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*more on story of crying bodhisattva, joy and rejoicing, working with the 8 worldlies, using unpredictability to work with addictions*

**LMC** [00:01:34] So on the chance that there are one or two people here this evening who have not been here before... following our meditation on this night, we have... we might call an open conversation. Anyone can participate in it who wishes. And raise any issues, any questions, we'll try to clarify. ... And that's it.

**Student 1** [00:02:21] I was here this morning and I would like you to remind me of the story of the bodhisattva who would cry when he saw people as he was walking. And because he was sad for them, because they were... I don't know. Please tell me more about why he was sad.

**LMC** [00:03:08] Well, the explanation that I read on that, since I actually don't have any firsthand experience of this, was kind of a classic teaching embodied in a person. And the teaching was... that oftentimes, given the truth of interdependence and the truth of karma and all... that sometimes we do things... which are joyful in the time that we're doing them. We feel happy about it. And then we're actually creating some kind of negative situation that will ripen later and cause more problems. And even, it wasn't quite that small, it was like... maybe reactions to karma ripening from many lifetimes ago. And then reacting to certain things and creating more difficult situations. And I think the idea was that the realization of this bodhisattva was so high that he could see how this was going to unfold. So... that's it. So as a result, he saw so much unfolding that was not so pleasant that... he cried a lot.

**Student 1** [00:04:40] Thank you. Because I got it connected with joy. And that's why I wanted more of a story. I wanted more understanding. But I also appreciate that... I don't know what limitless joy is. And I, basically, am not experiencing any joy these days anyways. So... talk to me about that.

**LMC** [00:05:30] Okay. ... Can you elaborate a bit on the question?

**Student 1** [00:05:40] When I was first introduced to 'joy' my understanding of it was to really be able to... just feel joy for people who are feeling joyful. And so you could really feel their joy. And so it would be if... someone got and... you know, if they're really happy, like they got a new job, you'd be happy for them. I mean, but you would feel the joy.

**LMC** [00:06:17] Yeah, and you know, you're referencing the Four Immeasurables. The immeasurable joy aspect of the Four Immeasurables... you know, there's various kind of ways and levels of understanding it. But one of the... kind of *endearing* ones is... the idea that you rejoice in the merit and the joy of *others* when they are engaged in things which are helpful for themselves and others. Part of it... is meant to be an antidote of judgment.

[00:07:34] So, like sometimes, when we have a negative judgment that we're holding on to about someone, we can witness them doing something which is virtuous. But immediately, we change it into a non-virtuous thing. Like, well, that person really is *not* a virtuous person. So of course, in an infinite number of time, they're bound to do something good. But that's the only reason that they're doing that good. So it's just by accident over this long time. And so, the immeasurables joy piece... one of the interpretations of it is that you have joy for the positive

things that others do. No matter *what* their previous history was. If they're engaged in something positive, you rejoice and you encourage and, you know, do whatever you can to raise that higher. Rather than undermine it with judgments and things. ... This makes sense?

**Student 1** [00:08:44] Well, I think that kind of joy I sometimes have. [laughs] In terms of that!

**LMC** [00:08:53] There's almost nothing that we have *all* the time.

**Student 3** [00:13:58] I have a question about the eight worldly concerns. Especially a desire for approval and praise and fear of rejection and blame. I really struggle. I've been discovering that I really struggle with... letting go of those. And repeated... for as long as I can remember, struggles with being okay with whatever people say or don't say about me. I'd like to know how to work with... the worldly concerns. Because I hear a lot about... letting go of them or... well, obviously not being concerned with them. [both he and LMC laugh] If, in the meantime, until I am better at not being concerned with them, I'd like to know how I can work *with* them, if that's possible. Or if I should just practice with dropping them. Letting them go.

**LMC** [00:15:13] I'll do the latter. [laughs] Get started. ... Well, I think there's two parts there, like you said. So how do you work with them? The reason why one might say, 'How do I work with them?' is that you recognize that they're very, very difficult... if not seemingly impossible, to let go of.

**Student 3** [00:15:46] It feels compulsive.

**LMC** [00:15:47] Yeah, yeah. And it's not particular... it's not you. It's like, this is what we reference as sentient beings. Like the confusion of... it's almost at the level of the confusion of being alive in this body, in this world... it's really like an embodiment of the worldly concerns. It's like, you just... you can't get away from, it seems. So if you *couldn't* get away from it, it would be cruel to teach about them. [gentle chuckles] So... I don't think we *are* cruel. And there are many ways that you can get away from them, get some relief from them.

[00:16:40] Unfortunately, one of the most profound methods of working with the eight worldly concerns... is to recognize them more continuously. So during the day, when you're doing ordinary things, you can find yourself kind of being... *pricked* in a certain way, like uncomfortable, painful. And you look at the pain and then you make an effort to recognize the eight worldly concerns there. And most of us, all eight are not, you know, we usually have specialties. [laughs]

**Student 3** [00:17:23] Definitely! Yes.

**LMC** [00:17:26] And so recognizing that concern is often not difficult if we're willing and determined to see it. And once there's a little bit of an abhorrence around being trapped, we all have an abhorrence to being locked up in a cage somewhere... and the point where we recognize that that's really what the eight worldly concerns are. We are... locked up. And... it feels like we're in a cage. But when we see that, it's helpful to engage in another practice. Which is not to necessarily be able to recite the eight worldly concerns. Which is not so helpful. But rather that in the moment that we kind of *feel* it, we see it, we can recognize that particular thing. And we can see in that moment exactly how it's brought us to this point of feeling suffering.

[00:18:38] To just be able to see that and do *nothing* but look at it... is itself, a great insight. Like really, you feel like it doesn't have me. It's kind of like in that moment of the turmoil of it, you bring your awareness to it... and it's kind of like being in the tiger's cage. And then recognizing at a certain point, there's no tiger in here. That was a myth! When they locked me in here, they said there was a tiger. There isn't any tiger. So then it becomes another series of things... kind of levels of working with those concerns. But seeing it is the first big deal. And *connecting*, by virtue of... do you contemplate interdependence?

**Student 3** [00:19:29] Quite a bit, yes. No, not with any formal practices, but actually in conjunction with calm abiding. When I'm just kind of... letting things in in the mind flow by... it's pretty easy to just kind of see... it... at certain points.

**LMC** [00:19:48] Yeah. So... contemplating interdependence is really critical. Critical to seeing the connections between our actions, whether it's speech or thoughts or just something that we do to our bodies. And we suffer, we hurt from those things. To see those things clearly... is a big step. Just to see it. Not to see it, so you can fix it. Just to see it. And then, of course, you see the eight worldly concerns in your mind, your body, your speech, all of these things... kind of nurturing those things. As if they were a cause of happiness.

[00:20:34] And the difficulty, that anyone who's dealt with this extensively will say is, it *feels* like that's where I get my happiness... is from those eight concerns. ... And you can you can mark the places where it seemed like that was the case. But if you keep your eye on it, it becomes clear that that is not the case. That it actually... *best* case scenario is... it is... not reducing your illusion. Not adding to it. Not reducing it. But the illusions around it are just absolutely... sticky. We can't put them aside. Seeing it is the first big, big insight. *Just* seeing.

**Student 4** [00:24:53] So I have a problem that's related to this conversation. And it really bothers me that I have this problem. And sometimes when I come here and I'm having a problem or some kind of struggle and I talk about it, it gets better. So I'm going to talk about it. I have a daily practice... and it's with my phone. [laughter] And I see it, you know. Every night, I spend time with my phone... looking at, you know, news and entertainment, looking at all of you sometimes. But I spend time there. And I say, 'Well, I'd *really* rather be practicing Dharma.' And I say that all the time. And then... I just am so *happy* to be able to spend time with my phone. [laughter] I mean, it's an experience of joy. It's the reward at the end of the day. And I want to stop. But it's like, I don't have any freedom to do that. You know, my mind just reaches for this and it has been going on too long. And so I wonder if any of you had anything to say about that.

**LMC** [00:27:35] The habit isn't going away? The habit of reaching for the phone? So what. Just curious, why is that a problem?

**Student 4** [00:28:00] I don't think it's helpful for others. I don't think it's necessarily helpful for me, even though even though I enjoy it. I don't think it's what I really want to be investing my time in. When I step back from it... I'd rather be using that time to get in a practice session in the evening. You know, a meditation session. Or do some practice commitments that I'm really bad at. I'd rather be using the time more productively.

**LMC** [00:28:39] What kind of productive?

**Student 4** [00:28:48] Practicing Dharma.

**LMC** [00:28:49] That's productive?

**Student 4** [00:28:55] Yes. [laughter]

**LMC** [00:29:13] So is it just that you feel you don't have a choice?

**Student 4** [00:29:23] It feels that way. It feels like an addiction. It feels like I don't have freedom... to make a different choice. I mean, I have, every now and then made a different choice and then just congratulated myself. And then the next day I go right back to it... the next night.

**LMC** [00:29:44] You send somebody an email to tell them that you made the choice? [laughter]

**Student 4** [00:29:53] You're the first people I've told.

**LMC** [00:29:59] Yeah. ... It's interesting, I think it's the wrong focus. Just to play devil's advocate a little bit. I think it's the wrong focus. When you intimate that you feel like you're in prison, like it's like a really solid addiction... should feel *that* way also. Then what other things do we have like that... and what do we focus on in order to free ourselves from that? Because whatever that is, should work for the phone and your relationship with all the other things also.

[00:30:39] In other words, it doesn't feel to me, and I have this issue... about all sorts of things. Maybe more than almost anybody. And in my own relationship with it is that... I don't like to be predictable to myself. ... And so in order to not be predictable to yourself, you have to like, change things around. And when we change things around, then we become a little less predictable. Like the way you walk home. Or what you have for lunch, whatever it is. Personally, I have found it useful to break some things by just changing some things that appear to be completely irrelevant to the apparent addiction. Hang out with different people. Invite someone to lunch that actually you don't really care to have lunch with. But of course, you don't have to tell them that! [laughter] That's cheating. They won't go. Yeah. And then you can't call it a success.

[00:32:01] So I think it is the case that the phone, that the *intense* addiction that our culture has with electronics in general, is really not any different than any other addiction. It doesn't seem to me like it's *special*... in any way at all. It's just, like I can look back 10 years in my life, or 20 years and just see the analog of it. You know, this is just the same thing. Now it's got a different kind of clothing. You know, its skin color changed and a few other things. But fundamentally, it's the same kind of *stuck*. Stuck somewhere. And it takes us some time being stuck before realizing we're stuck. Before we're realizing that, for *whatever* reason, we made the change... it actually isn't changing. Something is replacing it that looks an awful lot like what it did before. That's my experience. And it's hard to get out of it.

[00:33:14] See... the interesting thing here is that this is *your* suffering, right? I mean, it's not somebody else's. Somebody else may have the same kind of suffering, but it's not your suffering. And so, sometimes it's helpful... to actually make certain changes in patterns... with an *intent* to enjoy those. Like, I'm going to eat expensive lunches for three days, which I never do. Let's say something like that. And you invite somebody to lunch. Somebody who you really enjoy having lunch with and somebody who you... don't enjoy having lunch with. But then, in order to get the benefit, you see, you have to fill the tank on *that* side.

**LMC** [00:34:08] So you decide that you *will*, in fact, bring some kind of benefit to that person over that lunch. You will find some way to make them... happy for five minutes. Anything. Just so that it's not all about [yourself] or all about [me] or whatever. We mix that other piece in, 'Well, this is my practice! So I should be living up to it, at least see what it does! And so then we run some experiments to see how that works. Can I actually have lunch with somebody, who I don't really appreciate very much, and enjoy the meal, and also leave with a sense that I actually gave them something they didn't have before? I'll guess... that's possible. So at least we leave feeling like, 'Well, that wasn't what I did all my other lunch days.' And then we can rejoice like, well, that little thing... at least it's been dinged. May not be completely gone.

[00:35:24] An addiction is ubiquitous. So we can't expect anything small to undermine addiction in its broad form. But it doesn't come to an end by virtue of not making *any* change. So we make some change and gradually things happen. ... I can say that from personal experience. ... Oops, I just have to say, I didn't go out for lunch with you because of those reasons. [laughter] I just want to say that.

**Student 4** [00:36:06] Thank you. [laughs]

**LMC** [00:36:11] It was a joyful lunch.

**Student 4** [00:36:19] Ditto. I didn't go out with you for lunch for that reason either. ... What I'm hearing is change the focus. Change it to... change something... and watch how that impacts the pattern?

**LMC** [00:36:38] I have been to lunch with someone who said, we both knew that we didn't actually have much appreciation for each other. And we admitted that in the beginning of lunch, that actually it was difficult to have lunch together. And it's amazing! It's like we were suddenly on the same page. [laughter] I mean, in a certain way it was like... I don't like you. You don't like me. Yeah, that's right. But it's really... because it's not like abject hatred, like, I like to kill you. It's nothing like that. It's just the kind of stupid thing that we do. Like... I want to organize my days around people I enjoy being with and people I like and all. How boring can it get? You know, we're not challenged at all, and we call that success.

[00:37:41] So... I have been with somebody who would say, 'I really don't like being here. But I'm here because I'm trying to discover something.' And then that's kind of on my plate too. Just by virtue of... interdependence. We're there. There we are. What are you going to do? You're going to make the best out of it. You're going to figure something out. And I think most of us, practicing regularly, it's like... you don't have to be a brilliant and highly realized practitioner in order to just think about... how can I deal with this in a slightly different way? In a way that will benefit myself. I'll feel good about myself. And I will have as a goal that... after this meal, they will feel good about themselves too. And they'll feel good about the relationship. And that's my goal! I'm going to do it. That's where I go with it, just kind of like... determination.

[00:38:44] Almost everybody, it's easy to hold the opinion that they deserve to be free of suffering and its causes. Simple. I certainly believe I deserve that. And it's pretty easy to hold that view about... anybody else. I can't think of a single person... that seeing right in this moment that I would think, well, I'm not so sure about them. ... And don't test me. [laughter] And here we are. What are we doing? We're sharing all the tools to work with all of those things. So the practice isn't just about sitting quietly. Though, it's important to engage in all the different levels of it. Sitting quietly, and then we're actually out in the action, kind of. We're doing things with

people and things are happening and conflicts are arising. And all sorts of things are coming about and unfolding and folding together and coming to an end and starting fresh. And an awful lot of those are what make you want to say.... like, whoa, whoa, whoa, wait a minute. Can we just slow down here? So that's good too. And then pretty soon you realize I'm not where I was last month. Now it's different. ... Okay?

***sangha*** [00:47:07] *dedicating the merit*