

A Life Filled with Love is Virtuous

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Teachings by Dharma Master Cheng Yen

“In this world, other than what pertains to our own lives, what else is there for us to claim as time’s accomplishment? What else can we talk about that has to do with the truth regarding people, matters, and things? The Buddha often talks about the concept of emptiness. The reality is that nothing can truly abide in this world forever because everything is continuously going through decay and disappearance, then eliminated. Hence, there is ‘suffering, causation, cessation, and the path.’”

All things and matters in the world follow the law of nature and of the Three Principles and the Four states. They become broken down and depleted with time. At the Volunteer Morning Assembly on September 27, Dharma Master Cheng Yen reminded everyone not to be attached to our materialistic desires. Instead, we ought to make good use of the short time we have in this world to do things that benefit sentient beings.

“This is what I say every day. Not only do I talk about it when I am sitting here, everywhere I go, I also remind myself to be vigilant. I remind myself that time passes quickly. So we must work hard to sustain the current moment and the people, matters, and things that are part of it.”

Be Self Vigilant and Aspire Our Bodhicitta. Leaving Virtues in This World is Wondrous Existence.

The minds of ordinary beings are filled with defilement. They have not yet understood the true principles of this world so they always follow their greed and seek to fulfill their desires. Even in their final moments, they still carry some parts of their desires in their consciousness and take their habitual tendencies with them into the next lifetime.

Recently, Master Cheng Yen continuously reminded Tzu Chi volunteers to take a look at their lives and see how much they have contributed to society. Those that feel that they have contributed greatly should continue to influence and encourage more people to join in. On the other hand, for volunteers that feel that they have not contributed greatly, then they should encourage themselves to change their ways and show their care for society through action.

“How many good deeds have we done in this lifetime? How much Dharma did we take in? Do we have faith in it? If we have faith, then did we make any vows? If we did, then did we realize our vows through action? We may think, ‘I will do so when I have time, when my business is more stable and when my grandchildren are all grown up.’ In truth, these are simply excuses. When we are walking the Bodhisattva Path and vowing to follow it, life after life, though we may have faith and vows, without realizing our vows by putting it into action, we would be standing still. Without taking a step forward, we would remain in the same spot. Without taking a step back, we cannot go forward.”

Even walking with small steps, one can eventually cross the vast desert. Even small droplets of

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water can accumulate into majestic seas. As long as we are willing to begin, we can always add value to our lives and make a great difference.

“There is no need to fear that our good deeds are too insignificant or not enough. We must be enthusiastic and willing to do good deeds, say good words. We reap what we sow. Even if we only save up little by little, a dollar can turn into ten dollars, then into hundreds and thousands of dollars. We can still accumulate greatly from small amounts.”

Let Us Connect with Suffering Sentient Beings and Settle Their Lives and Minds. Be Living Bodhisattvas in a Refreshing State.

Looking around the world, there are many disasters. Though Tzu Chi’s charity footprint has reached 126 countries, there are still many places in suffering where we do not have the right causes and conditions to be able to go and help. Tzu Chi volunteers everywhere will begin relief work where ever they go, where ever they can reach. This is all for the sake of bringing smiles to the faces of the suffering.

“There are so many disasters happening in the world. Sometimes it feels frustrating that there are places that we simply cannot access. Seeing such news reports, all we can do is sigh. For example, the current state of Afghanistan, with its chaos, civil war, external issues and so on makes life very difficult for its citizens. This is suffering! Every day, when I see news like this, I can only lament since it is a place that we cannot reach. However, if we look back, anywhere Tzu Chi volunteers can be, though there are still suffering people, those people feel grateful and can freely smile and be at ease.”

This is just like how in the Philippines, many people are effected by the COVID-19 pandemic, resulting in their lives becoming even more difficult than before. Tzu Chi volunteers began implementing a relief plan to offer food and hope.

“As long as we have the will, nothing will be difficult. For the Philippines, they began their relief efforts this year (in 2021). They were very mindful and helped the poor and the sick. From places that are close by to places that are far away, Tzu Chi volunteers traveled to provide relief goods and gave with love. Truly, when there are Tzu Chi volunteers, bodhisattvas manifest to help relief and transform sentient beings and alleviate their suffering. This is what comes to mind when I think about Tzu Chi. Tzu Chi volunteers have faith, vows, and practice. We all have the ability to give. Truly, there are many very touching stories.”

Doing good deeds is not just a privilege of the rich; anyone who has the will can take part to give. Tzu Chi volunteers in the Philippines not only brought hope to those effected by the pandemic, they also aspired them to do more with their lives. During relief distributions, volunteers also shared about how Tzu Chi got started and that the love came from all over the world. They guided the care recipients to always make good vows. Even though one’s circumstances may be limited, small bits of giving can help those in need when everyone works together.

“I saw some Tzu Chi volunteers sharing about the spirit of the bamboo banks. Where ever Tzu

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Chi volunteers go, they will always introduce Tzu Chi and talk about the stories of Tzu Chi, regardless of which part of society the crowd is from. Doing Tzu Chi work is not the privilege of the rich. When it comes to the spirit of the 50 cents and bamboo banks, volunteers always share about Tzu Chi and the relief work we do while they are riding a pedicab or taxi. The drivers are always very touched. Doing good deeds is not the privilege of the rich; everyone can do it. So, these drivers will also follow in the footsteps of Tzu Chi volunteers and fundraise using the bamboo piggy banks.”

When everyone works hard and willingly gives with love, less fortunate people can receive help. However, since the world is full of suffering, we need more people to do the work. When we create more blessings with our love, we can provide more opportunities for suffering sentient beings to be helped.

“Everyone in the world is rich with love. You cannot run out of love. Plus, the more you give, the richer you feel. This is because when we look back to evaluate our own lives, we realize that we do not lack anything and we are willing to give. It is difficult to quantify this but we can evaluate ourselves with how filled our hearts feel. ‘The virtuous attain.’ These are the virtues we gain for the good deeds we do. When it comes to the Bodhisattva Path, let us be mindful to build and widen it. When we put to action and help those that are suffering, what they receive are material goods and what we receive is Dharma joy from helping people. Virtuous Dharma teaches us to go towards the direction of kindness and give of ourselves. Seeing others helped brings bodhisattvas joy. This is the Bodhisattva Path.”

Master Cheng Yen hopes that everyone can evaluate our own lives’ values. If our lives are truly valuable, let us praise ourselves. If others’ lives have value, we should praise them as well. This is how to be in the bodhisattva’s refreshing state.

From Dharma Master Cheng Yen's Talks at the September 27th Morning Volunteer Assembly
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