

## MORNING TALK OF 11 OCTOBER 2026 · THE GOOD THAT DOES NOT LIBERATE

*Even the good becomes a burden when you hold on to it · Ajahn Jayapañño (จายปานโญ ภิกขุ), Sakon Nakhon · translated from the Thai · with the teacher's blessing, sādhu*

[00:00] May happiness, well-being and blessings come to all of you. Today is a day of hearing the Dhamma (the Uposatha, the Buddhist observance day). A little over ten days remain until the end of the rains (the monks' rains retreat). We see how fast time passes. In this one rains retreat we have not done anything yet, and already its end is here. And our life moves closer to death.

[00:33] So what do we do if we do not make the effort to find ourselves a refuge? About one who already has eyes and sees the light there is nothing to worry. But one who is still in the dark, that gives cause for concern. If we still have no refuge for the heart, for the mind, where does it go when we die? That is why we must make the effort and seek ourselves a refuge.

[01:17] Take the teaching of the Buddha, the knowledge he distilled (from his own experience). The teaching of the Buddha is a body of knowledge. You take it, study it, learn it until you understand. Then you have a principle for how to live and practise according to that teaching. And then you have to do it, that is, live and practise accordingly. Only then does the result show clearly. Only then does firm faith (saddhā) arise. Only then do you truly have the Triple Gem (the Buddha, his teaching and the community of his disciples) as your refuge.

[01:58] As we say, "Buddhaṃ, dhammaṃ, saṅghaṃ saraṇaṃ gacchāmi" (I go to the Buddha, the Dhamma and the Saṅgha for refuge). We have the Buddha, the Dhamma and the Saṅgha as the refuge we call to mind. But have we really arrived there? Whoever truly has the Triple Gem as refuge first goes to a good place (a good rebirth). First to a good place. And beyond that, wisdom (paññā) arises that leads this mind out of the round of rebirth (saṃsāra), out of the going round in circles.

[02:37] So if we do not make the effort, we keep going round and stay stuck in here. "The rest of mankind runs along the bank" (from the Dhammapada): stuck on this shore, the bank of the bad and of merit (the good one accumulates). We are born because of merit and because of the bad. Born, we are now happy, now suffering, like this, without end.

[03:01] That is why the teaching, the knowledge, the science of the Buddha, has a principle that directs the study in one direction only: towards the end of suffering, towards giving away (letting go). Set it in your heart: we do this in order to give away. But if we do it in order to take in (for ourselves), then what we do may well be good. Someone might say: I do go to the temple, I do make merit, I do good. Yes, it is good. But that good is not yet straight (not yet aimed in the right direction).

[03:46] Because doing something in order to take in is an action whose result binds us. Kamma (cause and effect) bears fruit. Whether it is dark kamma, doing bad, whose fruit is bad; or white kamma, doing what is good and beautiful, whose fruit is merit: that too has a fruit that keeps us bound. So good alone is not enough. It must be good, and it must also be straight. It must be straight according to the principle the Buddha laid down: every action is done to give away, not to take in.

[04:31] You need not worry that when you give away you will get no return. Kamma is not without result. We do not expect anything, and yet it goes according to the cause we have made. We do not want to get anything, but once the cause is made, there is a result. That is simply how it is. It does not go according to our wanting, it does not go according to our thinking, it goes according to the cause we make.

[05:00] Giving, giving away, is by its nature, in reality, the way by which wealth comes, the way by which possessions come. Even if we do not wish for them at all. Like sugarcane that has gone into the press: wanted or not, the sweet

juice comes out. That is simply how it is. Once we have studied and understood this, we no longer have to carry expectation around with what we do. Act without expecting. Do good so that it is straight. Do it in order to give away.

[05:45] What is sad these days is this: we do not reach the principle the Buddha laid down. We go to the temple, live in the temple, become monks, live in the temple, and still we do not reach the true teaching. We hope only for an outward, fleeting benefit, because we do not open our hearts and listen. It is not that there is no one: there are teachers who pass on the Buddha's teaching. But most of us do not open our hearts and listen to the Buddha's Dhamma. We hold on to our own view.

[06:27] Because the practice was handed down this way (as custom), we have taken it up wrongly. Why do we go (to the temple)? To get merit. Wanting leads us there. We go and make the cause for merit: by giving, by keeping virtue (sīla, the moral precepts), by developing the mind (bhāvanā, meditation). That is making the cause. Merit is the result, what comes back from the cause we have made. So if we do not know how to make the cause, that is a life without a principle, and no result can come of it.

[07:20] That is why we must set the correct principle in place well. One step finer than that is the method, how to do it. There may be differences in the details according to each person's temperament (carita). But the knowledge must be correct, the principle must stand firm. Only then do we have a method of living and practising that suits us. Practise according to the measure of your strength, in keeping with the Dhamma, step by step, each in his own way.

[08:04] But if we lack understanding, we do it blindly and superstitiously, not knowing up from down. So we see no result. The faculties (indriya) do not grow: faith does not, energy does not, mindfulness, concentration and wisdom do not grow, because the knowledge is missing. We Buddhists have to admit this, first to ourselves: most of us Buddhists lack the knowledge of the teaching of Buddhism. Go and ask, go and look: out of ten people, are there even two who understand the principle the Buddha laid down?

[08:57] We are Buddhists who pay no attention to the Buddha's teaching at all. But we do want to be good. We do good, but good with our eyes and ears shut. And so it is a goodness like rowing a boat in a basin (you go nowhere): it does not lead to liberation. Because the principle the Buddha laid down is for liberation from suffering, from clinging and holding on (upādāna). And we Buddhists do not want to study, we do not lift our heads to look.

[09:33] Even though we are born in Buddhism, grow up in Buddhism, grow old in Buddhism, die in Buddhism, we do not see Buddhism. Like the fish born in the water, growing up in the water, dying in the water, and not knowing the water. It is a pity. Quite different are the people who have never come into contact with it.

[10:00] For example those who are grounded in science, who are used to it, as in the Western world. Their thinking proceeds scientifically from the start, and that is the same as with the Buddha: cause and effect. So if they take an interest in the Buddha's teaching and study it, they are more serious about it than the Thais. The Thais are sloppy and flighty. They do not care, they do not see the value. They have something precious and do not know it, like the chicken that finds a gem: it scratches it aside, not knowing its worth, and runs after worms and insects instead. (The Thais) do not see the value of Buddhism.

[10:51] Wherever people are lured, they go. Wherever they hear someone calling, they go, without knowing what call it is. Something rattles somewhere (as when one knocks on a basin to call the chickens), there must be food, and off they all run in a crowd. "Over there it is sacred, over here it is miraculous, over there success comes." That is not the Buddha's teaching in the least. Real Buddhism has no rituals. Buddhism has never had rituals. Buddhism does not teach belief in luck; it teaches belief in action, and in seeing the result.

[11:37] (The teaching) is the wisdom of man, for man to study. The Buddha did not hear it from anyone. He knew it clearly through his own wisdom and then put it into words so that those who came after could study and practise it, for the end of suffering in people's hearts. See, this is the understanding we lack. We only want to get merit, to be

born rich in the next life. The longer someone lives in the temple, the longer he goes to the temple, the more greed, the more wanting, the more wishing and craving.

[12:21] And so we fail to see that this life of ours does not amount to so very much. Even if you had wealth up to the sky, what then? Can you take it with you when you die? No one can take it along. The possessions we have, are they really a wealth that gladdens the heart? You have a fine car and suffer because of the car: afraid it will break, afraid it will get old. You have lots of money and suffer because of all that money: afraid it will run out, afraid of being robbed. Does the heart rejoice in these things? Instead of being a possession to enjoy, these things become a burden to carry.

[13:09] This is because we do not understand. Life is not long. Why do we not seek the peace of the heart, of the mind? Let peace arise within your own heart. First, peace from all that is bad and unwholesome (no longer doing it): that is virtue (*sīla*). Peace from clinging, from holding on: that is wisdom. Then we live with mindfulness (*satī*), concentration (*samādhi*) and wisdom (*paññā*). The way of Buddhism needs these three: mindfulness, remembering to stay aware; concentration, the heart that stands firm; wisdom, which sees things as they really are.

[14:04] (Towards others:) Do not expect, do not dictate, do not force, do not interfere. We cannot say why this one is like that and that one like this. Everyone has his own reasons. The bad person has his reason for doing bad, just ask him. And the good person has his reason for doing good. But the principle the Buddha teaches, we do not study it until we understand. I keep repeating it. Not even the very first training rule, the beginning of the holy life, this matter of giving (do we understand).

[14:45] Because we do not understand the knowledge, we have no principle for our conduct and practice. And so our practice, our doing, is not straight. It is good, but it is not straight. So we get stuck on the good, carry the good, hold the good and suffer because of the good. But if we do it so that it is straight, then we set it in our heart: I do this in order to give away, in order to let go of my holding on. Where is there stinginess in me? Where do I hold on to something? Can I give that away? Can I overcome the stinginess in my own heart?

[15:26] With actions like these we keep up the fight (against holding on). The holding on, the attachment that has sat firmly in our heart, gradually thins out and loosens. At the same time, what we do benefits others. It does no harm, it threatens no one. And people like to come to someone with a good heart, someone good and kind. No one likes to go to a stingy person, a greedy one, someone out to take advantage of others. That follows naturally. You need not say it; it is so.

[16:09] And once we have cleared the selfishness out, our heart begins to improve. It begins to become calmer at first. When you practise often: it depends on practising often, doing it often, not a single time and then it is over. It becomes a habit, it becomes a trait. From habit it becomes a trait. You take pleasure in doing it; the zeal to do it (*chanda*) arises. And whoever takes pleasure in doing it makes more effort. Zeal and energy (*chanda*, *virīya*). It happens naturally, automatically. Everything goes according to the cause that is made and the conditions that come in and shape it. The words: cause and condition.

[17:07] So once there is pleasure and satisfaction, the effort increases: zeal and energy. What you are doing, the work you are doing, you do not do carelessly, not half-heartedly, but with your whole heart, attentive to what you do. The mind attends to the work it is doing (that is attention, *citta*). And when it is done, you check: where is something still lacking that needs correcting? Where does something still need adding to make it better? That is investigation (*vīmaṃsā*). Zeal, energy, attention, investigation: these things are called the four roads to success (*iddhipāda*).

[17:59] At the same time, when we take pleasure in doing something, we are glad when we do it. Whoever takes pleasure in it finds joy in the doing. And when it has succeeded, happiness arises in the heart from what has been done. Do we see the development of our heart? Right here. This basic, first adjustment of the mind, becoming a person with a good heart, brings forth the wisdom with which one can handle the various situations better. Wisdom arises.

[18:48] See, the practice, the principle, is nothing complicated. We just do not accept it. We still hold to the old ways, still believe in tradition and ritual, still believe the lies. The truth we do not like; when someone lies to us, that we really like (said in Isan, the dialect of the north-east). That temple gives lottery numbers, this temple has a miraculous object, that temple takes you to pay homage to this and that (shrine). It is pitiful. The truth is there, but we refuse to rely on our own wisdom. Instead we lean on others and expect support from others. That is what is sad about us Buddhists.

[19:42] So we must turn around and start again. Go back and listen to the Buddha, do what the Buddha said, according to our strength. Give, and give so as to overcome the stinginess in our own heart. Our conduct should stand firmly within the bounds of virtue. No need to go far: let us just speak of the five precepts (sīla, the five basic rules). They are the foundation of being human. All virtue goes out from this body and this heart. The many outward rules condense and in the end remain at this one heart: a single virtue, here in the heart.

[20:31] So whoever can make his own virtue more complete, his mind becomes calmer. Giving: the fruit of giving is, in the end, happiness. The fruit of keeping virtue is peace. They differ in refinement, at different levels. So look carefully: if the heart has virtue, it becomes calm, it becomes sheltered, it becomes cool. Cool heart, cool mind. This is developed out of merit; merit is what nourishes; happiness is what nourishes the heart. That is the principle of how the heart and mind develop.

[21:19] When the heart is calm and cool like that, the bad and unwholesome cannot overwhelm it. Virtue is an armour against the bad, so that it does not arise in our heart. When the heart thinks, it thinks in the wholesome direction: that is cleverness in thinking and in feeling, a good EQ and a good IQ (as people say today), clever in thought, clever in emotion. The development of the heart moves it away from suffering bit by bit, even from the first (coarsest) kind of suffering. It leads to restraint and watchfulness (over the senses), it leads to mental development (bhāvanā), the development of our heart and mind.

[22:09] On the ground of virtue a heart stands firm; it does not sway back and forth, it does not flow out to external things, because mindfulness holds it back and supports it. Mindfulness is what blocks the stream of arising. Mindfulness, the remembering and knowing, is the brake, so that it does not flow along with the round (vaṭṭa). When it can stop, wisdom arises that knows things as they really are. Then (clinging) fades, you are not lost, you do not hold on. There is a method of practice. So there must be giving, there must be virtue, only then does mental development arise, the training and development of our heart.

[22:59] The principle is laid down for giving away, for the fading (of craving), for liberation. But the method is each person's own, a matter for the individual. It cannot be made the measure for judging others. The frames and rules we set up: do not expect others to live within the frame we have built. Everyone has a different temperament. (Others) are nothing we need to look at.

[23:36] Now we turn back and look at our own mind: what does it rub against, what troubles it? Here, this is where we set to work. If we cannot let go, cannot put down, we carry everything around. In the end we die together with all the suffering that has piled up like that. Whoever does not see the way in this life, for him the next one is heavier. Because most beings, after death, go to the lower realms (apāya).

[24:14] We must find ourselves a refuge, without fail. Rely on yourself, on the Dhamma, on the truth. The Dhamma is the truth. Stay with the truth, manage that. Have the wisdom to live without suffering. Be at peace in the middle of the battlefield, in the middle of the war, the war of the defilements (kilesa). This heart can be at peace because it does not get involved with them. If it is not at peace, do not blame others. We ourselves send the heart out into the turmoil. That is how it is.

[24:54] Do not keep hoping to become this or that in the next life. Stop. Stop being born, stop the suffering. For being born is the cause of ageing, sickness and death. In the end no one escapes. And in this life we were born into

Buddhism; this counts as the life that is most ready. If you ask whether the merit and the perfections (pāramī) we have accumulated are enough: they are enough. It only depends on whether we stop or not.

[25:32] Anyone can escape suffering by practising what the Buddha said. When the faculties have ripened and there is wisdom, one is freed from suffering. But because we have no faith, our faculties are weak. We do not listen to the Buddha's words, we do not practise correctly, and so we still cannot find the way out of suffering. Worse still: many do not even know suffering. They do not see the danger in being born.

[26:13] See, it is about the good: when it is good, it must also be straight. "Supaṭipanno, ujupaṭipanno" (practising well, practising straight; from the recitation on the Saṅgha, the community of disciples): that takes us far away from suffering. "Ñāyapaṭipanno": practising to know the Dhamma that leads out of suffering; walking further and further away, until in the end one is free of suffering. "Sāmīcipaṭipanno" (practising rightly). It (liberation) is right here, where else? In which life shall it be, how long do we want to wait? This life is ready.

[26:49] Stop the struggling, stop the wanting in your own heart, stop craving (taṇhā). However hard this life may be, however difficult: let it be the last one. Enough. Finished. It need not go on. No need to be good, no need to be clever, no need for anything at all. Stop everything, put it down. That is the principle the Buddha teaches: that we can turn inward and look at ourselves. For that we need mindfulness, the remembering and knowing, and it must be correct mindfulness (sammā-sati). I say this all the time.

[27:29] That we make mistakes and do bad comes from being heedless, from not being aware of ourselves. Every time we scold each other, it is because mindfulness and wisdom are lacking. Every time we make a mistake, it is because mindfulness and wisdom are lacking. If mindfulness, clear comprehension (sampajañña) and wisdom are right there, in that moment, one does nothing wrong, nothing bad. See, the principle the Buddha points to leads here: turn inward and look at yourself. The way to look at yourself begins with the body and then goes to the heart. Whoever does not know himself cannot escape suffering. Whoever does not know the five aggregates (khandha), does not see through them, cannot escape suffering.

[28:11] Knowing the Brahma worlds (the highest heavens), knowing the hells, knowing the heavens, knowing the underworld: that does not free you from suffering. No knowledge comes up to knowing yourself, knowing your own body and heart. Once you have seen through it, clinging fades. In practice we must not practise blindly, without understanding all round. Our knowledge must stand firm, we must have a principle, and the doing must be serious. Not in grand gestures, not half-hearted, not to be seen, not to show off, not for display. It must be done continuously.

[28:56] With mindfulness, support your own heart so that it stands firm, in concentration, continuously. Be one who lives in equanimity (upekkhā): be mindful and present. That is the study of the Dhamma, that is the practice of the Dhamma. Look in here. At the same time, the outer work belongs to it as a side part. You do not take the one and throw away the other. The practice must be complete: giving there must be, virtue there must be, concentration and mental development must succeed. Let nothing be lacking, let nothing be in excess. For the various parts of the practice support one another. None may be lacking, none may be in excess. Everything must fit together exactly, not too much, not too little. Develop yourself gradually.

[29:58] In the end you will see: this world is only an illusion. What is said to exist has never existed. We have merely named it all ourselves, by convention (sammuti). Happiness and suffering alike are nothing but a mirage. All things, everything said to be real, is in truth not real. It is empty, empty of any self in it. Not a being, not a person, not me, not you. If you want to say it in a fancy way, you call it emptiness (suññatā): nothing is there, none of it is anything. Or call it whatever you like. The terms, the labels, the names are convention.

[30:46] But if we turn back and look, check it once more: if we are simply aware, is there anything? Knowing in the present: there is no him, no me, no happiness, no suffering. There is only the knowing and what is known, mind and body (nāma-rūpa), leaning on each other. Only the knowing element, an element of nature, nothing more. Who then

is to be happy, who to suffer, who to be born, who to die? But as soon as you are heedless, there is a me. Not heedless: no me. Heedless, and at once there is a me.

[31:29] The way into the true study of the Dhamma is the study of these five aggregates. Not just studying in the books. Turn back inward and practise correctly. Set the heart on a firm principle. It is hard, it goes against the grain, that is how it is at the start, because it goes against our habit, against the old way we have lived. But if we do not go against the grain, if we do not train, if we let heart and mind, ourselves and the body just drift along in the stream of kamma, as things happen, then the chance to do this again is hard to come by.

[32:18] Not that it would never come. The chance exists. But it is very hard to get, as hard as in the simile of the blind turtle (that surfaces once in a hundred years and is supposed to put its head through a floating yoke). Just think how hard that is. So in this life we have the finest opportunity. It is not much: the Dhamma the Buddha teaches, summed up, is nothing other than this body and this heart. Stay aware of yourself, support and hold the heart. Do not let it wander out looking for things outside. What others are or do, judging that is not our job, grading them is not our job. "No one should pass judgment on another" (after the discourses, in substance).

[33:04] Belittling others, abusing them, mocking them, running them down: in truth it is our own heart that is low. What is in the mind, the mind shows. Whoever abuses others, that is simply what he has in stock (his property is like that): inside there is only rubbish, so only rubbish can come out. But if inside there are good, beautiful qualities, goodness and beauty, then only goodness and beauty come out. So the outward behaviour shows what the heart is like inside. If the heart is good, it thinks good, it speaks good, it acts good, because the good comes from within. So no good person can speak ill of others. Whoever can still think ill of others is not good.

[33:58] See, whoever really looks inward and studies, sees: he sees the bad in himself, the faults, the delusion in himself, the nonsense in himself. Whoever practises does not see that he has become cleverer. He sees his own stupidity, how stupid he has been. And once he sees it, the stupidity is over. But whoever still thinks he is clever is not yet clever; he is still being fooled. That is how it is. Turn back and look at your own heart: there is no happiness, there is no suffering. It is all just deception and mirage that we ourselves got lost in.

[34:45] Whatever happens, in the end you die anyway. From today until the day life breaks apart, do not let living be a suffering. Live on the ground of what is real, right here with ourselves. Without craving, without struggling, what is there to make suffering out of? A rich man with ten billion, a hundred billion (baht), still only eats until he is full. He cannot eat two or three meals' worth at once. Houses upon houses, and still he only needs room to sit and to lie down. No one has more than the other.

[35:23] What everyone has equally, and what we can use, is the breath; that is the same for all. We take this breath as the tool, the instrument, to train our mindfulness. Just train mindfulness until the knowing arises right there (at the breath). No need to run around looking for wisdom. No need to want to know, no need to want to see, no need to force or drive it. Just watch. Be the watcher, not the doer. Learn step by step: from form (the body) inward to feeling (vedanā), to perception (saññā), to what the mind creates (saṅkhāra), to consciousness (viññāṇa). The principle of learning the Buddha teaches is the principle of these five aggregates.

[36:09] So find yourselves a refuge before this breath goes out. Get the highest benefit out of it. And at the same time, let the outer work be done properly, for benefit and happiness, as we said at the beginning: for benefit and happiness. For that happiness, that merit, is fertiliser; it nourishes and strengthens the heart so that the good qualities keep growing and flourishing.

[36:45] Life is not long. So do not waste time suffering. Step quickly out of that mud pit of suffering. Step into the present. Finally, I say anumodanā (I rejoice with you) for every one of your intentions to train and lead yourselves onto the path the Buddha taught. Do not forget: first the knowledge, second the principle, third the doing. They must be in accord with one another, and it must be in earnest. Only then does the result show, namely true experience. For this morning the time is up. I will stop here. Be blessed.