

Heart Sutra, III
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We've been keeping company this retreat with the *Heart Sutra*. We'll read it through in just a moment. I want to say a few words about it and about working with koans first.

The koans we're going to work with tonight are ones that were written either as commentaries to particular parts of the *Heart Sutra* or were things I chose as commentaries to particular parts of the *Heart Sutra*.

The sense here is that the *Heart Sutra* is a grand and stirring statement of what can be possible with spiritual practice and meditation in particular. It holds out a promise to us or opens a vista that is wonderful and inspiring. The next obvious question is *Yeah, but how? How do we do that?*

The understanding of the *Prajnaparamita*, the literature out of which the *Heart Sutra* comes, is that wisdom that's called *prajna* isn't something that just comes in meditation. You meditate long enough, you get hit by this bolt of lightning, and all of a sudden you have this great, profound, wide wisdom. Rather, it's a wisdom that is made up of not just what we come to understand in meditation but also what the heart knows, what the body understands, what we think. All of those different ways of knowing and understanding come together in this thing we call *prajna*. It doesn't exist without any of them.

Meditation is necessary but not sufficient for this wisdom. All the other streams that flow into *prajna* — what the heart knows, what the body knows, even what the mind thinks — require a something in the world; a being in the world, a being in relationship, a doing, a trying, a failing, a trying again, a failing again, a trying until something works a little bit and on and on and on. That's how our *prajna* grows and deepens.

What the koans are about most fundamentally is a way of working with that stuff in the world. How do we bring form and emptiness together in the world? What does it mean that form is emptiness and emptiness is form? What does that look like on Tuesday morning at the breakfast table in a deep way?

The koans help us stand up out of the particular form of seated meditation and move into the rest of our lives and cultivate all the different parts of wisdom that go into *prajna*. That's

the answer of *Okay. That's beautiful and stirring and how do we do it?* The koans provide one way of looking at how we do it.

[Passes out koan booklets]