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**City Center**  
**"Real Precepts Are Beyond Words"**

[Today I would like to]<sup>1</sup> ... lecture about precepts. I—when I say "precepts," the first thing you will think of is something like Ten Commandment or ten grave prohibitory precepts. But Zen precepts is not like that. The Zen precepts is—to study Zen precepts means to understand zazen. So it is—another interpretation of zazen is precepts. Using words—word "precepts" we explain what is Zen actually.

The purpose of receiving precepts, observing precepts, is not just to remember what we should do or what we shouldn't do. And how we observe precepts is to practice Zen or to extend our practice to our everyday life. So the idea of precepts is completely different from the usual understanding of precepts.

The precepts, you know, which is—or foundation of precepts or—true meaning of precept—precepts is various way of understanding of one reality, one reality which is always with you—reality, which cannot—which is not indivisible in three, or in sixteen, or in ten. Tentatively we divide—we explain it from various angle, but that is just words. Real, you know, precept is beyond word. We cannot—if we talk about it, it is not real precepts already. So if you think precept is just to observe some various rules is precepts, it is very different or very far away from the true understanding of the true prac- [incomplete word: "practice"?]—precepts.

So, the first precepts of sixteen precepts we observe is—how can I [laughs] put into English word one reality which is not—which cannot be divided in three or sixteen—one reality, precept of one reality. You may call it "emptiness," or you may call it "the absolute." That is one reality, you know. That is the first precept we receive—we observe. So [as] you may know, this is the most important—maybe most—I cannot say the most important [laughs], but this is the m- [incomplete word: "most"?]—

Anyway, all the precepts start from this precept. Without understanding this precepts, our precepts doesn't make any sense. One reality which we cannot divide [by] three or six or sixteen. It can be understood in great scale; whatever there are in this world or in this universe, or what kind of rule we have, or what kind of truth we can observe in various

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<sup>1</sup> The first part of the sentence was not recorded on tape. The phrase in brackets was added by the transcriber.

way, or moral code, or rules, or theory we scientist observe, are all those truths is included in this big scale of the precepts.

We understand the precepts in various ways. Science—scientists understand his own way, and various people understand religious way. There must be various way of understanding of it, but the—what we study, what we observe is the one precept. That is the precept you will receive—when you receive precepts, sixteen precepts. You will understand then, you know, how you receive precepts. How you receive precepts is just practice zazen, just to be yourself. Then you can observe the precepts.

*Ahh.* It looks like I'm talking about something [laughs] about heaven [laughs], but it is not so. I am talking about each one of you and myself [drinks water], and about the water and about the stuff [laughs]. When, you know, stuff is really stuff, this stuff include everything. When you just practice zazen on your black cushion, your practice include everything. And you practice zazen with Buddha, with various patriarch, and with all sentient beings. That is, you know, what I always repeat over and over.

Whether your practice is good or bad, it doesn't matter. If you accept your practice as your own, then that practice include everything. At that time you have precepts which include everything as the absolute being include everything. We say, you know, something which include everything is the absolute. But it is actually it is more than that. It is beyond our understanding. You may—you may think if you add, you know, all of you and all the being which exist in this universe, then that is the absolute. But it is not so, because that absolute can be understood by your mind, you know. Something which you understand is not already absolute, you know, because your mind limit the real understanding of the absolute. When you understand, it is not so. When you don't understand and when you just sit [laughs], when you become just a stone or stuff, you know, then you include everything. That is, you know, our zazen practice.

This is so important point for us. If we lose this point, you will be easily caught by some idea or some experience in your, you know, practice. "My practice is good, very good. Recently I saw Buddha in zazen. [Laughs.] Various buddhas—all the buddhas came to me [laughs, laughter] and admired my practice." [Laughs, laughter.] You are laughing, but it is actually that kind of practice exists. And they practice this kind of practice very sincerely. But even so, it is good practice— But even so, compare—comparing to the practice "just sit," you know, you can't—it is beyond comparison [laughs]. Just to sit is much better than to see all the buddha in the world [laughs]. Do you [laughs] understand why is it?

That is the point, you know: to know how important practice it is just to be yourself. When I couldn't read Zen book in English, you know, Alan Watts said, you know, "When a stone is completely stone [laughs], that is real stone," he said, you know. That is what he put, you know, our—that—Zen into word. When a stone is really stone, that is, you know, when a stone is stone through-and-through. That is really a stone.

Not only that is really stone, or when it is really stone, the stone include everything. The stone cannot be, you know, picked up by anyone when a stone is really stone. When—because it is not stone, you know [laughs], so someone may kick it. But when a stone is really stone, you cannot do—you cannot do anything with it. When a stone is really stone, you cannot, you know, pick up. Even though you think you picked up, still, you know, it is a part of the universe. It is you that—who thinks you could picked up, but actually you didn't, you didn't. It is still a part of [laughs] the universe. You cannot pick up whole universe. If you say so, "I picked up whole universe," where are you? [Laughs.] You are ghost. You are outside of the universe. That is just delusion. Nothing exist outside of the universe. All what exist is inside of the universe, you know.

So, that you say you picked up a stone is big delusion. Stone is still stone. You cannot do anything with it. If you understand this point and sit, that is how you receive precepts. This is—

Only one way to observe precepts, perfect precepts. There is no other way to observe precepts. This precept is called—I don't know what, how to interpret—precepts which is—which is not dividable in three. Why we say three is there's two more.

Another point of this precepts is you say, you know—as you know, we say "dharma" and—no, "buddha, dharma, sangha." I am talking about—I have been talking about dharma [buddha] precepts, which cannot be divided in three.

And next one is dharma precept. Dharma. It is, you know, law of the universe. There is—in some way, you know, always things is going. If you throw something, you know, away it will eventually come to the earth because, you know, things, because of the theory of the gravitation. So what—there is some rules, you know, in the way of things exist. So if we say "rule," that law or theory, that theory or rule include everything. There is nothing—nothing exist out of—free from the law or theory. That is dharma.

When we say "freedom" [laughs]—even though you have complete freedom, you say "I have complete freedom from everything." But if

you exist outside of the law or theory, you are ghost [laughs]. You are, you know, you are—that is your own delusion. Actually nothing exist outside of the rule. And that is called—the second one is called pure—pure law or pure precepts.

Why—"pure" means not dualistic. When something is in duality, it is not pure, we say. When we—when things is not dualistic it is pure. Usually, you know, when you say "pure," pure is opposite of impure. And when you say "good," good is opposite of bad—a pair of opposite. Good and bad is pair of opposite. Then there is already pollution. Good air [laughs] or pure air. So, when we say "pure," it means non-duality. Non-duality.

When you sit, you know, if you say, "My practice is good," it is already dualistic. Whether you say "good practice" or "bad practice," you are right there and sitting [laughs]. You cannot say "good practice" or "bad practice." There is some reason why someone's practice is like this or someone cannot sit with her back straight. There's some reason, and you cannot say "good" or "bad." That is how she practice zazen. For her there is no other way to sit for two days' practice. She is making her best effort, and she practice zazen just to, you know, make her effort—complete effort. To be complete being, she is sitting. Not to attain enlightenment or not to keep her from being fall into the hell [laughs]. He is just sitting. She is just sitting. No one can criticize her practice. If she criticize her practice, you know, she is not making her best effort. When she is making her best effort, you know, she cannot criticize. She will not be regret about is—about her practice. That is her own practice, and day after day, if she continue this kind of practice, that is how we exist or how we live as a good Buddhist. That is how we keep our prac-[incomplete word]—precepts.

Anyway, there is some rule, you know, some reason why each person exist here. There is some reason why plant is plant and stars are star. So when we say "dharma," dharma include everything. And dharma is another name of the Buddha, the Absolute One.

The third one is sangha. "Sangha" means to keep harmony, to be harmonious. You know, when Buddha and the law of the universe is not two. And when someone who is practicing zazen and Buddha and his law is one, that is complete harmony. It is more than harmony [laughs]. It is actually one.

So, after all, we say, after all, one individable ... [*Sentence not finished. Tape turned over.*] ... the precept which is individable in three, or which is individable. We say "three precepts," but it is not three. We cannot divide in three. So we say "precepts which is not dividable in three." But we can, you know, explain it in three ways. "My practice is, you

know—my zazen is precepts itself." That is one interpretation—one way of understanding the precepts.

There's rules, you know. If I do something good, result will be good. You cannot [laughs], you know, escape from the law of karma. If you understand that way, then that law include—that rule or law—include everything. We say "law of karma," but you cannot escape from karma. Nothing can, you know, escape from the karma. There's some rule—always rule. Rule is following you—not following you, you know. It is how everything exist. So, you know, it is same thing with Buddha himself. When we say "Buddha," Buddha, you know, acts with karma, by karma, or for karma. So karma and Buddha is same. And we, you know, Buddha's disciple, is always one with Buddha. We cannot escape from him. So we say "indivisible" precepts. We cannot divide in three.

Now you are listening to my lecture; or you may, to study Buddhism, you will read many books. The books you read is not Buddhism itself but explanation of this, you know, truth. "Form is emptiness; emptiness is form." If we explain it like this, it is *Prajñāpāramitā* groups—study of *Prajñāpāramitā* group—sūtra of *Prajñāpāramitā* group. If we put emphasis on how to be buddha, why we are buddha, then that is study of *Lotus Sūtra*. What is the—if we study kōan, what do we study? What you study by kōan is what is the relationship between our practice and the reality. How we, you know—why we—how we have a glance of the truth or enlightenment or Buddha, which is always one, which is not dividable, which cannot be explained in words. That is, you know, how you study kōan. Through kōan, or through kōan practice, you will have a glance of the truth. "Oh, this is reality!" That is kōan practice. Whatever you say, whatever you write, it is a kind of way—it is one of the way to put the reality into words. If you are an artist, what you work on is how to, you know, convey your understanding of the truth.

To—so to study Buddhism, of course, include—is included in our study of precepts. Precepts is not just to observe ten prohibitory precepts: Do not kill; do not steal, you know, that is not [laughs]—that is, you know—It is precepts. It is really precepts, but that is not—even though you observe ten precepts completely, it is not how you observe our real precepts.

So we are not interested in to explain 250, more than 250—a little bit more—I don't know how many more, three or four [hundred] more precepts for [laughs] for a man and for a lady more than 500. I'm sorry to say. Each time I say [laughs], I—some of you maybe may not like it. But, you know, as I always say, female has more complicated [laughs] spiritually and physically complicated, you know, activity. So the rule should be more complicated. That is, you know, quite natural [laughs]. So man is more simple, and—"too simple" means, maybe, not so good

[laughs]. Simpleton? Simpleton. [Laughs, laughter.] So, you know, I am not proud of, you know, having half of the precepts as a lady has, you know. I'm not proud of it. I'm so simple [laughs]. I'm so foolish, maybe.

But anyway, it is not the point to observe those precepts one by one—one after another. The point is how to be yourself, how to be a lady—a lady. Then you have precepts. You have complete precepts. When you are just lady, you keep more than five hundred [laughs] precepts. Actually, even though you keep written precepts—five hundreds of written precepts—you may not be completely a lady. But when—the best way is just to be yourself. Then precepts are with you always.

People may ask, "What are you doing," you know, "in Zen Center? What kind of practice you have in Zen Center?" There are many ways, maybe, but, in short, to be one's self is the purpose of our practice. How to be one's self, one's self is our point of practice and how to keep the precepts—Buddha's precepts. And this—those are the three precepts—the three indivisible precepts.

And next one, I'm [laughs]—I'm not continuing my lecture any more [laughs], because you may hungry—you may be hungry if I continue [laughs, laughter]. The another three is the three collective pure precepts. Collection of all the goodies [laughs, laughter]. That is another three precepts [laughs]. How about it? "Collection of all the goodies precepts." [Laughs, laughter.]

And ten—we have ten more: that is ten [grave] prohibitory precepts. You shouldn't eat too much, you know, even though we have the three collective good [pure] precepts. That is sixteen precepts. And we tentatively, you know, explain the framework of Buddhism by the explanation of the precepts. So it is not just precepts. It is not just rule. It is direct explanation of our life and Buddha's teaching and zazen practice. That is why it is important for you to receive precepts.

Thank you very much.

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