

Learning the Buddha's Great Compassion

by Rev. T. Kenjitsu Nakagaki (Sensei)

"Don't Miss it!!! - This may be your last chance."

"If not for the most favorable karmic combination in one's past lives, how could one ever come to cherish a faith in the Pure Land and live it accordingly? If one should miss this opportunity through being beclouded by a veil of doubt, one may have to wait in vain for another numberless kalpas."

(Preface of "Kyogyosho-Monrui" by Shinran Shonin, translated by D.T. Suzuki)

"Oh, I should have done it at that time!" We all have had such experiences of regret in our lives. In the Buddha's teachings, the present moment is always emphasized, which results in a life without regret. Today is the first day and the last day, which is unrepeatable. Now is the first moment and the last moment, which is unrepeatable. Similar to each point of the circle is the beginning and the end at the same time. Therefore, we have to take good care of the present moment that we have. Each moment of "now" is a precious "now."

How can we fully live the moment? The Buddha says that in order to do so we need to encounter the universal truth of the Dharma. So, once we have an opportunity to touch the Buddha-Dharma, we should not let it pass by in front of us. Through the twenty-five hundred years' history of Buddhism, we have witnessed the teachings of the Buddha as giving great benefit to countless people. The Buddha-Dharma are real treasures, which give true happiness, peace and fulfillment to human life. The Buddha says, "To live a single day hearing a true and right teaching is better than to live a hundred years without knowing such teaching."

In our school of Pure Land Buddhism, the constantly reciting the Nembutsu has been a basic practice. Master Shinran Shonin says, "Those who deeply entrust themselves to Amida's Vow of Great Compassion should constantly say the Nembutsu (Namo-amidabu) whether they are wake or sleeping." Saying the Nembutsu means that one lives each moment in one with the Buddha, that is, one always meets true wisdom and compassion of Amida Buddha in the Nembutsu. The character of "Nem 念" of Nembutsu consists of two parts: Now (今) and Mindful Heart (心). "Butsu" is a Buddha. So, the Nembutsu means that the Buddha is always present in the mindful heart.

In the spring, I enjoy walking in a park, where I find many beautiful flowers blooming. When I look carefully on the ground, countless tiny flowers are blooming as well. I sometimes wonder how many of us really appreciate such tiny flowers? Many people may pass through the park without realizing those flowers exist. In the same way, many people live their lives without realizing the true quality of the Dharma. Sometimes, we need to stop and look carefully, then, we may find a beauty of our lives as in a small flower.

Days come and days go.

Open eyes to see it.

Nights come and nights go

Open the mind to realize it.

Tiny and trivial flowers are here living this moment with full energy.

May we open our mindful heart to our own life and each life.

I am here now with the Nembutsu,

Smiling at our own life

Saying the Name of the Buddha.

I am here living

Timeless time of NOW in gassho! (by Shaku Kenjitsu)