**ZOOM DHARMA TALK 15/04/24**

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TONIGHT’S DHARMA TALK IS ABOUT SAMU

Samu literally means “working meditation.”

Those of us who have attended sesshin will be particularly aware of its place in the daily timetable: the half hour following breakfast where we attend to the cleaning of our living space by engaging in particular jobs like vacuuming, window cleaning, doing the bathrooms, blowing the leaves, weeding the garden and maybe other specific jobs that have a relevance to that time and place. And haven’t we all, from time to time, just kept our ears open for the clappers!

Tonight I put the proposition to you that our whole lives, from birth to death, are just an extended period of samu where we move from one task to the next, just picking up and putting down an endless succession of activities.

Are we not resurrected each morning from the grave of our beds at which the tasks of the day begin: washing, dressing, eating, cleaning teeth, catching the bus/train, entering the workspace, reading emails, attending conferences, making phone calls, attending to correspondence. We just move from one task to the next, from one client to the next, from one conversation to the next, from one cup of tea to the next, from one complaint to the next, from reading one document to the next, from one knock on the door to the next; and when we return home it’s meal preparation, consumption, doing the dishes, sharing the events of the day, checking the mail, doing our meditation, until we ultimately submit ourselves to the death of sleep before our resurrection some hours later where much of the previous day’s activities will be repeated, although names and circumstances will have changed.

We pick up and put down— continuously and without end.

Some tasks are fun. Some aren’t. It’s then that we have to remind ourselves that the road is easiest if there’s “no picking and choosing” because “everyday is a good day” filled with endless possibilities and the odd eureka moment.

At our most recent Zenkai, Richard Warner, in his teisho, spoke about some of the sayings of Unmon, one of which was:
   “Without looking back, leaving one home for the next.”
And isn’t it so: picking up and putting down: one task, one chunk of time followed by the next, one moment followed by the next, one activity followed by the next, one day followed by the next, one home or location followed by the next,

but doing so using our best endeavours not to carry the trauma and drama of one moment into the next.

It seems to me that life, samu, is like playing a piece of music. Playing due regard to the key signature and the tempo assigned it’s just one note or cord followed by the next, sometimes modulating to another key, sometimes experiencing the squalls and dissonance of the minor keys, or hearing the dissonance of the 7th that resolves to the tonic; sometimes loud and bombastic, sometimes soft and intimate, sometimes doing a solo, sometimes accompanying a choir; sometime staccato with the short sharp exchange of argument; sometimes the smooth and sustained legato of melody and harmony where all seems to be great- for a time at least.
A piece of music has a beginning and end, hopefully a recognisable theme to which it often returns after squalls and drama, for a final flourish and an exit, stage left.

So, how’s your samu going? We need to remember that there’s no separation between cleaning the S bend and winning the Nobel Prize— except maybe for effort, application and innate ability.

At whatever moment of the day and in whatever circumstances, it’s just this.

RH