With this Monday, we begin the second week on the topic of the Four Noble Truths. And this week the topic is the second noble truth, the noble truth, of the arising of suffering. So there’s the noble truth of suffering, the noble truth of the arising of suffering, the noble truth that the cessation of suffering and the noble truth of the practice leading to the cessation of suffering. So, this four noble truths are often considered to be central teachings of Buddhism, maybe even the central teachings of the Buddha the myth or the lore Buddhism is that the first sermon, the first teachings the Buddha gave was on the Four Noble Truths. And there’s a long history in all the different schools of Buddhism, to make a claim about what is the first teachings of the Buddha as being probably what’s very important for that school of Buddhism. And so for Theravada Buddhism, this four noble truths is really kind of at the center of it all. And I take that with a tremendous appreciation and respect that there’s this Buddhist tradition, Theravada tradition that has this wonderful, dynamic teaching of the Four Noble Truths with which we can use as a framework to understand our life better. And then one of the advantages of this framework, especially as a kind of foundation of a whole religious tradition, is that it doesn’t assume or posit or require money. To believe in something that cannot be proven, cannot be seen and for oneself experience for oneself. There’s not a supernatural belief. It’s not an abstract metaphysical belief that we have to believe in something attended that comes down from the Buddha or from Buddhism that this is the this is, can’t be proven, but you have to believe this. This is something that we can really discover for ourselves in our experience. These are eminently practical
frameworks, the Four Noble Truths with which we can then look at our lives at the place where
Theravada tradition says its most essential, most simple, it's kind of like pare down to where the
heart of it is. And the heart of it really has to do with a third noble truth, the topic for next week.
The possibility of the cessation of suffering and then the road of suffering. And one of the
meanings we'll talk about this next week of nirodha is non obstruction, to come to a place where
we're no longer obstructed by suffering, no longer obstructed by all the different aspects and
ecology of suffering that might exist. So that who we are and how we are, can unfold, can move
can develop, can grow on the path to greater and greater freedom. That's kind of the core aspect
of Buddhism. So it's kind of like the good news of Buddhism. And it does it by this very simple
framework that doesn't require a lot of study doesn't require a lot of, as I said, metaphysics or
supernatural things, it just this is the essence of it. And if you stay close to that essence, you know,
all of Buddhism will unfold that said when ancient teachings Is that all the Buddha's, just like
all the animals, all the footprints of all the animals in the forest can be, can be placed inside the
footprint of an elephant. So all teachings of Buddhism can be put inside of the Four Noble Truths.
You know, everything else kind of follows from this. Now, the Four Noble Truths being such a very
important central teaching has been interpreted in many, many ways. It's changed now, but 10
years ago, I looked at Wikipedia on the Four Noble Truths. And there was some like eight different
modern explanations, definitions of what the Four Noble Truths were, and, and they were wildly
different from each other. And, you know, some of them I never even recognized as part of
Buddhism. And and,

you know, they're all coming Have modern explications and and so I was kind of surprised by this
and, and then a little bit surprised to that they didn't they didn't attribute any of them to anyone
who One of them was mine. And I thought that was kind of kind of interesting that something I
had said in some metal paper would end up in Wikipedia. So it's been interpreted in many
different ways. And probably all the different interpretations have value for the people who have
come up with it. And down through the centuries. In Asia, there's been many interpretations. One
of the key interpret, and I'll talk over the next few days, some of the interpretations or some of the
applications of the second noble truth, the truth of the arising of suffering. Sometimes literal
meaning is arising, but probably one of the most common understanding especially in the modern
world, but maybe also In much of Theravada Buddhism is that the second noble truth has to do
with the cause of suffering. And we want to understand what's causing it, what's bringing it about
what's the source of it, the some translators called the origination of it. But often in modern, we
books will say, there's suffering and there's a cause of suffering. And now this is also very practical
and useful teaching. In some ways, it's applicable to so many different areas of our life that are
available to us in everyday experience. Doesn't require meditation doesn't require my getting still.
Some of the other deeper interpretations of the second noble truth really require a depth of
meditative experience. But here looking at the cause, in everyday life, you can see that we get
impatient, you can ask what's the cause of that impatience? oh, I'm in a hurry to get somewhere.
Maybe I don’t have to be in a hurry, that desire to get some quickly is making tension in the system. So the very question what’s the cause of this distress I’m feeling? this, whatever it’s going on. And and that question that just simply a question opens the field reveal something that we can do something about sometimes we can have a different relationship with our you know, the causes, we can let go of it, we can let it be we could not pick it up. We could put it aside so that the cause is not whatever the causes does no longer becomes a cause. It just becomes something. Now, it’s very popular also to say that, in modern interpretations that the cause of suffering is desire and And that makes all desire kind of seem like being a problem. It could be that we understand that not all desires are the problem. But if there’s going to be suffering, there is some desire behind it. And there can be desire, perhaps without any suffering. But if there’s suffering, the cause is some kind of desire is desire, that, you know maybe is more interesting, rather than making all desire problem. in the, in the teachings of the Buddha, it seems that there’s a word that is used to kind of characterize the kind of desire that is the emphasis. And this is a very, it’s a metaphor. As I said, last week, a lot of Buddhist teachings are metaphoric. And the word the metaphor that’s being used is literally in English means thirst. So it’s a kind of desire that has occurred Characteristics of being thirst. Imagine someone’s parched, someone’s really thirsty, really desperate for water. And the compulsion that drive that preoccupation with getting some good drink can be quite strong could be that all the person thinks about. And so that kind of, so this thirst is the cause of desire of suffering. So thirst means the suffering has some kind of compulsive quality. There’s a drivenness where it’s not to, you know, leave a take it or leave it. It doesn’t really matter to me. It’s like I don’t have any there’s sometimes a force an addictive force, that it’s almost sometimes very impossible not to give into, when desires are really, really strong. It’s addictive, compulsive kind of force. of and that’s part of the reason Why there’s suffering involved. Because the desires have tension, of have loss of freedom, this kind of compulsive desire. And anytime we lose our freedom, we suffer, we feel less, we’re limited where we’re, we’re have a burden. There’s a challenge. There’s an inner kind of burning, that’s not pleasant at all painful burning going on, we have to have this. And so, in mindfulness practice, then we learn to look at the nature of desire. Look at the nature of our, you know, to be for suffering, we look at what is the cause, can identify anything that’s conventionally called the cause. And then if it’s desire, or whatever it might be, we learn to look at it more carefully. And this is where the meditation this morning of letting things be, is so useful because when you learn To let it be, you learn to see it more clearly. And you let it evolve and show itself. Not all cravings are only problematic. Sometimes what we crave and what we’re addicted to, represents something deeper need, we might have a deeper desire for something good actually even that’s directed in the wrong direction. But the deep need we have gives it compulsion we have to have this. If we let go of the unwholesome desire, without taking our time to let it be and study and see it, and let it kind of relax. Then we might not discover the deeper things going on the deeper maybe wholesome desire that’s there, not always but sometimes. So to stop and take a good look
to ask the question, what is the cause of my distress, my sorrow and my grief. Appreciating that there might be multiple causes multiple reasons. And their causes that this four noble truths is interested in is our contribution to our suffering, by how we thirst, how we have compulsion, how we have very strong desire for something to exist to have or to want, or very strong compulsion, to have something not exist to push away to get rid of. Those that deep, deep drive of desire that human beings have, takes many forms, some of them quite beautiful and necessary and profound. That Buddhist practice, the freedom from suffering, the cessation of suffering, the non obstruction of suffering, has this beautiful thing where it would releases more and more the wholesome desires within us. The Four Noble truths are not an abandonment or release of all suffering. But as we go through our lives and live our lives, it does purify desires so that anything which is compulsive, anything’s addictive, anything that we have, any desire we have, in which we lose our freedom is shed and it’s such a beautiful thing. So the first task with the Four Noble Truths is to just carry with us the question as we recognize our suffering, recognize our stress and distress that we might experience to ask ourselves, what am what is the call What am I contributing to this suffering? What is my contribution? There might be other people, who conventionally can be said are the cause of your suffering. But the place where you can have the most impact, not to ignore that. But the place of Buddhist practice is to ask, what is my contribution to it? And then to take a good look at that and hold it in awareness and understand it deeply. And in doing so, find your freedom.

So, tomorrow we'll continue with other meanings of the second noble truth. Thank you