

## *Boundless Happiness*

*March 22, 2014*

Close your eyes and focus on the breath. Breathe in a way that feels really good.

You're here doing something good. You're being generous, you're observing the precepts, and you're meditating, all of which are ways of finding happiness that cause no harm to anyone at all. This is why they're special.

There are so many different ways you can try to find happiness in the world, but most of them end up causing harm either to yourself or to other people or to both.

But these forms of happiness don't harm anybody. When you're generous you benefit: There's a sense of well-being, a sense of spaciousness that develops in your own mind. You're not the kind of person who's constantly parsing out every little gain and loss and saying, "If I lose this, then what I am I going to do? I'm being diminished by this." With that kind of attitude, no matter how much you have, you're poor.

Whereas if you can be generous with what you've got, then no matter how little you have, you're rich. You have a sense of spaciousness that goes beyond just your own immediate concerns. You look out for the well-being of others, and that, of course, is going to come back and contribute to your own well-being as well.

The same with virtue: You abstain from harming others, but with the state of mind that develops when you're virtuous, you look back on your actions and you realize, "I haven't harmed anybody." There's a sense of pride, a sense of self-worth that comes with that.

Similarly with the meditation: You're working on your own mind. You're not blaming other people for the problems of the world, you're blaming yourself—well it's not really blaming, but just looking within yourself for the solution. And if you can get rid of any amount of greed, aversion, and delusion in the course of doing this, other people are going to benefit too.

So it's through this kind of happiness that we can live together as people: the happiness of generosity and virtue and meditation. As human beings we have to live together, so this is what keeps us alive.

Some people think to stay alive you've got to cut corners, you've got to cheat this person, you've got to look out for your own self-interest. But that's a very short and narrow kind of life.

True life comes from the goodness we develop in our hearts. It brings a happiness that spreads around, a happiness that dissolves boundaries.

The happiness of the world is based around gain, status, praise, physical pleasures. But that creates boundaries, because if you gain something, other people lose it. Whereas the gaining that comes from virtue and concentration and discernment and generosity: Everybody benefits. That helps to dissolve boundaries.

So the more we practice these things, the fewer boundaries and fewer conflicts there will be in the world. The world will be a much better place to live in. So think of these things as necessary for life, necessary for an enjoyable life. And give them the importance they deserve.