On the New Land

July 9, 2014

We wish for true happiness. Where does it come from? It comes from within. It doesn’t have to come from things outside. The practice for true happiness is aided by things outside. But the only thing you can really own is the happiness you create. You create within. Wealth comes, wealth goes. Status comes, status goes. Praise comes. Criticism comes. Pain, pleasure—these things come back and forth. That’s the way of the world. When you look at the world, there’s nothing you really own. There are things you can use. And while you have the opportunity to use them, you want to use them wisely. John Lee makes a comparison with the Buddha. The Buddha talks about things being not-self, but there’s one thing that he says is your own, and that’s your actions. Where do your actions come from? They come out of the mind. So we train the mind so it’s a good source of good actions. And our path is one that causes no harm to anyone. And we’re happy to dedicate the results of our practice to everyone who’s interested. So try to look inside and see what resources you’ve got right here, right now. You’ve got some new outside resources, a new piece of land. But as I said, no one really owns anything in this world. You have use of it for a while and then you have to let it go. So let’s make good use of this place. That way we get something of real value and we leave something of real value for other people through the example of our behavior. That’s how goodness gets carried on in the world. So what have you got right here, right now? You’ve got the breath. You’ve got the body sitting here breathing. You’ve got the mind thinking and aware. So put all those things together, because when they’re brought together, they grow. It’s like a seed. You put it together with some soil, put it together with some water and some sunlight, and it’s the combination of all those things that allows the seed to grow. So your seed here is what? It’s your intention to find true happiness. And Jon Munn had an interesting way of expressing it. In his very last major sermon, he said, “It’s your resolve not to come back and be the laughingstock of your defilements, to let them make you suffer ever again.” That’s the determination. He said that’s like a soldier going into battle. And here our battle is not with other people, it’s with our own defilements. So all the real issues are inside. Externals are there as places that are conducive to the practice. We look after them because they’re useful. Jon Chodd, a nice statement, says, “You have a cup, and you know that someday the cup is going to break. But that doesn’t mean that you just discard it or treat it carelessly. You try to take very good care of it, because you can get use out of it, as long as it’s in good shape. And if it so happens that the cup does break, then there’s no regret, because you’ve gotten good use out of it.” If you keep it away and don’t use it and somehow it gets broken, then you haven’t gotten anything out of it at all. Or if you misuse it and it gets broken, then there’s regret. We’ve got this body here. It’s going to grow ill. It’s going to get old. Someday it’s going to die. And the only way you can face those things without regret is if you make good use of the body, of its various strengths, its various abilities, why you have them. So here we’re trying to make the most of our breath. It’s a simple thing. It comes in and it goes out. But it can provide a real home for the mind, a real dwelling place for the mind. It gives the mind strength. You’re wrapped in a sense of well-being. You’re sitting here in the midst of this body, breathing in, breathing out, and the breaths are all around you. It’s soothing you, soothing the body, soothing the mind. It’s medicine for a mind that’s been frazzled, or medicine for a mind that’s been overworked or misused. And as the mind gets more soothed by the breath, you find that the mind is put in a better mood. It’s important to have a good mood as you practice. Try to be cheerful about the practice. Try to be upbeat about the practice. Because there are a lot of difficult things in training the mind. And if you bring the right spirit to it, it makes it a lot easier. The breath can help. Your right attitude can help. In other words, you’re making use of what you’ve already got inside here. Because the practice is something you can take wherever you go. It doesn’t have to be in a monastery, it doesn’t have to be in any special place. Because wherever you are, there is the breath. So learn to make the breath your home, so that wherever you are, you are at home. You’ve got the nourishment of the breath. The breath can be compared to food, it can be compared to clothing, shelter, medicine—all facets for the mind are right here. We take advantage of the good external circumstances we have. It makes it easier to look inside, easier to deal with issues inside. Then we express our appreciation for the fact that we have this opportunity. For people who are generous, Todd gave his inheritance to us so that we could practice. It’s because he saw that we were doing good with what we had that he wanted to share his wealth with us. So now we try to do our best so we can share the merits of our practice with him and with all the beings that are here in this land. We’re here to find a happiness that’s harmless. And a happiness that we can share. Because the happiness that comes from within is something that erases boundaries. Happiness that’s based on material gain or status or praise, physical pleasures, creates boundaries. If you gain, somebody else loses. Or if they gain, you lose. But the happiness that comes from the practice is not like that at all. It actually erases boundaries. When you’re generous, you benefit. The people who are recipients of your generosity, they benefit. Even the people who see you being generous, they benefit too. The same with the precepts. You benefit from your harmlessness. The people around you benefit from your harmlessness. The people who take you as an example benefit as well. And the same with meditation. We meditate so as to reduce the greed, aversion, and delusion in our minds. And we’re not doing it. We’re not the only ones who benefit when that happens. The people around us, at the very least, are less victimized by our greed, aversion, and delusion. And they get a good example. Think about all the greater jhans. Just seeing them practice, knowing of their practice, raises your opinion of what human beings can do. So all this is a happiness that erases boundaries. It’s a happiness that spreads around in all directions. It’s a well-being that spreads around in all directions. So it’s perfectly harmless. And it’s a gift to ourselves and to everyone around. So every time you come over here to practice, remember the people who gave so that we could have this peace of land. They gave for their time, their energy, their material wealth. May they benefit from this practice too.

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