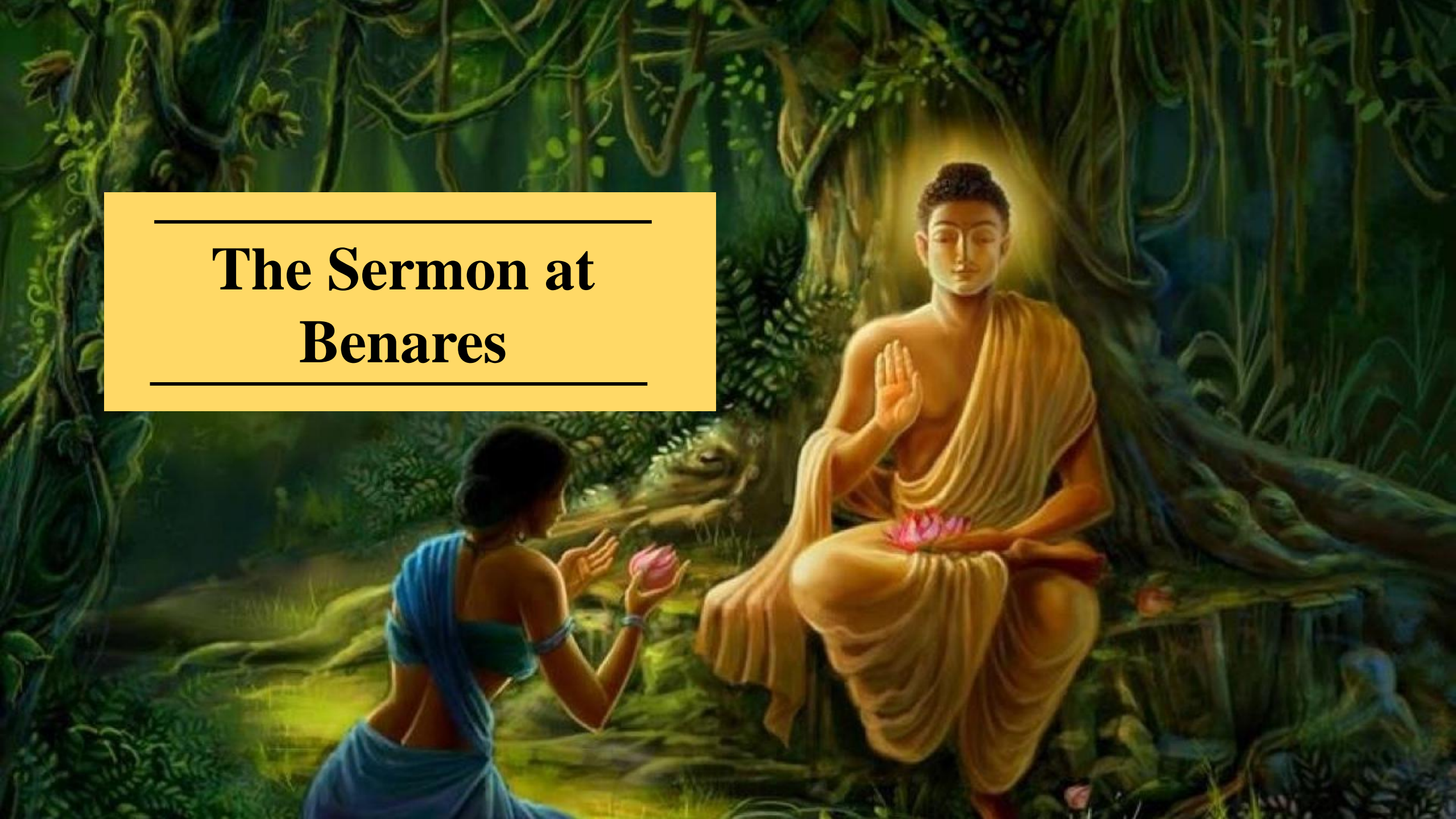


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# The Sermon at Benares

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# BEFORE YOU READ



**GAUTAMA Buddha (563 B.C.–483 B.C.) began life as a prince named Siddhartha Gautama, in northern India. At twelve, he was sent away for schooling in the Hindu sacred scriptures and four years later he returned home to marry a princess. They had a son and lived for ten years as befitted royalty. At about the age of twenty-five, the Prince, heretofore shielded from the sufferings of the world, while out hunting chanced upon a sick man, then an aged man, then a funeral procession, and finally a monk begging for alms. These sights so moved him that he at once went out into the world to seek enlightenment concerning the sorrows he had witnessed.**

# BEFORE YOU READ



**He wandered for seven years and finally sat down under a peepal tree, where he vowed to stay until enlightenment came. Enlightened after seven days, he renamed the tree the Bodhi Tree (Tree of Wisdom) and began to teach and to share his new understandings. At that point he became known as the Buddha (the Awakened or the Enlightened). The Buddha preached his first sermon at the city of Benares, most holy of the dipping places on the River Ganges; that sermon has been preserved and is given here. It reflects the Buddha's wisdom about one inscrutable kind of suffering.**





**Kisa Gotami had an only son, and he died. In her grief she carried the dead child to all her neighbours, asking them for medicine, and the people said, “She has lost her senses. The boy is dead.”**

**At length, Kisa Gotami met a man who replied to her request, “I cannot give thee medicine for thy child, but I know a physician who can.”**

**And the girl said, “Pray tell me, sir; who is it?” And the man replied, "Go to Sakyamuni, the Buddha.”**



**Kisa Gotami repaired to the Buddha and cried, “Lord and Master, give me the medicine that will cure my boy.”**

**The Buddha answered, “I want a handful of mustardseed.” And when the girl in her joy promised to procure it, the Buddha added, “The mustardseed must be taken from a house where no one has lost a child, husband, parent or friend.”**

**Poor Kisa Gotami now went from house to house, and the people pitied her and said, “Here is mustardseed; take it!” But when she asked, “Did a son or daughter, a father or mother, die in your family?” they answered her, “Alas! the living are few, but the dead are many. Do not remind us of our deepest grief.” And there was no house but some beloved one had died in it.**



**Kisa Gotami became weary and hopeless, and sat down at the wayside watching the lights of the city, as they flickered up and were extinguished again. At last the darkness of the night reigned everywhere. And she considered the fate of men, that their lives flicker up and are extinguished again. And she thought to herself, “How selfish am I in my grief! Death is common to all; yet in this valley of desolation there is a path that leads him to immortality who has surrendered all selfishness.”**





**The Buddha said, “The life of mortals in this world is troubled and brief and combined with pain. For there is not any means by which those that have been born can avoid dying; after reaching old age there is death; of such a nature are living beings. As ripe fruits are early in danger of falling, so mortals when born are always in danger of death. As all earthen vessels made by the potter end in being broken, so is the life of mortals. Both young and adult, both those who are fools and those who are wise, all fall into the power of death; all are subject to death.**



**“Of those who, overcome by death, depart from life, a father cannot save his son, nor kinsmen their relations. Mark! while relatives are looking on and lamenting deeply, one by one mortals are carried off, like an ox that is led to the slaughter. So the world is afflicted with death and decay, therefore the wise do not grieve, knowing the terms of the world.**





**“Not from weeping nor from grieving will anyone obtain peace of mind; on the contrary, his pain will be the greater and his body will suffer. He will make himself sick and pale, yet the dead are not saved by his lamentation. He who seeks peace should draw out the arrow of lamentation, and complaint, and grief. He who has drawn out the arrow and has become composed will obtain peace of mind; he who has overcome all sorrow will become free from sorrow, and be blessed.”**

# I. A Guide to Coping with the Death of a Loved One



**Martha is having difficulty sleeping lately and no longer enjoys doing things with her friends. Martha lost her husband of 26 years to cancer a month ago.**

**Anya, age 17, doesn't feel like eating and spends the days in her room crying. Her grandmother recently died.**

**Both of these individuals are experiencing grief. Grief is an emotion natural to all types of loss or significant change.**



## **Feelings of Grief**

**Although grief is unique and personal, a broad range of feelings and behaviours are commonly experienced after the death of a loved one.**





- **Sadness.** This is the most common, and it is not necessarily manifested by crying.
- **Anger.** This is one of the most confusing feelings for a survivor. There may be frustration at not being able to prevent the death, and a sense of not being able to exist without the loved one.
- **Guilt and Self-reproach.** People may believe that they were not kind enough or caring enough to the person who died, or that the person should have seen the doctor sooner.



- **Anxiety.** An individual may fear that she/he won't be able to care for herself/himself.
- **Loneliness.** There are reminders throughout the day that a partner, family member or friend is gone. For example, meals are no longer prepared the same way, phone calls to share a special moment don't happen.
- **Fatigue.** There is an overall sense of feeling tired.
- **Disbelief:** This occurs particularly if it was a sudden death.



## **Helping Others Who Are Experiencing Grief**

**When a friend, loved one, or co-worker is experiencing grief—how can we help? It helps to understand that grief is expressed through a variety of behaviours .**

**Reach out to others in their grief, but understand that some may not want to accept help and will not share their grief. Others will want to talk about their thoughts and feelings or reminisce.**

**Be patient and let the grieving person know that you care and are there to support him or her.**



## II. Good Grief

### AMITAI ETZIONI



Soon after my wife died — her car slid off an icy road in 1985 — a school psychologist warned me that my children and I were not mourning in the right way. We felt angry; the proper first stage, he said, is denial.

In late August this year, my 38-year-old son, Michael, died suddenly in his sleep, leaving behind a 2-year-old son and a wife expecting their next child.

There is no set form for grief, and no ‘right’ way to express it. There seems to be an expectation that, after a great loss, we will progress systematically through the well-known stages of grief. It is wrong, we are told, to jump to anger — or to wallow too long in this stage before moving towards acceptance.



**But I was, and am, angry. To make parents bury their children is wrong; to have both my wife and son taken from me, for forever and a day, is cruel beyond words.**



**A relative from Jerusalem, who is a psychiatrist, brought some solace by citing the maxim: ‘We are not to ask why, but what.’ The ‘what’ is that which survivors in grief are bound to do for one another. Following that advice, my family, close friends and I keep busy, calling each other and giving long answers to simple questions like, “How did your day go today?” We try to avoid thinking about either the immediate past or the bereft future. We take turns playing with Max, Michael’s two-year-old son. Friends spend nights with the young widow, and will be among those holding her hand when the baby is born.**

**Focusing on what we do for one another is the only consolation we can find.**



**THANK YOU**