

Transmission Speech

By Zen Master Jeong Ji

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(Raises stick, hits table)

Long, long ago in Tang Dynasty China, an eminent teacher was asked “How is it that we can manage to survive in this catastrophically brief and precious world?”

And the master replied, “Body exposed in the golden wind.”

(Raises stick, hits table)

More recently an eminent teacher among us has replied to a similar question on any number of given times, with the following phrase, “Rest in openness to the totality of present moment awareness.”

(Raises stick, hits table)

Just a moment ago a little voice belonging to Jeong Ji piped in and said “How are we going to get through this evening?” To which I replied, “Jeong Ji, pay attention!”

So I ask you, there are so many dilemmas that we face in our lives and for each dilemma there are probably 10,000 different instructions, pieces of advice that we’re offered, and these three teachings that I just shared with you already, they’re kind of similar, aren’t they?

Well I have a question for you then, are they the same or different? If you say they are the same, I am very sorry to say, that as pretty as a notion that is, as lovely and heart-warming that may be to say they are all the same, I am sorry. This world will turn around and hit you thirty times in spite of such a notion.

On the other hand, if you say they are different, you will hit yourself with confusion thirty times and won’t be able to find your way out of a closet.

So what can you do?

KATZ!

What a precious, precious joy it is to be among all of you tonight, to see your shining faces.

In other words, if our eyes, ears, nose, tongue, body and mind are open, exposed 100 percent, then the most precious, the most golden of insights is available to us, moment by moment. In other words, all of us are students, and all of the teachings are available to us, right here, right now.

When we’re young, we can appreciate that, so much easier when we’re really young. As children we enter into this world with this notion of actual don’t know mind, and our eyes are shining and bright. Before long we get hardened and decisive about what is correct and incorrect, who we like and who we don’t like. But we can hearken back to our childhood and find the Zen Masters of our childhood. I would like to call up a couple of memories to share with you.

My brother, who is here, Sam, has known me longer than anyone else here. I would like to share a brief story when I was really little. My father and I went on a little walk to an abandoned block in our neighborhood. We walked past weeds, broken glass, garbage, abandoned sewer pipes, the kind of scenery Detroit is so famous for. I didn't see that there was anything to see and then my father suddenly grabbed hold of me by the shoulder and said, "Anita, look!" And he put me at the edge of this puddle and it was slimy and smelled awful. He said, "Look Anita, look closely!" So I did. And there were dozens of tadpoles in that little puddle, squirming around, so alive. My father and I rejoiced in the small, luminous presence of these sentient beings. That memory never left me, and also that teaching, "Pay attention, pay attention!"

Another recollection I'd like to bring up was with my mother. She worked hard and had a lot of talents. One of them was as an artist. I loved to watch her do her pen and ink drawings. When she had some free time, she would be in the basement drawing these incredible detailed line drawings. I would tag along when she went to shows and people would often ask her, "What happens if you make a mistake?" She said, "I never make mistakes!" She would just leave them hanging there, wondering. For years I would have recurring nightmares about lines, lines that kept going in the wrong places. What a powerful teaching that was for me. In our Zen lingo, we would call that: Only go straight, Don't Know, Just Do It!

And so I was fortunate to have this question about creativity earlier this evening. Creativity *is* Zen. And this was the Zen training that I grew up with having these two remarkable parents. But no matter how many lessons we receive growing up, it only goes so far until we attain something, until we attain it for ourselves.

I was an extremely shy and awkward child. Sam can attest to that, because he was so cool. When I encountered Zen teaching for the first time when I was living in Maine, I knew that this was it. As Ji Bong Soen Sa would say, we know when we meet clear water. I sold my house, got rid of all my belongings, except for the clay, and went to study with the nearest Zen Master who happened to be Zen Master Seung Sahn. And after many years of training, doing hundreds of days of retreat, I've followed this practice, and tried my best, 100 percent, only go straight, don't know. And then I left the sangha for 15 years, until I had the great good fortune to meet Zen Master Ji Bong (who we should now address as Dae Soen Sa Nim, our great honored teacher). Dae Soen Sa Nim – I owe you a debt I can never repay. Your teaching was so true and keen-eyed and meticulous as everyone has been saying, but if it weren't for you, I wouldn't have come back. So thank you!

Through the training I did with Zen Master Ji Bong, I was able to practice knitting together insight with wisdom. It is no surprise to me that his name is Wisdom Peak. This was a knitting together of kong-an work, intuitive wisdom training, along with cognitive training of taking responsibility for knowing our heritage, where we come from in this Zen tradition. I know myself, I can be a little bit on the lazy side, so I thank you for keeping my feet to the fire.

And in that same realm, I thank all of our sangha. It takes a sangha to raise a child. What good company! It's the quality to our sangha. People always remark that we're so friendly, so easy going. This had to be my home, and it always will be.

My fellow partners-in-crime, Ji Do Poep Sas. Thank you especially, for tangling eyebrows and mud-wrestling through all that we've been training with together.

There's a key, key element to our training, which is why we're training, our Bodhisattva direction. This is all about complete love, unquestioning love and devotion. This experience and great good fortune has always been present in the life I share with my dear family. I call out my husband, Nick. Please thank him. He's been so steady, so supportive. As many times as he would say, "What, Anita? You're doing another retreat? Do you really have to?" He's been like a rock. My great enlightened husband, thank you so much for being who you are. *<applause>*

And two of my three children are here. Matty, my oldest, and Katrina. To have had this kind of love and devotion, I couldn't imagine any other life than to have had you. Oh....there are no more words! My brother and his wife, Sam & Beth, an amazing quilter who made this kasa. *<applause>*

So all of these terms we've heard about – only go straight, don't know, pay attention, unconditional love, resting in openness to the totality of present moment awareness, body exposed in the golden wind. All these words don't quite address an important matter.

(Raises stick, hits table)

Though we may be precious, sometimes wounded dreamers in a completely unpredictable world that seems to be sometimes devouring itself while giving birth to itself, simultaneously, the question remains, "How can we help?"

KATZ!

So many bright faces, each one reflecting light. When we step out of this room, I hope that we can, each one of us, celebrate and serve this world, to the best of our capacity, moment by moment.

Thank you so much.