

**First I went following the fragrant grasses
Now I return chasing the falling leaves**

These lines are from the thirty-sixth case of the *Blue Cliff Record*.

One day the priest Chōsha Keijin went for a long walk in the mountains. When he returned to the monastery, the head monk was waiting for him. The monk asked, “Master, where have you been? There are many disciples gathered here for training – what are you doing, just wandering around?”

Chōsha responded, “I went to the mountain to play a little. The cherry and the peach flowers were so beautiful, and while I was looking at them they pulled me right into the deep mountains, and then the clover and dandelions were blooming and the butterflies were dancing, and while looking at them, I arrived home again.” He was saying that the meaning of life is found in the encounters of each and every moment. Although we need to have goals, if we aren’t acting playfully within each and every second of realizing our goals – if we think, while in the midst of living and struggling, that we have to wait until later to play – then we aren’t realizing the true value of life.

People who work from Monday to Friday often think they have to wait until the weekend to be happy. After five days of suffering through our work, we try to make up for that with two days of being happy – what kind of life is this? The samadhi of the Buddha isn’t about waiting for the future but about finding joy no matter where we are, no matter how difficult or miserable our circumstances. It is about living wholly and totally in each instant.

Our lives cannot be lived in a vague way. We have to keep our sight on each footstep and live fully and thoroughly in each second. Life isn’t about enduring pain every day and looking forward to something else that will come along later and far away. When each and every moment is true, when our goal is to have a deep worth, to be complete, then in each and every moment we will find deep wonder and amazement and joy, and the value of life will be clear. We must hold this kind of life precious.