

Helen's opening talk: What is Awakening? 11/11/22

So, welcome to this virtual weekend retreat. I am super excited to be here. This is my favorite thing to do, retreats...simply because it's just amazing what happens as we progress through the weekend.

And as we get deeper and deeper into our satsang as the days and the hours go by, we can find that we begin to have insights, and epiphanies and understandings and begin to let things go that we may have been struggling with releasing. And perhaps most importantly when we all come together like this, as part of a group like this, a gathering, retreat is special in that way, because we are together, but we are together for an extended period of time and there is a group dynamic, this energy that starts to really kick in. Where everyone's unconditional loving presence for each other, even if we can't be unconditionally loving of ourselves yet, we generally have already got that already sorted out for everyone else. So our presence for each other really facilitates and enables breakthroughs for everyone.

So, it's an exciting time, and one of the things I really love about retreat also is that as we go through these sessions, there tends to be, every time, a theme that develops, just seemingly randomly, but we are not a random group of people that are here at this retreat. We are all vibrationally aligned, which means we are all looking at the same things, we are all challenged with the same things, we are all breaking through the same things. Even if it's showing up a different way in our life.

Some part of that essential challenge is common to all of us. So, as we go through these sessions there will be talks like this, there will be silent meditations, silent sittings we call that, where we simply sit in silence. And you know if you are anything like me your mind just goes crazy when we do that. Because there is no structure, no agenda, there are no soothing words from me to guide your attention into a deeper state. Its just- I will never forget the first time I did a silent sitting; it was me and my craziness. And the slowest 40 minutes of my life. Luckily, we are only doing 30 minutes at the longest. 30 minutes-40 minutes of my life.

But then I really began to relax into what silent sitting is, and I will explain that as we go, it became one of the most powerful things.

We will have guided meditations too. We will have some satsang. We'll do some self-inquiry as we move through the weekend. Some really powerful seeing will be coming out of that.

So why are we gathered here? Why do we come together like this? What is the purpose of such a gathering? What are we on retreat for? And what are we retreating from?

Are we retreating for a reason? What is this about? For me, the best way I can explain the process when I went through retreat as a student, as a seeker, was to step away from my life as it was at the time. Because whether we are actually physically at a venue on a zoom retreat like this, there are certain common factors about our resistance to waking up. And that is usually that we all have our unique ways of avoiding looking at something that we need to look at. Or distracting ourselves unknowingly or knowingly from what needs looking at.

And even if we, sometimes when we are on retreat, we will find things coming to the surface, emotions, things like that to release, that's totally normal. The difference being that on retreat we are not going to distract ourselves from that. We don't have to go perhaps to work in the next hour. We don't have to take care of the other things in our life that stop us from remaining deeply with whatever is coming up in our experience; whatever is current for us to look at inside.

So that's what we are retreating from; is from all the ways that we usually distract ourselves on our pathway to awakening. And we are retreating into ourselves deeper, much deeper. And how deep that goes is really up to each one of us as to how open we find ourselves in this moment to the truth. And that can always be changed, if we don't feel our awakening is going quick enough, we can look at why. Could I

be more open? Are there some thoughts I'm not questioning or haven't even seen. And we'll be shown that over the course of the weekend.

And what happens here at retreat will have an impact this weekend but also moving forward into the coming weeks and months of your life.

You'll find that your awakening is accelerated from what it would have been if you weren't here with us with weekend. And for the next weeks and months you'll find those effects still in motion. You are seeing things quicker; you are moving deeper. You are letting go of resistance easier.

So it's important to recognize that it's not just this weekend, this retreat will be with you for a long, long time. And maybe some of us will choose to actually stay on retreat. So, even when I'm out and about doing the rest of my usual, whatever that is, going getting what I need food wise and putting petrol in my car, running around after the kids, and doing whatever at work that I need to do.

Whatever that looks like for you, you can do that still while you are on retreat. Retreat can be a physical place it can be a virtual place, but it really is more of an attitude, a heart space which we honor, and put above anything else. Of course, we will do what we need to do in the world. But where are we doing that from? Are we coming from an open heart with compassion for ourselves and others.

Retreat is more about adopting a particular stance in our awakening. So, we are here to kind of do that together, to make a conscious choice towards our awakening.

That whatever has happened up to this point is simply whatever has happened up to that point. Now we can move forward in a more conscious way. Choosing to recognize how life functions. Life functions.

Something happens in our experience and that brings up; shows us some things that we have to look at inside. That process is ongoing, always.

But as awakening deepens, as we know what we really are clearer, then there is less and less resistance to that process. Something needs looking at, and then it gets looked at. Some thought is revealed to still be operating in our life diminishing our joy, our peace, our abundance... and we turn towards it rather than away from it. So, that is ongoing, and this retreat is only going to accelerate what's already occurring.

You wouldn't be drawn to an event like this if you weren't already waking up the Truth. You wouldn't be drawn to spend a whole weekend in deep seeing and meditation and all of that if you weren't well along the path.

So, we are just facilitating here what's already, retreating into the process that's unfolding inside. And process, I don't mean trying to get to some end point where I am awakened. I mean awakening is already occurring and I am just going to be allowing to allow it to unfold easier and faster. I am going to become more conscious of the ways I am resisting that. And then I can allow those to cease and I can move into a more conscious way forward.

This is the most important thing we can do with our lives. And it speaks volumes that you are here in this retreat. Because it says to me that already this is for you the most important thing. The most important thing, awakening to the truth of what we are. Not just because we'll feel better whenever that happens but because everyone around us is going to benefit from that too, whether they are awakened or not. Whether they even know there's another way to live; whether they have even heard of awakening, enlightenment, self-realization, whatever we are calling this.

So, you are doing this, you are taking this time away from your life, so that you can go back into your life, and hold this vision of what you know yourself to be. What you know the other person to be. Maybe perhaps, when they can't as yet. Bringing that into their life.

I'm not talking about sort of sitting down on the sofa and I gonna tell you about what you really are, whether you want to hear it or not. And I'm not going to stop until you tell me you are infinite. I've tried that a few times and it didn't work at all.

I'm talking about being this loving presence of reality, so much so that without even opening your mouth people feel that there is something different about you. People know that there is something about you that they really like. And they are not sure what that is, maybe. But you have already touched them with your presence. You have already changed something for them. From that point forward they will know that there's a different way that they can live. Something there, when they are ready, whenever that is.

So, you are doing this not just for you, you are doing this for everyone, for your spouse, your siblings, your parents, your children, your coworkers. Everyone. You can't help but spread peace as you see clearer what you are. It's not anything that you are doing... it's what you have seen yourself to be; constant, effortless knowing which is always shifting.

Awakening is not a sudden event. At least not for most of us. It certainly wasn't for me. It was so gradual in fact, that I didn't even realize it had happened. It may seem strange that you could wake up to the truth and be living as that and not know.

That somewhere along the way my ability to resist what is fell away. And with it my ability to suffer because they really are the same thing.

And, only when I looked back in hindsight could I see that I no longer somehow had the ability to push against whatever is appearing in my experience.

Or to grab ahold of whatever is appearing, something I want to keep, I want to grab ahold of it, but it has to leave so I suffer.

Or to push against something that's coming into my experience, but it's got to come into my experience, so I suffer. So, with this every simple inability to resist, whatever is coming comes, whatever goes, goes in terms of thoughts, and feelings and experiences. The simplest of things and yet the most powerful.

Freedom might be a little simpler than we think it is. And my kind of job really is just to kind of put that out there. That maybe it is much more available than we have realized. Just because only a few, a small percentage of beings have woken up in every lifetime to the truth of their real nature doesn't mean it can't happen for you and is happening for you. Let's not put it in the future. It's a flower that's unfolding.

We have all the tools we could ever want to make a global awakening possible even. The internet, obviously we have zoom, we have ways to communicate with each other from all corners of the planet that we didn't have even a century ago. Everything is set up for your awakening and you are here at the perfect time.

So, I am excited and I can't wait to see what is gonna unfold over these sessions. I just want to encourage you, that if you are struggling during the retreat, if you are finding something coming up that you are challenged to look at. That there is help available; you can either ask in the satsang, on the page where you find the recordings, also, there is a form that you can fill in. You can ask a question and I will read it out anonymously in the satsang.

If you don't feel that you can't put your hand up and talk, or put your camera on or talk, but you have something that needs addressing you can use that. I can only read a certain amount per Satsang, of course, so make sure to get that in early if you need to.

But it is there if you need help.

Also, there is always non-physical help around us at all times. Beings, whose only purpose is to try to guide you towards your highest good. Whatever we call them is different in every culture, but they are there. but they do need our permission to help. They do need our yes and our openness to help us.

All the great sages and saints that have ever woken up to reality are really pushing for you and rooting for you, supporting you. And they don't see any difference between you and them.

And there's a celebration every time someone has a breakthrough. So, you are not alone, even if you feel very far, far away in a different part of the world from where I am sitting now.

There is no distance between us ever.

There is just the One of us here. And this one being is experiencing itself through all of these bodies all of these minds, all of these experiences. Individual and unique as the way it is expressing itself as every human being, not separate. Never separate. And that's why everyone's question is important. Everyone's question is going to help everyone in this satsang. Every answer that comes is going to help everyone in this retreat.

What is Awakening then? What is all of this for? What is the point of all of this?

Awakening is... it could be described a million different ways and none of them would be correct. I will do my latest best current attempt to explain what my experience of awakening has been. And then that may resonate with you. Because if you don't know what this painting looks like when it's finished, when it's sculpted, when this sculpture has been completed, how do we know what we are heading towards? So, for me, awakening is a deeper and deeper recognition, and that's ongoing, completely, a deeper recognition of what I really am, what you really are, what everything really is. That I am not actually a separate being, that I am not a person at all, that I am an appearance, an individual expression of something much greater, something universal, something that is not a thing yet can show up looking like things. Like all of these things, in fact.

So, a deeper recognition of that. And that's not something you see once. You see this over and over again. There is nothing substantial about me when I look. When I try to find this Helen character she's missing in action. I find only thoughts, emotions, experiences, desires, things like that. So, a deeper and deeper recognition that my essential substance, my being is substance-less, it is formless. That it is also appearing as form. It can show up either way. I can be form or formless. And that I am everywhere, whole, and undivided.

The same self that is speaking these words is listening to them right now taking them in.

And that you created this body to talk to you this weekend, to help you see that you're listening to yourself. And all the other teachers that have ever been and will be.

You are so clever that you created a way out of this trap of the mind thinking that we're a separate being. You knew that when you were ready to wake up out of this there would be help there both available in form and without form.

So, a deeper recognition of what you essentially already are, and a strengthening willingness, a deepening willingness to let that change you. To let that contradict what you thought was true. Perhaps, that you are not a good enough human being, or that you are not ready to awaken, not able to awaken. Or perhaps not worthy, or not loveable or loved. Whatever it is that is coming up for us in our human experience, our awakening is going to contradict that.

Each and every time, it's going to contradict that. We are going to see again and again, and again that we are the essence of love. That love is formless, everywhere and infinite, and it can also take form.

We are going to see that our safety and our security has never been in question. Even though we all are certain that it has or were certain.

We are going to see that we are effortlessly loved that there's no conditions upon that love, that there is just love. And no person to give or receive love even or withhold or deny. That there is just love and all of the shapes that it is taking.

We are going to see that our essence is whole and has never been diminished. We are going to see as our awakening deepens that our mind, our thoughts, our emotions, our body, is all made out of this formless love.

And I'm going to call our essence by difference names. Sometimes I might call it silence, sometimes love, formless love or consciousness, or sometimes reality, sometimes Self, capital S, sometimes Noumenon, that which is not an experience, not a phenomenon. And whichever name you like you can hold onto. If you don't like one of those that's ok. You can also call it You.

How would it change your attitude about yourself and other people if you realized that everywhere you go, everything you experience, and only everyone you meet is your own self in disguise.

How would that change your safety, your security, your stance in life? How would that change how you treat those people? And how would that change how you treat yourself?

Whatever we think we see happening out there in the world is really happening inside our self. There is nothing outside of you to hurt you or harm you. Although it really seems at times a very convincing illusion that we have believed that for a very long time.

So, awakening first of all for me was this willingness to see what is actually real. And then this willingness to let that change my thought process. What if I am already safe, what if I was never unsafe? What if the idea that I was unlovable was total nonsense. Am I going to hold onto that idea or am I going to go towards what I have seen to be true? This formless love is everywhere. It includes everything in it; it cannot exclude anything; it just doesn't have that capacity.

Whatever shapes it makes are constantly changing in a motion of becoming and dissolving, forming, dissolving; manifestation is always changing and it's simply allowing that to occur; this loving presence.

This is an ongoing process. There is no end point to this deepening. There's an endpoint that when we see clear enough what we really are, at some point we can't really think like a separate being anymore, like a person. There's an endpoint in that. Respect, enough self-inquiry will get you to that point.

But then you begin a different kind of journey, a journey of joy, a journey of joyous exploration of what it means to be this infinite love in human form. That happens to your life, your relationships, your career, all of that when you know what you really are. What's that like?

Each and every day that deepens for me still. Every time I think I know what I am, I could use the word formless love, it shows itself to me; I show myself to me in some other way.

Some beautiful being coming into my life, some amazing manifestation happening, some breakthrough moment that someone has, in a thousand different ways like this each and every day. So, a willingness to see what you really are. And a willingness to let that change you. And then as that deepens this third and final ongoing thing begins to occur.

And this is still happening for me, this, all of this. But it's kind of running on auto pilot. This third thing, is that whatever comes up in my humanity, whatever experience I go through, whatever that seems to bring up inside, whenever anything comes up to look at, it is automatically embraced. Even if there is resistance there to look at some emotion, the resistance is also immediately embraced into the wholeness that is love.

So, it's a willingness to be this, to meet our lives as this loving presence. This is where the rubber hits the road. Am I willing to meet what happens to me today as this infinite love? What would love do? What would the presence do with an emotion that comes up? What would it do with a misunderstanding? What would it do with a quarrel? What would it do with a somebody with a strong opinion? What would it do with a pain in my body? Or what would it do with a sleepless night? Or whatever is happening for each and every one of us?

Your mind may be going, oh god, there are three things to remember now. But this is just one way of explaining. But those three things are really all the same. The more clearly you see what you are, that you don't have any form or shape, you can't really find any edges or boundaries to what you essentially are. There isn't a someone rattling around inside of here, turning the cogs and all of that. There is just nobody at home, but that nobody, that nothingness is pure intelligence. That is the intelligence that runs the body, the intelligence, the sentience, that makes humans human is nothing to do with the form. It's before, beyond and inside the form. In fact, the form is made out of it.

The more you see that -the more you naturally slide into allowing your emotions. Being more compassionate with your karmic patterns when they come up. Blaming and judging yourself less and less, it can't really be otherwise as you start to see what you really are.

I've split them into these 3-- just as an illustrative thing, but really they are happening anyway

The more you see what has always been true the less sense it seems to make to hold on to what is completely untrue. It doesn't mean we automatically let go of it. The less and less and less allegiance we have to our stories about ourselves

And the main story of course, which is that I am not already that- self, formless, infinite love. It makes less and less sense to hold onto that. And then we begin to notice a shift happening. Or like my own self, didn't notice until afterwards.

That something is shifting over in the way that I encounter my mind and my body, the way that I embrace them. In fact, that I embrace them at all is evidence of this experiential shift in knowing who I am actually.

Who is actually running this show is compassion, is love, is wisdom, is pure formless intelligence and it knows what it's doing despite what our mind says.

It is unfolding your awakening already and it cannot be stopped. Do you understand the significance of that? Awakening is quite paradoxical really, it's the one thing we think we are never going to achieve and yet it's the one thing that cannot fail to happen. Whether it's in this body/mind, or the next body/mind or ten down the line; that's the only thing in question.

But once it's deeply seated in your heart it's there with you forever. So, what we are going to look at this weekend, what we are going to move into, is how to make sure it happens in this lifetime. Actually, in this weekend I prefer.

Maybe even in this session, just saying, what if it's just a willingness, here, a heart opening, a willingness, a deep conviction, a devotion to truth. That wherever I see myself believing something that's causing me pain, I am going to really examine that from a place of compassion. I am going to make a bigger effort to be kind to myself like this loving presence would be; this infinite love.

It doesn't know how to reject and all of this body's existence is to totally let this body/mind be what it is. It's never once said, nor is it capable, the presence of saying, this is not what you should be doing right now, you should be more awake than this; you shouldn't be judging yourself.

It's the epitome of love, to let our body and mind be however they are in that moment, whatever that looks like. It has no preconceptions of what you should be. And maybe awakening can be as simple as adopting that way of life. I don't know who I am, I don't know who I am supposed to be. I am not even certain there is anything I am supposed to be or anyone I'm supposed to be.

I have my familiar shapes and personas that I put on when I meet this person and that person. But I am willing to step outside of those a little bit more each day, into the great space of this unknown.

I don't know what I am supposed to look like. The best I can say is that I'm supposed to be like this right now because this is how I am. So, if you are confused, be confused, 100 percent. If you are scared let that fear come the best you can. If you are peaceful be absolutely peaceful, if you are joyful, have at it.

If you are terrified do the best you can to feel that; if you made a mistake do what you can to sort it out without blaming yourself.

Could it just be a simpler way to live; could it be just that? An allegiance to, a devotion to letting go of any particular way we are supposed to be and seeing how we actually are in this moment. Because that is being the Self. That is the awakened state, right there.

Less of shoulds and shouldn'ts, less blaming, less judging ourselves and more just being whatever we look like in this moment. There is something powerful when a human begins to choose that consciously.

Because you can't not be what you are in this moment despite what your mind says. So, we may as well align ourselves with that and be peaceful along the path, along the journey.

The rest of your life you are going to be seeing clearer what you really are, and you are going to be living as that more. That's really the only thing that is going on right here. You already are that infinite love and we are just releasing ideas over this weekend to stop that shining through as it would like to or diminish the light of that love.

When that light is diminished it looks like self-hatred, self-blame, unworthiness, fear, anger, all of that. When it is allowed to shine fully we use words like bliss, compassion, joy, peace. But it's really just how open we are to let that shine.

So, we are not doing anything impossible, we aren't even doing anything difficult I have to tell you that because your mind will tell you something else. Just each and every day noticing what comes up in front of you to be examined and looking at it the best that you can. Each time that you do that, the energy you have invested in that thought will come back in your heart and you will feel more peace. And as that peace builds and builds and builds contentment will become a deep and close friend and then love.

And then joy. And then bliss. And it never stops increasing. Every day your body can feel more of what you do want simply by being willing to us. The willingness to see clearer what I really am, the willingness to be that more, as much as I can. That's it.

Notice I didn't say stop myself from judging; notice I didn't say stop myself from resisting. Those things will fall away on their own in this loving, infinite presence.

So, it cannot be stopped, it's already happening- we're just stopping digging our heels in and sort of pushing back against the process that's already occurring. How do we do that, how do we dig our heels in and resist our own awakening?

The number one way that you'll see as we move through this weekend is judging yourself and your progress. Deciding that you aren't where you think you need to be; or that you aren't where everyone else is on this retreat, or something like that or that you are not where I am. Something, whatever variation on that theme.

There may be more peace, love and joy felt here, but that is only because this body/mind started that process sooner and has been doing it longer or has found the things that work quicker.

And you follow the same trajectory/path/direction you're gonna end up with the same results, it has to be.

So, I want you to feel excited, I want you feel open, I want you to feel enthusiastic about your freedom, your own freedom. That it's not something out there in the future, it's something here and now, it is there for the taking this weekend. Just one word to remember.

Willingness.

What if that one thing is what it's all about. I don't even have to figure out how to find out what I am. I don't even have to understand how to do self-inquiry, I just need to be willing to. I don't even need to know how to let go of this emotion, or transcend this karmic pattern, I just need to be willing to.

Everything else will be orchestrated for you, through you. And we can all be willing right now in this moment, can't we? That is achievable right now, if you weren't willing you wouldn't even be here.

So, let's, as we move through the rest of these session, let's wipe the slate clean, we are here, we are open and we are willing and there is nothing else you need to do except sit back, relax, and enjoy this retreat.

If something comes up, do your best to look at it.

If you have a deeper seeing, do your best to honor that.

It's gonna just unfold no matter what you do and the only control you have is how much you resist that.

So, can we have some fun this weekend? Can we relax? Can we really, really not work so hard? I don't want to work hard I don't know about you. I have done enough of that as a seeker for many, many years. I think I have forgotten how to do that actually if I'm honest, which is very nice.

Maybe we can all practice that this weekend. So.