

February 2022

Greetings,

I hope all are doing well with this very contagious Omicron variant. After starting up my in-person meditation groups in September I had to take a step back in January because of the outbreak here. I know there is a whole lot of pandemic fatigue going around. I have had to be quite mindful of it myself. Being still and doing extra meditation has really helped me. Another thing that has helped me is a teaching from one of my seniors -"If you look down all you see is down". This has really helped me keep a positive attitude with all that comes up as I go through each day.

Below is an article I recently wrote about judgmentalism.

With all my heart,

Rev Basil

Judgmentalism

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For a while now I have been talking to folks about the problem of *judgmentalism*. I have seen this for some years quite strongly with politics, and recently I have seen it in relation to the COVID pandemic.

First, let me explain what I see as the distinction between *judgments* and *judgmentalism*. As a normal part of our daily human life we make judgments all the time. We look at different situations and make a judgment about what is good for us to do. For example, what doctor or dentist to see and when to see them, what to wear, where to go, what to buy, and so on. The problem is when we move into a *judgmental attitude of mind* about people and situations.

The dictionary meaning of *judgmental* is "given to making or expressing unfavorable judgments about things; tending to form opinions too quickly, esp. when disapproving of someone or something; feeling morally superior." Our spiritual training and practice helps us see that the flow of the Eternal, the Unborn, the Buddha Nature flows through everybody and everything. When we engage in judgmentalism, we blind ourselves to this flow of pure love, compassion, and wisdom. Our spiritual vision is distorted by the greed, hate, and delusion that is inherent in judgmentalism and we have difficulty perceiving the Buddha Nature in another. We must be mindful of this attitude of mind because it can really lead us astray.

There are signs to watch out for. A big one is *anger*. If we allow ourselves to go strongly with anger toward those we are judgmental about, that anger can actually turn into a poisonous, deep-seated hatred. We have all seen this increasing tendency to extreme and uncompromising opinions and points of view in the political arena in recent years.

We must be extra mindful when we see ourselves going with this. When these thoughts and emotions come up, we want to catch them and let them dissipate into the love of the Eternal. This is actually my daily meditation and training and it is always ongoing.

Another area a judgmental attitude shows up is when we think others inferior. When groups of people harbor the attitude that other groups of people are inferior, all kinds of suffering and harm develops—things like slavery and ethnic cleansing. We can also judge ourselves inferior or superior to others. Again, this delusion causes us suffering by not seeing the flow of the Eternal within ourselves.

In the scriptures and teachings, it is said to be very careful and not go with a judgmental attitude. The deepest purpose of the Precepts is to show us when we are not seeing the flow of the Eternal in *everything* and acting in ways that block up our hearts. In the case of judgmentalism, two in particular "light up" when we engage in it. One is, "Do not speak against others." Rev. Master Jiyu's commentary on this Precept is, "Every person, every being is the Temple of the Lord wherein the Lord dwells.... If you speak against others you speak against the Lord of the House." The other Precept that is particularly helpful is, "Do not be proud of yourself and devalue others." The commentary for this Precept says, "How can there be devaluation of others if they are the Temple of the Lord? How can there be pride if all possess equally within the Lord?"

The temptation to go with judgmentalism about people or circumstances that we do not agree with is strong. And even if we limit our judgmentalism to our own thoughts, that causes suffering for ourselves. A daily spiritual practice—as challenging as that can sometimes be—helps us keep this tendency in check and live a more loving, peaceful and spiritual life that is grounded in the Eternal.