

CLASS TALK 11-12-17 The portal of the heart opens outward into the world and reaches inward into Eternity. Step inside and roam.

Yesterday my granddaughter was in a gymnastic trapeze program that was presenting itself to a large audience. There must have been thirty kids doing trapeze acts and there was a big audience because everybody brought their families and grandparents like us.

There's this thing that starts to happen in life where you begin to present yourself to the world. You begin to want to be known, be observed, be appreciated, be loved. It's really interesting to watch. There were probably thirty girls and one boy and one woman in her seventies and they were all doing their level of routine. Each one had more mastery than the ones before them and Thalia was early in the game. But her mastery was something more than ability on the trapeze. She was present tense. She was very assured of who she was and her place in the scheme of things. It was really beautiful to watch and I could feel it so deeply. Of course, she also liked being acknowledged and she wanted that acknowledgement and she wanted the universe to say I see you, I get you, I know you, I love you. She enjoyed being recognized by something bigger than her own family. But I could tell that her sense of inner presence transcended all that. She was deeply at home in her own being.

Her brother Elijah was there watching this in a state of amazement, and maybe some confusion about who am I, how would I do that, what am I supposed to be in life? A lot of stuff was going on. I could feel his mind working and he was desirous of being hugged and held by his father, his mother, his grandparents; he just wanted security because he was not ready for that exposure or that acknowledgment. He had not yet connected to presence. I could feel inside this churning of stuff that goes on with all of us. We are all so wildly human, basically wanting acknowledgment and afraid of it. Wanting to have it and not wanting to live up to it, or having to perform to get it. So we're very complicated beings and very needy.

I watched all the girls and the one boy and the one older woman performing and every one of them had a different level of presence. Some performed as if they weren't even there. They were just going through the routine. Others were milking it like mad. Some had incredible skill and beauty and some had no form at all. There were sometimes two or three things going on at the same time and so people were applauding for some and not the others perhaps and there was a kind of confusion of the energy. It was not a Hollywood movie. It didn't have a great beginning, middle, and an end, and I must say that after the first forty-five minutes I was ready to do anything to get out of there but couldn't. So there we were, stuck in this thing and so I just held my grandson and he just held me and we were just there together. He settled into a quiet joyful presence I often sense in him and we were both grateful for it.

When this was all over we went out to lunch and because Blanche has trouble hearing we were able to have a private room so it was quiet and we could all hear

each other and the feeling of family, of Evanne and Josh and Thalia and Elijah and me and Blanche just together was so huge, so fulfilling, so much of what life is, this kind of acknowledgement from all directions that we are whole and we are a piece of cloth, that we know and love each other. And it was so wonderful. Thalia was so satisfied at being who she was and it was really wonderful. The only issue was that Joshua had to go to a meeting in the city, and he had to break up this sense of perfection. It was in the air, but his son Elijah was not aware exactly that this was happening. And so when Josh got up to go to this meeting Elijah could not bear the break-up of this family unit. He could not bear the aloneness he suddenly felt, the loss of a parent, the insecurity, the fragility, the fear of being abandoned. It just surged up in him and he started crying, "Don't go daddy!" It was the most pure expression of love and fear and abandonment and beauty. Everyone of us, to a certain extent, knows these feelings and has worked so hard to get past them because they are so painful. The idea of loss, the idea of separation, the idea of detachment, the idea of somebody leaving this perfect space that we're in is so destabilizing and I watched Elijah go through this and it just broke my heart. We do not want the things we take for granted, the acknowledgements, the cohesions, the familiarity, the simplicity, the joy of our lives to be dismantled, to be taken away, torn asunder. There wasn't much we could do for Elijah. I had a hard candy and offered it to him. It was a distraction and helped take his mind off of everything. He stopped crying and Joshua was actually able to make his exit. We all regrouped and found our way back to a quiet equilibrium and then went our separate ways. But I could not shake the primal fear that Elijah had expressed. It was so fundamental, so essentially human. He touched a nerve.

About an hour later I get a call from Josh. He was on his way to San Francisco, about to cross the Golden Gate Bridge and he turned around. He said I'm not going to this meeting. I'm going home. And he turned around and he went home to his family. I was so moved by that choice, by something in him that was not cognitive, it was felt. It was a sense of, I need to be there at this moment for these people. I need to be part of the whole. And this thing that pulled him away, which was beneficial perhaps for his work and for down the road as a connectivity, as a networking experience, he just said I'll have to do that another time. He made a choice for something that had to do with love, embracing, compassion, kindness, and it broke my heart. He understood that we have choices in life and they matter and that his family was at the core of this.

So he came home and Elijah was already down for a nap and he took Thalia out and Thalia has been afraid to ride a bike. She's six years old and she's just been afraid and Josh said, "Let's go ride a bike." She said okay and he took her out and the energy of that acknowledgment of the day, this sense that she had been witnessed by the world, this sense that she had been empowered by life did something to her and she went out on this bike and Josh had his iPhone and he ran with her down the path and he let go of the bike and she goes wow and she's doing it, she's riding on her own, she is bicycling down this road and she is in awe of what she's doing.

But the energy of that day was completely transformative because she came out to the world and her father came back to her and they took advantage of this incredible dynamic to move forward yet another step into engaging life.

I came away from all of this looking at the big picture of life and the small picture of family and the cosmology of all of us together in this vast universe of evolutionary process and I watched that process unfold yesterday having to do more than anything else, with the heart. Hearts breaking, hearts opening, hearts being recognized, I watched this energy in play and I saw how much we are driven by, influenced by these feelings of contentment, need, fear, joy, beauty, responsibility, and all of these qualities so essential to the human experience. And when people live them according to an evolutionary process, that's how we grow as human beings. We make choices based on feelings, not always conceptual, not always thought, but just how do we feel. This instruction that comes through our heart is so powerful, this inner sense of doing the right thing, of knowing something, that Joshua felt driving away in that car, this isn't a thought, it was a feeling. He felt I should turn around, I should go home, I should be with my children, I should be part of something that needs me in this moment. And he made that turn. And out of that turning around Thalia had a new burst of capacity, and for anyone who remembers riding a bike, it is a liberating moment, almost as good as driving a car, and maybe better because it's so freeing for a young person to find balance and find speed and find control and the whole power of that new expression.

This is life. This is how life works. We work as a collective. We work together. We are either in harmony or we are in dissidence. If we are in harmony we empower one another, we give to each other the opportunity to evolve and to grow. If we are not in harmony, if we attracted parents who do not turn the car around, if we attracted siblings who were not kind to us and who didn't love us and who didn't learn from us, if we experience people around us who were challenging and who were not uplifting, who took away rather than gave—and I'm talking about most everybody, then life derails in some way. We don't trust it. We don't know how to live it. Most people are not brought into total harmony by their daily experience, by their teacher/student experience. We have challenges and difficulties and we have struggles, and so when you don't have people who turn the car around for you, what do you do? What do you do when life does not provide that much information that redirects them into the right thing, how do you live your life as someone who is not a recipient of the right thing?

Here's one of the great gifts of the teaching of meditation—when the outer life does not serve you and does not give you what you want and what you need, there is a place to go, there is a place to turn to that will change everything. And it is available to everybody on the planet. Unfortunately in many cultures, in particular, our western culture, nobody talks about it, nobody gives us an opening to it, nobody explains to us the possibility, but it is so simple. The opening is inside. The entryway is in your heart. Actually it's in all your center, your mind, your heart, your gut, but the heart is the easiest opening and it the realm of feeling. Many of us have feelings that are engendered by the outer experience, so when we're not loved, when we're not acknowledged, when we're not allowed to express our true selves, when we're not paid attention to by people who come back to help us, when

we are at a loss for that kindness. If you can sit with your own sadness, sit with your own disappointment, enter into your heart center and sit quietly, even crying inside you will find a place of comfort and embrace that which the outer world often fails to deliver. Those of you who have cried a lot know there is something that happens in crying that is not unlike meditation. It's a breathing, a deep breathing. It brings you into your heart and after a period of time you don't cry anymore and you achieve something that is still pointed. It is an open heart, a quiet open heart.

That quiet open heart, after you've cried, sits there and you start to feel comforted by something you don't even understand. It's what remains after the crying has been expressed. There is something that invites you in and says "I'll hold you, I'll take care of you, you're okay." It's a quieting. And everyone who has cried in any depth knows this feeling. But crying is not the only access to that feeling. Simply sitting still in a meditative space and bringing your attention into the heart allows you to ultimately feel that welcoming embrace that takes you in and allows you to begin to feel safe and comforted and at home and at peace. It also helps you take that peace back into the world and feel better about the life around you.

But let me tell you something else it does. When you go inside your heart, when you accept the invitation to your own inner being, you will feel as if you've been offered a nice comfortable chair. You will be encouraged to put your feet up and warm yourself by a fire in the fireplace and soon you will be enveloped by a feeling of an unbelievable coziness. But here's a secret. Inside the warmth of your own heart, there's a portal, a doorway, a little bit like the wardrobe in Narnia. It will beckon to you. It is waiting for you.

This doorway takes you deeper than anything you can experience in the outer world. It's a feeling space and you start to move through it guided by a visceral sense of being. It is a world full of beauty. It is filled with color. It has perfumed smells, it has emotional turmoil and beauty and offers a powerful sense of upliftment. It has all of these energies, and as you move through your heart you start to be guided into a kind of orchestral symphonic experience of such awesome beauty that you forget that there's an outer world at all. You just begin to go on this discovery journey of who am I? And you start to see that you are vast, you are ancient, you are beyond comprehension. You are entering into a world of such wonder that you almost stop wanting to go back into the real world, the outer world. But you cannot stay in this inner space because your body demands that you return to the outer world. Still, the incredible thing that happens when you return is that those feelings travel with you and the outer world becomes transformed by the inner.

So those who have not had the benefit in life of the father who turns around to take care of you, those who have not had people that acknowledge them, those who don't have lovers that pay attention to them, almost all the people in the world who have lives that are not working the way they want them to work come out of this inner space into a world that allows you to have compassion for the people who don't love you, for the father who didn't turn around to embrace you. It allows you to experience life from a different perspective. And the deeper you go in yourself, or the higher you go, the more you will see the totality of life in its enormous

dysfunction. Compassion is the only response. You see so much about life and one of the things you see of course, is that it's impermanent. Everything is temporary.

The inner life provides a way of witnessing the outer with a kind of deep clarity, knowing, and acceptance. And that acceptance starts to free you from your dramas, from your guilt, from your sense of dissatisfaction. The inner life begins to filter through and illuminate the outer life and they start to work on each other. The inner and the outer start to have a kind of flow between each other. And what happens in that flow is they open the doorway so that they begin to see that the inner and the outer are the same thing. It's one vast being. And you are right at the center of that being. You are the space between the outer and the inner, the place where they get to witness and know each other. And this little doorway of personality, which all of us have, starts to get bigger and bigger and bigger and then you are no longer the arbiter of what goes in and what goes out, you are no longer somebody who is living in relationship to the inner and the outer because you disappear in the vastness of your own opening, and it all just flows and there's nobody who's deciphering, there's nobody who is thinking about it, nobody who is fighting it or wishing it was otherwise. That all just goes away and then there's just life, "Life," inner life/outer life just moving with this incredible dynamic force with no endpoint. It's infinitely big and small at the same time. Somehow once you let go of the frame, the doorframe of you, the heart expands inward and outward and embraces everything there is and it has no stopping point.

The wonder and beauty of openness, of open-heartedness, of surrender, of acceptance, of seeing and witnessing and being one with all there is is not an impossibility, it is not a dream, not a story, it is the reality of each one of our lives. Each one of us is that doorway. We think of ourselves as something personified, as a person, as a thing with arms and legs and a mind and a head and eyes, but when you really relax all of that and you go deep inside, the mind, the heart, the arms, the legs, they all become expressions of this singular truth. So when I sit here and teach class and my arms go through these ballet-like moves, it's energy from the inside moving to the outer and then moving into your inside and then making your inside and my outside part of the same whole and it's this exquisite, beautiful dance of energies. And the entwinement, the connection, the sense of sharedness is beyond understanding. It's so beautiful. And we all have the capacity to be this singular reality that is anointing itself, is loving itself, acknowledging itself, giving to itself, taking from itself, in an endless expression of love.

And then when you're in that space and the voice inside says turn the car around and go back, you'll do it. Trust me, you'll do it. And if somebody didn't come back for you and do it for you, you'll do it for somebody else. And that will heal you as well as that other person. And the person who didn't turn the car around, if you forgive them and you love them and you open to them, then they too gradually start to feel this energy coming at them that starts to inform them. You may finally have a dialogue with them or at least have a letting go of something inside that is holding onto your anger with them, and your letting go of that anger actually is a release for them.

Not everybody gets it. We're in a world full of people with a lot of complexity and a lot of difficulty and a lot of suffering and many people we know are unsatisfied and have needs and wants and all of these things, but if we take care of our side of the equation what starts to happen is we start to free other people to be free in their equation. That's our dance. That's what we can do, it's our way of serving the world. By taking care of us we take care of everybody. So it's an extraordinary responsibility. People call it the spiritual journey, I just call it human, just being human. And being a human being is such an extraordinary achievement, to be able to give yourself to another person, to be able to touch somebody, to love somebody, to help them forgive themselves, to be able to let them know that they are good and fine as they are. This is an amazing thing to be able to do. It's something we all have a capacity for and yet most of us are so self-absorbed in our drama, in our anticipations, our hopes for greatness, or whatever we don't have, we're so lost in those things that we don't stop to find this unbelievable refreshment that comes from being who we already are inside.

The wakeup call is to know that you can in this lifetime discover everything I'm saying. And the benefit of it is not that you become a wonderful person, but that you become full of wonder. Not that you become a beautiful person, but you become a knower of beauty. And that is the gift. That's the gift. And you can't get enough of it, and all you have to do to get it is to let go of trying and just be it. The source that you're looking for is you. The source of everything is you. You're it. The source filters through, floods through, expresses itself through you. This is who we are. This is not game, it's not a dream, I mean, maybe it is on some fundamental level, maybe it's a virtual reality, I don't know what it is, but I will tell you that this system of going deep inside is just a practical way of living. Give to the world so that the world will be a better place and you will live in a better environment. And your environment is usually small. Family. A couple of people. A few coworkers. If you feed that environment with your stillness, your joy, your kindness, your goodness, your compassion, you just bring that to that space, you will live in that space. If you're nice with all the people you work with they'll start to be nicer and happier mostly—some won't, we have all had bosses who won't get it, but it doesn't help to be angry at them, to hate them. It doesn't help at all. Once you have truly opened to and accepted the reality of a person you become free. When you become free you will move on, life will move you on. As long as you are engaged in the anger and hostility and the difficulty of the life you've lived, it's got you caught. You are caught by that life. The only way to get free is love and compassion. It frees you and it frees them. If they don't get the message, that's not your problem. You get the message and you will move onward and life will free you over and over and over.

But it doesn't free you until you have dealt with the issues. Until you bring love to the equation. That's what we have to do and it comes from in here. It comes from the heart center. This powerful sense of sensing, of being, of feeling, of emotional life, if you can go past the fears, if you can go past the doubts and all of that stuff, you will be brought into deep awareness. The universe will give you a little piece of hard candy and you will start to forget all of the pain and it will start to open up and you will start to either cry your heart out or just step inside and go thank you and that will do it all. It really will.

We know this stuff when we're kids. We don't know it when we're adults. I'm a terrible cryer. I hardly cry at all. It's really hard for me. On the other hand I experience sadness and when I saw Elijah yesterday I was enveloped in his sadness. I was reacquainted with the terror of a grief stricken child and led back into the core of the human condition, I totally got his fear. I totally got his helplessness. I know the whole ride he has to go on in order to arrive at the place that I'm talking about. But he is on the ride we all share and he'll figure it out in the ways that we'll all figure it out.

And if we don't figure it out maybe we come back again lifetime after lifetime, until we do. I don't know for sure how that works, but I do know that it's better to figure it out now while we are here and have a life worth living than not to figure it out and harbor endless resentment against the universe. That is not a way to live. So take the time, sit down, breathe, open your heart, go inside, and roam. Enter your heart and roam. Go in there, sit in that easy chair for a minute, and find the universe that exists within you. It's huge and it's worth fighting all your doubts, angers, and distractions to find.

I hope that wasn't too basic. I think we all know it on some level, but on another level we don't and it has to be articulated so often because the thing that I see that goes on all the time is that people are looking for all of the solutions externally. They're looking for all the solutions outside themselves; another piece of cake, another drink, another pill, another love affair, whatever it is, and it doesn't work. And it's so simple to do this inner thing if you can get past the fear of your emotions and past the fear of the deadness that you'll sometimes feel. It will, if you sit and focus on this heart space, it will ultimately go, "Come on in." It just does it. That's what it does. It invites you in. It's there for that. It just takes determination.

Thank you guys for coming, I love you all, truly. I'm thankful you're all here.