

Faith (5 of 5) Service

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SUMMARY KEYWORDS

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For the talk today, the general topic, maybe the title, could be “Faith as Service.” The idea of service is to offer care. But, when we combine the idea of faith with service, maybe that’s associated a little with devotion, trust, and generosity. This faith can also involve not only what we receive, trust, and allow for, but it’s also something deeper – a wellspring of what we offer. It’s an action that expresses our love, our faith, and what inspires us in some deep way. So, in having faith, we are not only recipients, we are givers.

To really have faith, I think it also helps if there is a feeling or recognition inside that there is a desire for action, to do something. Many times it’s the desire to serve whatever the source is for the faith: to support it, to benefit it. But, this service aspect of faith doesn’t have to benefit the source of the faith – for example,

your religion, religious community, or practice community. Faith can elicit a desire out of love, care, compassion, and a fullness of heart to serve people anywhere in the world. Maybe Haiti or other places, your neighbors, or your family in a more full way.

This idea of service (to serve) is a beautiful thing of the heart. It's a wonderfully rich and multifaceted quality of generosity, love, and care. There's something about caring that is really a part of freedom (non-clinging), which I talked about yesterday. As we don't cling to anything, there's much more room in the heart and the mind to be responsive to the world around us. To be responsive to the suffering and the joys of the world. To respond in a way that feels like we're expanding our faith, our freedom, and our love out into the world in some wonderful way.

So, to serve out of faith is not to want anything in return, but rather it's a clear, clean expression of generosity, of serving something valuable. To have the circles of giving and receiving (this language that I used in the guided meditation) flow and move and turn freely – not be clogged up or stopped; not to have the brakes on.

For instance, if you take away half of a wheel, it's not a wheel anymore. It won't roll. You need the whole wheel to roll. So the wheel of giving and receiving, giving and receiving, arises not out of a should, not out of

obligation, but rather from being settled in some deep way in our heart. There is something here that we trust, we have a devotion to, and we have confidence in.

Yesterday, I talked about confidence in non-clinging. To rest in that confidence is not a passive thing. It's like the soil, the nutrients, for then responding to the world. I want to emphasize again that this response is not an obligation, but feels like the most natural thing in the world. It's just what flows out.

The liberated heart – the heart that's filled with this kind of Dharma faith, the heart that goes for refuge – is not a passive heart. It's a heart that has an orientation, a motivation, and inspiration to act in a new way – to live a new way. One way of understanding this is to live with care and to offer care. It is wonderful to care for the place in which you practice. Part of the practice is to care for the place you practice. Part of the practice is to care for the world in which you practice. And this world spreads out beyond any walls, beyond any boundaries, and is open-ended. So, to do that with a kind of service that is almost devotional or an expression of love or goodwill.

I've talked about many different qualities and characteristics of faith this week. There are many more. Faith is a very rich topic. As I said in the meditation, I prefer not to believe that I know exactly what faith is. I

can talk about different aspects of it, but it feels much more in harmony with faith, with this deep trust, not to know fully what it is. And in not knowing, to open ourselves to trust it, or appreciate something larger and bigger than anything we could know or have control over or possess.

So there's a wonderful feeling of willingness to be open that doesn't have to know, but is ready to serve, ready to care, ready to participate in this world as if we belong here. Where belonging is this wonderful circle of giving and receiving care. And maybe in the end, this practice that we do is a practice that transforms us into free beings deeply connected to our communities and our world in this mutuality of giving and receiving care.

So, service as an element of faith. Thank you.