

CLASS TALK 11-19-17 "Being" is a verb. It is a higher form of "doing." A spiritual life is discovering how to "be." It allows you to truly serve the world.

About 50 years ago, when I first came back from India as a kid before I met Rudi, about a week or two before I met Rudi, I was staying at a friend's loft in SoHo and sleeping on their couch and I picked up a copy of Esquire magazine and I read an article basically by a group that I think was called a Club of Rome talking about how we are going to run out of food on this planet and there was going to be too many people and it presented an unbelievably dire picture of the world. I don't know what happened exactly, but I know I came back from India not having found a teacher which was a big deal for me and I was totally uncertain of the future. I had no path forward. I was probably in many ways depleted and I remember I was very scared and reading that article didn't help. Something flipped in me as I finished it and I couldn't move and I sat still on that couch and I was immobile. In truth I remained immobile for about two or three days. My friend didn't know what to make of what was happening and I didn't know what to make of what was happening. Nobody knew what to do. He would keep going, "Are you okay? Do you need anything?" I would just shrug. I just couldn't function and it was really pretty scary. It was the kind of thing where he may have called a doctor after another 24 hours if I had sat there any longer, but something strange happened, and it was very instructive. He was rebuilding the loft and a huge delivery of wood arrived down three flights of stairs and it all needed to be brought upstairs. He came to me and said, "Bruce, I don't know what's going on with you but I need help. Can you help me bring this plywood up the stairs?" And I was just so out of it but I said okay and I walked downstairs and I started lugging lumber up the stairs one piece after another and it was unbelievably exhausting and extremely difficult. The thing that happened, and I have never forgotten this, is that somewhere by about the third or fourth trip up the stairs I discovered that whatever was happening to me was lifting, this depression, this darkness was just lifting and everything I did, every trip I made I got lighter and lighter and lighter and I understood in the deepest part of my being that this salvation for my depression and my lack of direction and clarity was move, work—movement and work were crucial ingredients. By the time I got all the wood upstairs I was a different person. I had to let go of all of the darkness, I had no idea how to proceed, but I didn't care. I was trusting life, I was full, I was energized, I was through something that I really had to go through that I didn't in any way understand or grasp, but it was essential. And what took place was that I got freed from my inertia by movement and by action, by taking direction, by helping somebody do something. All of these tiny little ingredients saved me. And as the story goes about a week or two later I met Rudi and Blanche and my life turned around.

So there's a directive here. One of those directives is something I read a long time ago which I always loved, and I've said it in teaching many times I think, "God loves those who are in motion." We need to engage our lives, we need to engage the world, we need to engage the demands that life makes on us, and we need to make demands and engage ourselves. It's not just a matter of passivity, this idea of still pointedness, which is at the core of our meditation experience, must be balanced by the doing and the action in the world. They are part of a whole of a

continuum. Sitting still alone in a retreat or a meditation facility or somewhere you are just separating from the world is fine if you want to learn how to sit still, but it's not the place to spend the rest of your life. Perhaps there are people for whom that is the only way, but I have met many, many people who have gone inward as a place of hiding, as a way of leaving the world behind, as a way of simply staying inside and not engaging. I don't want to be judgmental because that may be the path for many people, but I have experienced—I remember one particular woman recently who had been a meditator in a retreat for many, many years. I don't know why she came out exactly, but she was one of the deepest people I had ever seen. But when I went to hug her she totally froze. She was unable to connect. She was able to go in but not out. This to me is wildly imbalanced and problematic.

Just going outward is also terribly unbalanced. And most people that you know, and you may be one of them, are mostly outer-driven. We look to the world to take care of us, to keep us engaged, to keep us in motion, to keep us alive, to keep us stimulated, to keep us distracted, to keep us involved, and we can get so involved that we forget the basic tenant of the Buddhist teaching, which is impermanence. That means you can have all of this stuff but it's not going to last. It's all fine, enjoy it while you have it, but don't look to it for anything other than the joy of the moment, I guess. But do be aware that everything that is your source of involvement and pleasure in the moment is going to go away. It's impermanent. It cannot last. Everything you seek from the outside is a failed salvation. You cannot be saved by the outer. It cannot happen. Because if you're attached to it you're going to be saddled or grief stricken or beyond that, paralyzed in depression by the loss of everything outside you.

The alternative to that is this inward journey, which can also become in its own funny way, paralytic. So what's this razor's edge of activity—it's the thing that I found when I met Rudi. He said your material life is your spiritual life. And that connected to me. It was meaningful to me, so valuable. This is it. Not that or that, this. This is it. And it's so extraordinarily necessary to finally arrive at this. And I kept trying through my meditative practice with Rudi of taking my deep breaths and asking for help to surrender and really going deep into my chakra system. I kept trying to get to this. But the problem was the trying because trying implies that you're not this, that you're not here. And of course you're here and all you have to do is go, "oh," and this funny thing happens when you go "oh," which is, you go, "Ahhh. I didn't have to do anything. I'm here." And that 'here' is a really interesting place because it is the seed form of everything. But when I was sitting on that couch in a state of total depression, in a sense I was here because I had no future I could contemplate. Past was just sort of evaporating, all I could face was this dark future that seemed to be arising around me or would have something to do with where I would finally end up in this world and it was so not exciting, compelling, involving that I didn't want to go there, I only wanted to be hidden in a sense, hidden from the future, hidden from life, and so I got into a present tense that was awful. Awful. There is this idea in spirituality that by being in the moment you will enter into infinite bliss and transformation. You will find liberation and that your journey will be over by just being in the present. But just being in the present isn't enough. Just being in the present can be a state of terrible stuckness, of sadness, of depletion, of depression. There is something else that's wanted in this whole

journey, and I guess the word that I like most about it, well there is two of them, one of them is aliveness, alive in the present, and the other is presence, that you are present. And what you discover is that there is in a sense a you, which is known as the ego-minded personal Self, which in the present tense can get stuck, can get depressed, can get lost. And there is the being that you are, which is nothing but the present tense. And it is nothing but presence and it is infinite, vast, eternal being.

The difference between sitting in the present as a you, as an ego, and being present as the Self is a deep difference. It's profound. The journey that we are all on is to find that profound truth that we are. Sitting in that space of egotistical me terrified of the world, or me as the best thing that has ever happened to the world, or whatever your particular configuration is, is a false state. In other words it is not permanent, it is not going to provide you with anything at all other than a temporary sense of misery or joy. And holding onto it is going to cause you to suffer. Nothing new here, these are ancient teachings.

What to do? What to do.

Rudi said to take a breath, go into your heart, ask for help to surrender. Surrender what? Surrender this personhood that is causing you grief, this person who is building you a life on quicksand, this person who thinks he's going to get something if they make two billion dollars and they build this incredible mansion, that you get the yacht you've been waiting for your whole life. I just read there is some yacht docking in Florida that was a two billion dollar yacht. I don't know what you do with a two billion dollar yacht, but you get all that stuff and then what? You think it gives you permanence? You think it gives you ultimate joy and pleasure?

I remember talking to Hollywood people who were on the studio head's yacht and they said they would have given anything to be close enough to shore to jump in and swim. They wanted off of that yacht. They said it was the most unbearable luxurious misery they could possibly imagine because the people were so egocentric, so driven, so about themselves and only wanted to be honored and acknowledged on their yacht. I get it. I've been around enough of the luxurious parts of life to know how illusionary they all are. It's delusionary.

What you want is to find the Self that permeates all of this and doesn't go anywhere, that offers a kind of well-being, a kind of joy, a kind of simplicity, a kind of satisfaction and fulfillment that requires nothing but itself to be. Nothing. Requires nothing. It's not an escape from the world, it's not embracing the world, it's in this place that envelops all of that. It's a singularity. It's a oneness. It's a totality. It is the absolute. And it is what and who you are. It's what you are. I know it sounds like words and I know it sounds like pontificating about something that maybe one day you'll get to. I'm telling you you are that as we speak. Not to know that is because you are addicted to what is not true, what is false. You are addicted to the drama. And I completely get it. I have been addicted to the drama and I still get swept into the drama. We all get swept into it because it's so pervasive. But what you need is either a meditative life that pulls you back for half an hour into a place of, "Oh yeah, this..." and a feeling of gratitude and relief that you escaped the

stupidity of your own delusions. Or you start to arrive at a place of presence and you watch all of these things form inside you: happiness, drama, everything—and you just watch it with amazement. You watch it. You go, “Oh my God, this is a dark day.” “Wow, this is beautiful.” “This is terrifying.” “This is wonderful.” You see all of these things forming inside and you acknowledge them and you are with them and you understand they are part of some kind of clouds filling the sky and blotting out the sun. It’s temporary. Don’t suddenly shoot yourself in the head because the sun got obstructed. It’s not like that. The thing is, go deep inside and find a way to say yes to the ‘what is’ no matter how it presents itself. And it will present itself in every kind of form imaginable and it’s waiting to see what form can you not get away from, what form captures you, what form catches you. And we know what they are. We all have certain things that get us every time. And finally you have to go, “I’m done with that. No.” And you just relax. You just relax and you go, “Okay. Okay. I get it. Okay. There you are again, I get it.” And you accept and you accept and you open and you open and you become liberated more and more deeply than you ever imagined was possible. That’s the spiritual journey, that’s what sitting everyday does, that’s what opening does, that’s what awakening allows to take place.

It is an exquisite journey and it’s valuable.

Having said all that, this morning I was reading *The New York Times* before I taught class and probably not a wise thing to do, but it’s often very informative and valuable in its own funny way, and there was an article about somebody talking about 25 years ago reading an article from all of these scientists who all said we only have so much time on this planet if we don’t take care of business. And it was like totally invoking for me. Again, this 50-year-old moment of sitting there going, “Oh my God, it’s all going to end. We’re all going to starve.” Then we didn’t know about climate change exactly, or if we did we weren’t talking about it, we didn’t know about Donald Trump, we didn’t know about all of these things that can go on in the world—political problems—I mean, we did, but we all have our ways of living in our own particular confirmation of things. I’ll buy this part, but I don’t want anything to do with that. We all live in a life we design basically, we all create the universe we all want to be in. So anyway, I took this in today. I took it in and it was scary because we’ve all been, those of you who read the newspaper or who listen to fake news, we’ve all started hearing scientists talk about the fact that there’s a problem with bees. There are problems with the bees disappearing. Now, huge numbers of insects disappearing. They take care of pollinating the flowers, they make the food chain possible. Those of you who watch the news learned about what happened in Puerto Rico and Houston and Florida—I’m a dramatist and I come from the realm of drama. We have something called foreshadowing in drama. In the first act you know if somebody coughs you know they’re going to die in the third act. That’s just how it works, that’s what it’s called. And if you’re on this planet right now and you take a look at Puerto Rico and you take a look at Florida and you take a look at Houston and we live thirty miles from the fires up north that destroyed a whole community, you know, you look at all this stuff and it’s called foreshadowing. It’s a sign of things to come. Those of you who were here in Los Angeles during the summer had temperatures of a hundred and ten or above, even in San Rafael, and that’s not normal, that doesn’t happen. This stuff is now

happening. And it's happening in a very big way. It is both foreshadowing and also not foreshadowing. It is the arrival of the possibility of an uninhabitable planet

Some of us have grandchildren who are going to be living on that planet and also some of us are beginning to realize that it's happening so fast that we're going to be living on that planet. So it's not for some future generation, it's for us. Things are changing in a very dramatic way and they're not being addressed, if anything they're being hidden. Hidden is the wrong word, climate change we're told by some people is a fiction. Other people tell us it's not and we're in a society that's actually even debating those kinds of things when the temperatures are a hundred and ten in San Rafael. And when a whole country is washed away, and it's really interesting those of us who watch the news as opposed to those of us who just read about it, will find that Puerto Rico, as an example, a country that was pretty much demolished by a storm created by global warming, really, is approximately for a week or two, maybe four minutes of the news broadcast, then it's a minute, then it's thirty seconds, and then it just disappears. Do you think the people of Puerto Rico have gotten over the hurricane because it's no longer on the news? And yet our minds are over it. We don't think about it. It's gone. The fires are gone. The floods are gone. Hurricanes are gone... until the next news cycle.

I don't want to get political here, all I want to say is this, the thing that put me in a state of great trauma 50 years ago is now expanding and filling the airwaves. We can still push it away but it's going to come closer and closer day by day. We have to live with this and in a way we are powerless to do much about it. And this is important because what does one do in the face of such huge dramatic odds? What do you do? Of course you can sign petitions, you can give money, you can go picket, you can walk on the streets and try to tell people what's going on. Blanche and I went on a climate change march up in San Rafael. I talked about it. There were just a lot of angry people being angry and I felt no contribution to the larger world situation.

Those of us who are concerned about the world and about ourselves and about our loved ones, there is not a lot of doing that will be affective. You may find things that you can do and I would say great, engage them. Do them. But here's a really important and interesting idea—being is a verb. Being is a verb. It's not a passive experience. Being is an active experience. It is something not that you do, it is something that is happening. When you engage being you are in a sense affecting and changing everything around you. People who are being in an egoistic sense are effecting things often in very karmic ways. They'll lash out, they'll do something negative, it will come back in some way to haunt them. The problem with egoistic being is that it is self-serving, it is for your benefit and nobody else's usually.

True being is infinite and eternal being and it is the larger context in which your tiny little being exists. If you can get rid of your tiny little being a little bit, just begin to break it down, just open inside to this larger being, the verb of that, the activity of that, will be a state of presence of being that affects everyone and everything around you. Your being is the very antidote to the stuff that is happening. Yes you can picket, yes you can do all these kinds of material things if you want, but nothing will be more effective than learning how, which isn't really the right word

because learning is not exactly how you arrive at this, but coming to the place of just being yourself.

What I see happen when you are you, when you're just being, the doing aspect of being affects everything in very minor minuscule ways, in minuscule ways. I go on my walks every day and now I see litter on the side of the road and I go, "Well, I can walk by it or I can pick it up." If it's garbage day I don't hesitate, I pick it up and walk 20 steps and I'll drop the beer can in the garbage somewhere. But sometimes, if you pick stuff up you have to carry it for quite a while, and I keep going into this thing Rudi taught me, if it's in front of you it's yours. You can not look at it, you can just say that somebody else will get it, but it's going to sit on the side of the road for years. So my understanding is, "I can do this. I can pick it up. I know it's tiny. I know it's ridiculous. Who cares? Nobody cares." I care. I care. I care because if it's in front of me it's mine. If there are people in front of me who need something and I can provide it, it's mine. I have to do it. You have to do it. You can be selective. There are the same people standing on the same corners in San Rafael asking for money every day and I do not give them money every day because they are not engaging the capacity to do. I don't mean to put them down, I'm not against welfare, I'm just trying to say, sitting on the corner is not the only answer and there are people you do not help by giving them stuff. But there are people in your mind, in your ego, and something inside you will tell you, "This person needs this." That's when you give. Do the thing that's in front of you. Help the person in front of you. Bring them into your home. Give them a meal. Whatever it is, let your being be the action that helps the world. That is a wonderful spiritual reality, that who you are, in a way, is a loving, giving, compassionate being, but don't put boundaries on that. Let it ripple, let it go out, be the best version of your ego-minded tiny Self and be the expression of vastness and infinity that is beyond that ego being.

That is the best activity that you can bring into what's happening here. The world may be in for a very difficult ride. I suspect it is. Something needs to show light in the middle of darkness. Something needs to be light in the middle of darkness. You are the light. You. Are. The. Light.

If you are sitting there going, "But...," I'm sorry, you're wrong. You are the light. As hard as it is to be the light, as hard as it is to be a kind, compassionate, loving human being, you are that if you choose to be that. You are that if you wish to engage it. Or if you get out of the way of the thing that fights that idea. Don't sit back and say, "Oh, he's not talking to me. I've got all these problems, all these issues, and all that stuff, I'm too busy, I have my life to live, have all these dramas going on in my life..."—yes, every human being has all of that going on.

On the other hand, you are either an ego-minded tightly wound-up person living in that world, or you are a beam of light moving through it. I will tell you, you are the beam of light. If you believe, me you'll live differently. If you don't believe me, you'll keep fighting and go through your day to day bullshit as though it's important.

I can only tell you that bringing yourself to the table of this meditative process, of sitting still every day long enough to just touch yourself, to just touch the light, to touch the thing in you that's waiting to be expressed, to find the path in you that opens the door to the flood of light that wants to shoot through you. If you can do that every day and just take responsibility for that every day, your life will be changed and the world will be changed. I cannot tell you how it will be changed.

I think I've described this before, but one of the things I was told by the universe was to tell people what you saw, which was in relationship to my LSD trip in the 60's, but beyond that, this awareness of everything I'm talking about right now. I was told to share it and it gave me a platform, which was to make movies. And every so often people come to me and tell me that my movie changed their life. It's like I don't know what I put out will do. I have no idea that it will serve other people. You don't know this stuff, but you just put it out. It doesn't have to be a movie. It can just be an act of kindness. The cliché of that is ridiculous, but pay it forward. That idea is so valuable to people. If you can give this thing to the world, it will maybe one day come back to you and someone will say, "You know you really helped me." But if they never say it and trust me, it doesn't matter, you will feel the joy of having been a transmitter rather than an obstruction. You will feel the joy of this thing pouring through you. When light pours through you, who is the first person to experience the light? You are. You're the light. And that light will completely wash away all the stuff inside you. It'll wash away everything. The more you give it the more it cleanses, the more it expands, the more it shines through, and people will find you to look for light. They will come to you to look for light.

So I guess if there is a message—One: the world needs you. —Two: you are exactly what you need to be to help. There is this extraordinary quality of being that equates with doing. If you can use being as a verb you can affect everything in the world around you without literally having to do very much. You just do by being and the being will take care of it. The being is all you need to engage. Be yourself in the deepest, most profound, most loving, most complete way that you can figure out. And when you stop trying, it will happen. Trying is fine, but when you just let it be, you will arrive at the thing you've been seeking your entire life, which is where you've always been.

QUESTION: I came today. I have pain in my eyes and it was just gone. I feel that I am in the presence of an ethical alchemist in the spirit of gratitude is leading us to the door of grace. And living in a state of grace we can be the light.

BRUCE: Absolutely. That's exactly right. We're all living in a state of grace, we're just not embodying it very well. Most of us, if we have pain, curse the world. Curse it. We want relief immediately, we want—we don't need to know the origin of it so much, we just want to get rid of it. But pain speaks to us. We have to dialogue with the what is. We have to dialogue with it. I've discovered in certain cases that the universe provides pain to bring me to it. Not to the pain but to the universe itself, only through the pain do I dig deep enough sometimes to get to the truth of my being. So it's not a punishment.

It's hard to describe what this is. To put it into words is beyond almost everybody's ability. A few poets get there, but mostly we crawl along trying to figure it out a little bit. Some people don't even try to figure it out, they just crawl along, but we're trying to make ourselves at one with an enormous mystery. And that mystery will never be understood, but it will be felt and it will be known and it will be embraced and you will come to a place inside yourself that is nothing but grateful. I can't explain it beyond that, but that's the ride. If you're not walking around grateful, if you're not walking around in a state of amazement and wonder you're not there yet.

I keep trying to describe the walks I take every day, but when you can walk around and want to literally just hug everything and everyone and touch the flower petals and feel your feet on the ground and feel tensions move out of the soles of your feet as you walk and feel the air touching you and the beauty of everything around you just announcing itself and there are layers of color and levels of perception that I never knew were there before and they are just radiating all day long. I try to take pictures of it to give people a sense of what I'm seeing. It's so unbelievably beautiful and wonderful and horrible and difficult and problematic—the whole spectrum—but you get to go wow to the entirety rather than I'll take this part and not that part. That's where you get into trouble.

QUESTION: Coming from that personal pain alchemy transformation to the more global, there seems to be a bit of a disconnect from going and understanding that personal thing to really seeing what's real, but it seems like there's more of a negative foreshadowing around the larger picture of our—I wouldn't call it our impending doom—but whatever it is that seems—I'm just wondering where the two interplay, because it seems like it's pretty easy from the individual to alchemize this physical pain into seeing it as God's love but it seems a little harder to do when there's other people involved.

BRUCE: None of it's easy exactly. And I don't know that it's alchemizing exactly, I think that pain brings you to a doorway of helplessness. That's all I can tell you. And out of the helplessness you may actually ask in a way that is truly sincere and something comes. That's my experience of it.

Having it happen in a global sense is a deepening of that. For me, my personal pain is something I can deal with. When I look at my grandchildren crying, I am broken-hearted beyond belief. My empathy for them is beyond anything I have ever known before. And now my empathy is becoming more universal, so I walk around with a broken heart much of the time, but it doesn't stop the beauty and the wonder from radiating everywhere. I think the core ingredient in all of this is a broken heartedness, but as Leonard Cohen and others have said, it's through the broken hearts, the cracks, that the light comes through. So we have to let the light through in any way we can get there. I don't understand the construction of all of this. I don't like the fact that the world might actually be in trouble. That really is beyond description, and I don't know what to do other than talk about it and to arrive at an understandings. And the understandings I'm arriving at are pretty much what I'm presenting in the class, they just have to do with the making of a verb of being. That's really important to me. This is a journey we're all undertaking personally,

individually and globally and collectively. It's something that is beyond individual ideas and abilities to handle, although some people may be in a position to move the world more strongly than others. Each one of us can do our part and that's all we can do.

The pain of global suffering or of suffering beyond ourselves is our pain. We're not separate from it at all. I gave a talk last week completely about my grandson not wanting his father to go to a business meeting and he broke down crying in a way that it was me crying. I was crying to God. I was crying because I felt how alone we all are, how frightened we all are, how dependent we all are, how interdependent we all are. It was all there and that crying was so pure, it was so frightened and so reaching out and attached and hopeful and I get it and I am that being. I am that. I am all of that. And it is only by expressing it as totally as we can that we begin to reach out to each other and find this connectivity that is our salvation in a sense. But the true salvation is not the reaching out and touching each other as much as it is reaching in and touching our Self, and they both are essential to me.

I don't know if that's answering your question, but it really is what I feel. The alchemy is essentially being driven to find that space in yourself that is connected to all that is. That's what we need to do. And once you do that you realize that connection is—you and it dissolves into one thing, which is all we are, which is the absolute.

QUESTION: When you spoke about the joy you feel when walking in the morning, I had made a commitment because I know I had a change and shift in how I walk through life. I've been the tough New York broad and it got me things but it didn't open my heart. So in the past year or so I have become a person that wants to shift me. I decided to have joy wherever I can and make something good out of it. I had my car stolen last week and that was devastating for me and then I received a phone call four days later and a policeman said he found my car and if I could get there in half an hour he wouldn't have to impound it. So everything worked out and somebody gave me a lift and I got there and I met this terrific human being who took the time to not impound my car, who had about him the loveliest quality, and I said to him, can I hug you? I am so grateful to you, can I take your picture and put it on Facebook? We all laughed, but it was really a big deal to me. I lost my purse and my everything and this joyful moment came about and I put it on Facebook, I put his photo on, and I said I love this man, and people kept writing to me. Their hearts were opening towards policemen, towards how good people can be. I am telling this not because look at what a fabulous person I am, I am saying, what a result at wanting to be some other kind of person in the worst possible time. And then I printed a photo and I made an 11 by 17 poster and I brought it into the police station and he was not there but they talked about how they were going to tease him. And I walked out going, "Okay."

BRUCE: Thank you. I think it just amplifies what I'm talking about, but also not everybody here knows you. The journey to this person that you're talking about is such an exquisite journey and that's really what I'm trying to talk about. We all have that possibility in ourselves. We all have something in us that elevates us if we want to be elevated and allows us to contribute to the world in a way that is loving

and grateful. It's a beautiful journey. And if you're not there it's only because you choose not to be there. Or you're too self-absorbed not to want to bother, but I would suggest, bother—it's worth it.

Thank you guys for coming.