

True Blessings

Written by Tzu Chi Foundation
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[[Master's Teachings](#)]

When people talk about having blessings, they often consider it to mean having money or good fortune. However, the Buddha teaches us that true blessings are having wholesome friends, the opportunity to give of oneself, and the opportunity to learn the Dharma. The blessings we have now come from the good deeds we've done and the goodness we've been nurturing in our past lives. This is illustrated in a sutra story.

One day in Srovasti, King Prasenajit brought his ministers along with him to pay respect to the Buddha. With utmost sincerity, the king asked the Buddha if he could make an offering to him.

"Dear King, you make offerings very often. Why are you so formal this time?" the Buddha asked.

"I sincerely hope people in my country could see the Buddha and follow your Dharma teachings as well as uphold the precepts you've set. Then my country will be very orderly and peaceful," replied the king.

The Buddha smiled and gladly accepted the offer. Overjoyed, the king rushed back to the palace and ordered preparations to be made. The offering was so grand that the banquet extended outside the palace, and the Buddha arrived with more than a thousand monastic disciples. The king offered a sumptuous feast which drew a massive crowd of people, all gathered to witness this impressive event.

After the offering, the Buddha gave a Dharma talk. Among the audience were a merchant and his friend. While listening to the Buddha, the merchant was filled with joy; he thought what the Buddha said was full of life's truth. Seeing the king respected the Buddha so much, the Buddha must be someone with great virtues and had accumulated enormous blessings and wisdom.

However, his friend did not think highly of the Buddha; he thought the Buddha was merely a spiritual cultivator. In his mind he conjured up the image of a bull pulling a cart where the Buddha is the bull and the Sangha is the cart. The bull pulls the cart around seeking alms and receiving offerings. He was full of disrespect and scoffed at the whole thing.

When the event was over, the merchant and his friend left the city. At the border, they saw a pavilion and decided to take a rest in it. The merchant was still absorbed with the Buddha and his teachings. He greatly admired the Buddha because the king respected him so much, and he wished he could have such grand blessing as the king who had made offering to the Buddha. His heart was full of piety.

His disrespectful friend, however, was uninspired; he took out his wine and started drinking. As the wine travelled down to his stomach, he began to feel the effect and was soon drunk. He

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sang and shouted wildly, then stumbled out of the pavilion, and fell down onto the road. Just then, a caravan of travelling merchants riding on bull carts passed by and trampled on him. He could not escape in time and was crushed.

The merchant who was absorbed in the Dharma was startled by the loud noises. Realizing his friend was not around, he went searching for him and discovered the gruesome remains on the road. He became very afraid. "If I go home without my friend," he thought, "will the people think that I murdered him for his money?" This thought kept him from going home, and he wandered into a neighboring country.

This small neighboring country had recently lost its king. Before the king passed away, he instructed his ministers, "Once I die, as I have no children, you won't have a king. However, my stallion has a special ability. It will choose the next king for me. If he sees someone and kneels down before him, that person will be your new king. He shall govern this country and lead the people." Having said this, the king died.

Following the king's instruction, the ministers took the stallion out to find their new king. They travelled around the neighboring countries. When the stallion spotted the unfortunate merchant who had lost his friend, it led the ministers toward him. Standing in front of the merchant, the stallion kneeled down. "We've found our king!" the ministers were astonished.

Very courteously, the ministers explained to the merchant the late king's wish and invited him to the palace. Sitting on the throne, the merchant was terrified. He thought to himself, "How did this happen? I'm only a merchant. What have I done to deserve this position? How do I go about governing this country? How do I lead these ministers?"

After he had collected his thoughts and calmed down, he decided: "I shall seek my answer from the Buddha. He'll explain this karmic affinity for me and tell me what to do."

He told the ministers his wish, and they went to see the Buddha at the city of Rajagriha. After paying respect to the Buddha, the merchant spoke of his conundrum and asked for an answer.

The Buddha smiled and explained, "You have this affinity to become a king because you have accumulated blessings and wisdom from your numerous lives in the past. Aside from giving of yourself with love and kindness, your persistence in spiritual cultivation has never wavered throughout your lives. When you heard the Dharma, you were joyful and were inspired to cultivate compassion and wisdom. This is your blessing."

The Buddha further explained, "The blessings one has created will follow him like his shadow, no matter where he goes. Now your karmic affinity has ripened leading you to be a king. If you always harbor kindness, love, and respect, then the ministers will support you."

Upon hearing this, the leading minister said to the merchant, "Dear Sir, if you take on this kingship, we'll follow and support you in guiding the country with the wholesome teachings of the Dharma."

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This story shows us that it truly takes blessings to encounter the Dharma in this life. We should seize the opportunity to put the teachings into practice, to create more blessings, and to continue nurturing kindness in our heart.

From Dharma Master Cheng Yen's Talks

Compiled into English by the Jing Si Abode English Editorial Team, with the help of Tzu Chi volunteers