

Rōshi Sama 003 [transcribed 07.05.2018]

I have been given this time every day during *sesshin* to give a talk. I have been doing this for many years now, 7 *sesshin* every year, 5, 10, 20, 30 years, 40 years. Many people have been coming to sit *sesshin* for over 30 years now. After *sesshin* if I ask about what you have heard here, you are quite likely to answer, you didn't understand anything, even though I am chewing it up and so kindly feeding it to you, even though everything I am telling you is exactly right on, the way it is. At the same time, I feel that maybe I shouldn't be giving these talks because sometimes I know that I set you up to think and wonder, to do your head. And so, that's why I carefully stick to the point, the ONE point. But it often happens that you haven't heard me even though I am always saying to you only ONE thing, over and over. You are blessed with the opportunity to sit this one time in *zazen*. How grateful you must feel. And how much you probably feel that you don't want to waste even a second of this time that you have been given to do *zazen*. You are blessed with this human birth in order to deal with this one, most important matter. The *most* important matter. It's the only thing there is. Are you right on the mark? Aim straight - right with this most important matter. Or do you waver between two or three things, "This" is important, "that" is important, or "the other" is important? Answer this for yourself, because, what I must ask of you this *sesshin*, is that no matter what comes up, I must ask that your determination not to become distracted, does not waver. Do you stay focused, for great rebirth? To be truly reborn to who you are, you simply have got to stay with this practice. If you are even a fraction off the point of a needle, you must get yourself together. Don't lay back, or get lazy, or give into this state or that state, that cannot possibly satisfy you. Please, have courage. Hold nothing. Bring nothing. Carry nothing. White paper. Please practice just as you have been shown. Sincerely. It's not only with *zazen* that you do this, do JUST THIS.

The other day a mother came with her two children and the little sister was active, vital and roaming around, but the older brother sat here in front of me and it was obvious that he wasn't satisfied. And he came up on his own with the question, "How can studying be more fun?" So, of course, I could only tell him the same thing that I tell you. Sit up straight. Your spine straight. Your neck straight. Your chin pulled in. If you are thinking, your head is bent forward under the weight like Rodin's thinker, holding his head in his hand, and his leg bears the weight of his hand. But to carry that a bit further, happily the great earth supports his legs and feet. Everything is always supporting everything else. We just don't notice it. There is the true genuine Self to be realized. This ONE important matter. What could be genuine? What is my real Self? This doubt, the great doubt, this question is where you start out. You just have to find out what is this most important thing. Asking this question sincerely is so very important, so precious. Asking this question, you

are free now to dedicate your life to getting the answer you need. When the boy is studying, he must just study, posture straight, breathing deeply. And you, the breath, how is your breath now? Breathe from your *tanden*, your lower belly. I ask you over and over to breathe deeply, to stay centred in your *tanden*. Yet you refuse to get it. You continue to breathe shallowly, sometimes as if you are panting. Breathe from the *tanden*. Breathe with the mind's eye. Place the mind's eye in your *tanden*. Keep your attention here. Your All. I am telling you repeatedly to do this, yet you come to *dokusan* to complain, "I just can't do it. I know what you are saying, and I want to do it, and I believe, but I just can't do it yet". Can't? It's just that you don't do it, you don't breathe deeply, you don't keep your mind's eye focused in your *tanden*. You can. In order to chase the devil of ignorance out, you must concentrate all your force on the counter-attack, so you that won't be swayed, pulled away from what you have got to do. You concentrate your energy in your *tanden*. Keep your eye in your lower belly, and you *will* have power.

Because the boy who I was talking about was a grammar school student, I told him these things to do with regard to his studies, to face his desk, and before opening his books to straighten his back [and] to breathe deeply. You will settle this way. Then arouse again your determination to do it, to do THIS. I'm going to DO THIS. After a couple of months had passed I talked to his mother on the phone, and she was saying what changes she had seen in her son. Although he tends to be a quiet, retiring sort of boy, he started taking responsibility for the beginnings of some his classes and starting a group. He calls the group "*Yoshi yaruzo*". Ok, I am going to do it. It seems at the start of class he says it in a quiet little voice, "Ok, I am going to do it!". And he is top in his school in swimming, and he seems to be happier and enjoying things happily. If you are 100% doing, what you are doing, you are happy. Truly, Life is happiness.

Others come. Somebody just the other day and when I asked him, isn't there something interesting or fun about what you are doing, he couldn't get out of his moping. And his voice and face were really showing that he doesn't enjoy life. Whatever I see, or do, I feel so happy. I enjoy what I do. And that's why I know that every one of you, everybody, can be this way as well. There is nothing special about me. So, I feel when I see someone like I did the other day, I feel so sad, he isn't yet able to experience his life in happiness. No matter how I tried to show him, it just went in one ear and out the other with no effect. His time was not ripe.

There is a question of timing and ripeness. Bodhidharma knew that the time was not ripe yet, when he met the emperor. So, he left the emperor to go and face the wall in the cave. Why couldn't the emperor hear Bodhidharma? Because he was holding tightly to his own judgements, to his own notion of self. Clinging tightly to the small isolated self, regarding yourself as a hard, concrete thing. Well, your time

is ripe, and that's evidenced by the fact that you are sitting zazen here-and-now. You're here to take yourself in hand, to firmly break through this notion of self that is so hard and fast. This most important matter. Are you quite, quite certain of your target? It's you. It's this Life. It's your Life. It is simply Now. Here. Some people think that this one life is it, that when you die, you're dead and that's the end. Such a big mistake and a real pity to be so misled. How many countless lifetimes of struggle have brought you forth in this human form, this human birth. What have you to show for these countless lives? Can't we say everything? Aren't you receiving it all? The other day I asked someone who was working in the kitchen, "have you eaten yet?". And he answered me, "I received dinner". It was such a good clear answer. "I have received", "I have been allowed to receive". Aren't you now receiving this great wonderful life? Fully. Wholly. Aren't you graced with Life? This Life is eternal. This Life indestructible, eternal. Your Life. But you still have the habit of getting all caught up in picking and choosing, dividing and discriminating, likes and dislikes, he and I, gain and loss, good and bad. You are always judging this way and fragmenting your world. So, it is a hungry ghost world. It's a fighting demon world. You are blessed with this life time. But it's yours for a time and then [SLAP] it is instantly grabbed away from you. So, you are dissatisfied and frustrated. If this is the way that you are receiving life, then I can't really say you are receiving, receiving, gracefully. The ONE way path in which you can receive everything. This is Life's jewel. This is the jewel of Life. It is simply THIS ONE Doing. THIS ONE Doing (*Ichi Tantei*), the most important matter. Listen. The wonderful, precious, precious sounds of Life. The sound of the gong. I am not separate from the sound of the bell. We are ONE. You, yourself, no separation. The fact is, the reality is, that you are blessed with the grace of this Truth Life. One with Life. Everything that you encounter is this blessed Life. You are perfectly protected and cared for. Now. Here. This Reality. This Truth. There is nothing else and Life is nowhere else.

Of course, if you still have the notion that "I am receiving", then you are just barely scratching the surface. You are not digging in to your Life. In reality, you are blessed with all of life, with the source of life. There is no separate independent self. How could such a thing exist? It's only an idea, a false impression. THIS. Now. The most important matter. You have got no time to look off. Now. Here. THIS. No matter what form it takes, no matter how it sounds, it includes all of everything, even in this phantom world where we so easily split up self and other. All things are Truth. But it is so easy to divide and calculate, to get fooled, to get pulled around by circumstances. So easy, that's why you bring yourself Now. Here. Only THIS! It is not possible to grasp. There is no conceiving of it, no thinking of Reality. It is not something that can be imagined or understood with the intellect. Don't think "good". Don't think "evil". At this very moment, what is the face of me, the head monk?

Unfortunately, if I bring in texts to talk from, you tend to start conceptualizing, to try to figure it out, to analyze it, to let your mind wander. No. Open up your palms wide and let go. Do not grasp. Do not hold. Do not lay back. *Shikantaza*. No carrying. No holding. No grasping. Counting the breath. THIS ONE Breath, with all your might. Following the breath. *Muji*. The sound of one hand. Whatever face arises, do not allow your attention wander. Just give it your noble attention. Give THIS your all. Lay your life on the line. Continue. Just carry through. Be ONE with [as] your practice. Be your practice. No matter what arises, neither indulge in it, nor reject it. But when you come to *dokusan*, bear your practice, lay your experience forth, bring your practice in to *dokusan*, just as it is. And do not conceal, or doctor your practice, to hide what is really going on. You must be perfectly honest. Say what you need to say.

When I was 21 years old, about 10 days before I had my *sesshin* with *Daiun Rōshi Sama*, I made up my mind to do it. I wrote in my diary these words, "I vow to repay my gratitude for all my boundless blessings". So, I went into that first *sesshin* determined, with conviction. I am receiving everything. Receiving everything. That was my starting point. I still falsely conceived of an "I", "me", "my", who was receiving. But, it was clear to me that I am always so blessed, and clear to me that I must return that kindness to the world. It was my mission, something that I could not help but do. So, in practicing under *Daiun Rōshi Sama*, I didn't feel much dissatisfaction, or frustration, or complaints. How is it with you?

The flying squirrel, who has been living under the *zendo* roof for a long time now, comes out in the morning thrashing noisily around over our heads. Perhaps his dear wife or baby have been eaten by a cat, I don't know. Maybe there is another reason, but he has been extremely rough and loud, a hindrance to our morning *zazen*. So last night before getting ready for *sesshin* we put a kind of spray bomb that mixes stink in the area under the roof to drive the flying squirrel away. I feel sorry for him, but we had to ask him to go for a time and live in the big tree next to the door so as not to disturb our quiet, precious *zazen*. We took away his beloved home and we are indebted to the flying squirrel. Even to this flying squirrel we are indebted. Please make each and every *tantei* [doing] genuine. Every day of our life, we receive countless blessings in this blessing that is our Life, and we are repaying this kindness with our practice. But, you must not become dark and practice with a grumble, [but] rather you are brave and clear. Do not look off. Sincerely, practice this practice. You are not here asking for a hand out. What you are doing is simply dedicating your All. Look. Listen. Isn't each and everything perfectly dedicating itself to the universe. Isn't this what Life is? Everything dedicating itself to everything else.

ONE with all Beings we attain the Buddha Way.

