

This is the Only Moment We Have

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One thing that is not always clear to us as we go through our daily routine is that if we look at our life, if we think about it and try to analyze it, we find that there are not so many "important" events — events that have great significance, great meaning. Mostly our life, moment by moment, is composed of very mundane tasks, very small things.

So what happens, and it's sort of a human fallibility, is that we don't pay attention to the small things. But the small things are also very important. I like to tell the story of how an avalanche comes to take place. If we start to trace the cause of an avalanche, we find that often it's a very minute action. Maybe somebody speaks too loudly and that loosens a small rock and that rock loosens a bigger rock, and so on and so on. Just one small thing that is very insignificant, through a chain of events, comes to be very meaningful and has a big impact.

In a way, it is the same with our practice. We don't often realize the power of practice. One day, one retreat, just coming here on this Sunday morning and doing what we're doing. What kind of significance will it have? We don't understand right now.

What Zen teaches us is not to make those distinctions about whether something is important or not important. But as we go moment by moment, we are asked to pay attention — to give ourselves fully to this moment, one hundred percent. It doesn't matter whether it is an important moment or not an important moment; it is the only moment we have.

So what I emphasize is that in fact the only thing, the only true thing, that we ever have is this moment. The past we cannot touch. The future we cannot grasp. And if we try to catch the present, it's already gone.

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