

## *Compassionate Happiness*

*March 18, 2018*

Close your eyes, watch your breath. And watch your mind as it's watching the breath to make sure it doesn't go running off.

We have to look after our minds because our minds can be troublemakers. You can be sitting around perfectly normal and all of a sudden something comes up in the mind. A memory from the past or a fear about the future can really pain you. If you're feeling weak at that point, then the pain just overcomes you. So you want to be able to get the mind under control, both for your sake and for the sake of the people around you.

We live in this world and everybody wants happiness. And some people think about how their happiness affects other people and other people don't care. When you're meditating, you belong to the first group, because you realize you want a happiness that lasts. For a happiness to last it has to be a happiness that doesn't cause anybody to suffer.

There was one time when King Pasenadi was up in his palace with his queen. And in a tender moment he turns to her and asks her, "Is there anybody you love more than yourself?" And you know what he's thinking, he wants her to say, "Yes, your majesty. I love you more than I love myself." And if it were a Hollywood movie, that's probably what she'd say. But this is the Pali Canon and she's no fool. She says, "No. There's nobody I love more than myself. And how about you? Is there anyone you love more than yourself?" He has to admit that there's nobody he loves more than himself. So that's the end of that scene.

The king goes down to see the Buddha, and the Buddha says, "You know, she's right." Then he goes on to say, "You could search the whole world over and not find anybody that you love more than yourself. And in the same way, everybody else loves themselves just as fiercely." But from that he doesn't conclude that it's a dog-eat-dog world. Instead, he concludes that "You should never harm anyone." What he means, of course, is that if your happiness depends on harming other people, it's not going to last. They're going to do what they can to destroy it.

So you have to look for a happiness that's responsible. Some people say that when people meditate they're being irresponsible, that they're just looking after themselves. But actually they're looking for happiness in a responsible way, finding happiness in a way that doesn't take anything away from anyone else, doesn't harm anyone else, and doesn't harm them. That's the kind of happiness we want.

Think about the Buddha. He's concerned about *your* happiness, which is why he gave his teaching. And your happiness, of course, is something that only you can experience, just as your pain is something only you can experience. Yet here he left behind a teaching that was just specifically for *your* pain, whoever you are. We feel our pains alone, we feel our happiness in our search to get rid of our pains, and to find happiness we impose on other people. So he's

teaching us a way to put an end to our own suffering, to find happiness and not place any weight on anybody else at all.

When you think about it, it's a pretty amazing teaching, a very compassionate teaching. And the question is, do you have compassion enough for yourself to want to follow it? If you do, this is how you do it: Be generous, take the precepts, observe the precepts, and then train your mind to focus on a happiness that comes from inside, a happiness that's good all-around.