend to be worried that something bad is going to happen and difficulty. The chronic anxiety that many people have our feelings and sensations that don't allow room for happiness that kind of crowds, the psychic mental space and so we don't notice the simple happiness is in well beings that are here. The yesterday you know, I've been doing a lot of biking that's mostly men. main mode of transportation these days, and I really enjoy it. I know a lot of joy in the biking but yesterday I had an occasion to ride my truck my car and I thought to myself, you know I enjoy riding the bicycle so much. Is it possible for me to relax into the driving and enjoy the driving in a way that I normally don't. And I found that was actually relatively easy for me. And I felt kind of cozy in this little cab and safe and kind of flowing along and I kind of felt like maybe I'm like someone from 120 years ago, maybe when the first cars are being made, and just kind of delighted and just kind of thrilled at the ability to roll across the streets at this amazing speed. I was probably going 25 miles an hour and it didn't take much They kind of get a whole different perspective of driving. We're just I just felt kind of a comfort and delight and sitting there and it's comfortable chair sitting back and being carried along by these four wheels. Now the question is in this you know, probably it was a seven minute drive that I took or less maybe the allowing myself to feel this delight and happiness and just contentment and just going there was that unrealistic of me to do? Was that selfish and indulging to do that? Was that somehow ridiculously sentimental and ridiculously kind of a waste of time to enjoy and appreciate little drive after all, I was polluting the air I was using up resources and I was contributing to the decay of the globe and climate change and You know, I could have easily just been depressed. Here I am driving a car and causing all these problems. And I responsible and I really needed to kind of take responsibility and you feel the weight and the burden of
the damage I'm doing because how could I ever do differently if I don't really get depressed about driving? So in those five minutes that I had, what what was the best use of that time? Was it better to be preoccupied by the next activity I was doing and not hardly even take in the opportunity of driving and a happy way? Was it better to be depressed about all the harm that I was doing in those five minutes? Or was there something valuable about taking those five minutes to feel some sense of delight and contentment and joy in those five minutes of driving? I think there are times when the law Choice is the best choice. The last choice prepares us for the world in a better way than last choice maybe allows us to address some of the important difficult challenges of our life much better if we're burdened and suffering and you're feeling heavy all the time, depressed all the time. And I use that example of yesterday, because it was a relatively small, little incidental incident in the course of the whole day to have that little joy of driving.

And I think many times driving, I wouldn't have availed myself of it. I wouldn't have allowed myself that possibility. But there it was. And it was nerve nurturing and nourishing, it was satisfying. It created a very different feeling in my mind and heart than if I was driving in other ways. To develop happiness and well being is necessary to begin to let go of clinging, let go of grasping, let go of resisting. It's not possible to have a healthy sense of joy, delight, gladness and happiness, without a movement in the direction of liberation and freedom, in movement in the direction of openness, of allowing, allowing energies and forces within us to bubble up and, and kind of move through us without us controlling it. They say it's often said that we can control how much pleasure we feel by you know, the foods and what we drink and pay someone to give us massage or go do something that's pleasant, physically enjoyable, physically Pleasant. But you can't do the same for happiness. Happiness, a lot must include some kind of willingness to open and allow some deeper source within us than simply having pleasure. And our capacity to feel happy to feel joyful is a precious resource. And it's not a crime to be happy. And it's not an incidental thing to be happy. It's actually brings all kinds of good qualities to our attention to the world to our mindfulness, and deeper, deeper realms or deeper connections of Buddhist practice, are built on a foundation of well being When I was in Burma, practicing there and the Vipassana retreats, I remember once in a long retreat, I was starting to have a lot of joy and happiness. Just every time I sat every time I did walk meditation, it was strong upsurges of happiness and well being that happened. That came a lot because I give myself myself over so fully to being absorbed in the activity of walking or sitting. Like being absorbed in a good craft or playing an instrument or reading a good book, there can be a sense of contentment and well being. So I was just really there. And then one day I was doing walking meditation. Something opened my mind in a new way. And I was kind of stunned, in awe shocked almost, that I saw something in my mind the nature of my own suffering. In a deeper, fuller way than ever seen it before, I had no idea how pervasive suffering stress is in the whole mental system. But more importantly for me, I realized, wow, if this is true for me, there's so much more suffering in the world than I ever imagined. So that could be a depressing thing to experience. It was actually the opposite. I mean, it wasn't inspiring. I didn't make me happy to see it. But because I was feeling all this happiness and joy, that was the container that was the context in which to see this density of suffering. And it was like more okay to do it was like, This is the truth. It's good to see the truth. And I wasn't burdened by it. I wasn't diminished by it. And I
wasn't. It wasn't a painful thing. Exactly. To see. It was an opposite. It was actually inspiring for me. Yes. To be honest and see this world clearly for what it is, that's the way forward, that's onward leading. So to cultivate and develop well being to allow that to come is partly a result of availing ourselves of the amount of well being and joy and happiness, which might already be here.

That is not found because of the negativity bias because of our preoccupations. Because we haven't trained ourselves to be willing to open and recognize how we can be content here or happy here joyful. There's all the reasons for that. But not to be pollyannish. But so that the eyes and hearts and minds can open so we can see this world realistically. And so that we can open. To suffering and plumb to the depths of it, or we'll find our freedom and liberation, the Maha sukha the great happiness. So thank you. And hope I haven't made you unhappy with talk like this. And then for those of you who are participating on YouTube, that you're welcome to comment four o'clock, California time today, as I give this before o'clock talk to this retreat. It's kind of continuing the series that we're doing this week. And this at four o'clock we'll do the characteristic of suffering, that hopefully the day today can be a day of happiness until until this topic comes up at four o'clock. Thank you all very much.