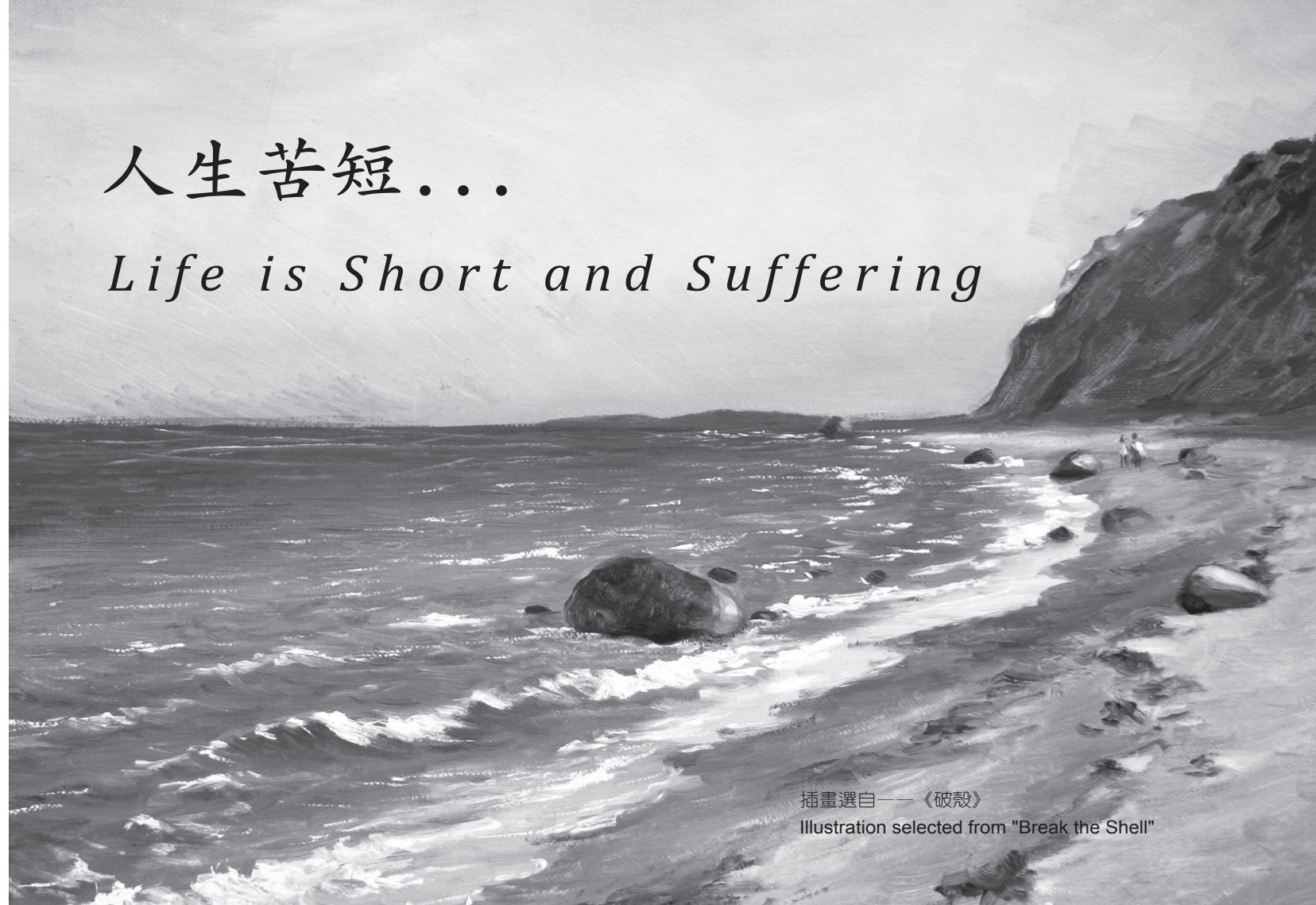


人生苦短...

Life is Short and Suffering



插畫選自——《破殼》

Illustration selected from "Break the Shell"

舟舟講於2014年1月28日萬佛聖城大殿

A Talk by Zhou-Zhou on January 28 at the Buddha Hall of CTTB

諸佛菩薩、上人、諸位善知識，晚上好！馬上就是除夕了，末學沒什麼喜慶的事跟大家講，就跟大家分享一下近期對「人生苦短」的感觸。

每過一次新年，年紀就長大一歲，生命也就短了一年。小時候總覺得每一天都是那麼長，覺得「一輩子」這個詞很遙遠。慢慢長大了，每一天好像縮短了似的。現在在萬佛城，時間對於每一個人都是最寶貴的，一不留神，光陰就偷偷溜掉了。好像生命被誰按了快進，日昇緊緊挨着日落。

All Buddhas and Bodhisattvas, Venerable Master and all Dharma friends, good evening! Even though Chinese New Year's eve is drawing near, I don't have any celebratory words to share with everyone. Rather I would like to share my recent contemplations on the topic of "life is short and suffering".

With every new year, our age becomes one year older and our lives become one year shorter. When I was little, every day was so long, so much so that the phrase "a life time" seemed so far away. As I grew up, the days seemed like they became shorter. Now at CTTB, time is the most precious thing for all of us and it passes away without us even noticing it. It is like life is being fast forwarded; sunrise is immediately followed by sunset.

說到長大，讓末學想起剛來聖城常住的時候。說也奇怪，不知道為什麼，大概是繞念時，末學隨眾從後面一步步往前走，一抬眼，驚呆了，心中不由感慨：「天吶！萬佛城不一樣，萬佛城裏的人也不一樣！怎麼都這麼巨大！」末學感覺自己就像小矮人似的，因為當時看到每個人都很高很高。尤其是滿身金黃的法師們，給末學的印象很深，當時還有點被嚇到似的，真的很高！一個月後，末學就病了蠻久，應該不是被嚇的。

生病時的苦痛，大家也都深有體會。這次禪七呢，女眾禪堂裏的咳嗽聲，像交響樂似地此起彼伏，有時還會夾雜些其它各種伴奏的聲音。為了珍惜這難得一遇的禪七，有些咳嗽很嚴重的也不捨得離開禪堂，即便在起七前，法師也提醒可以去祖師殿，可是禪堂的魅力太大了。所以，想好好修行，這個臭皮囊還是得讓它健康一些纔好立功。

這次禪七呢，末學雖然沒有咳嗽，但是卻有另一番皮肉之苦，那便是佛七正日燃香供佛的香疤。其實早在佛七中，香疤都差不多好了；可是佛七圓滿日那天上午的繞念坐念後，紅色的結痂就一下子變白了，裏面都是膿水，這對於末學來說是史無前例的。接下來禪期就很悲慘了，尤其是第一週，每次離開禪堂回寮房都要把上面那層連皮帶肉揭開，把裏面的膿水血水擦掉；然後很快就有了新的結痂，可是每次進禪堂打坐後，回寮房一看，又是化膿的血水；所以只得又把上面一層撕開、擦乾，然後等著再結痂、再化膿、再清理……。那陣子胳膊腫得像麵包，最多的一天之內，這樣結痂撕開重複了三、四次。

末學就想，大概是因為打坐的影響，所以那些香疤才長不好，那就歇兩天不進禪堂，等胳膊好了再去；反正去了，也總在參胳膊。這時，突然想起「四種清淨明誨」中的經文：「若我滅後，其有比丘發心決定修三摩地，能於如來形像之前，身然一燈，燒一指節，及於身上薰一香炷，我說是人無始宿債一時酬畢，長揖世間，永脫諸漏。」禪七結束時，這些傷疤竟然好得跟什麼都沒發生似的。

禪期的最後一天，末學收到外公肺癌晚期的消息；因已擴散到骨髓，所以就離開醫院停止了一切藥物治療。外公向來還算魁梧硬朗，養母帶大的外公很孝順，又從不挑剔衣食住行，工

Speaking of growing up, I can't help but thinking of when I first came to live at CTTB. Strangely, during the walking recitation, I was following everyone step by step, but when I looked up, I felt like a tiny person because everyone seemed so tall, especially the Dharma Masters with golden robes. I was in shock. I said to myself "Oh my gosh! CTTB is different, and the people at CTTB are different, everyone is huge!" It left such a deep impression on my mind that I was even a little bit scared! After one month, I became sick for a long time; although I don't think it was from the shock.

Everyone is familiar with the suffering of sickness. This Chan session the sound of coughing in the women's Chan Hall was like a symphony going up and down with the rhythm of other sounds. For the sake of the Chan session, some people with severe coughs left the Chan Hall. Even before the session, the Dharma Master said people can also go sit in the Patriarch Hall but the charm of the Chan Hall was too strong. Therefore if you want to cultivate, you still have to make sure this stinky skin bag is healthy so you can apply your effort.

Although I did not cough during this Chan session, I suffered other bodily pains. The actual day of Amitabha Buddha's birthday the Dharma Master helped me to burn incense on my arm to make an offering to the Buddha. On the last day of the Buddha recitation session the scab was almost healed, but just after sitting recitation the red scab became white and filled with pus. This had never happened to me before. The following days of Chan session were very difficult for me, especially the first week. Every day when I left the Chan Hall I would go to my room so I could open up my wound and clean the pus. Although a new layer of scab would form quickly after a day of meditation, when I would get back to my room to examine it, it would be filled with pus again. So once again I would have to open the scab and clean it up. I found myself going back and forth again and again; some days I had to clean it three or four times a day.

At first, I thought, maybe it is because of meditation that the wound is not healing properly, maybe I should stop going to Chan Hall for a couple of days. I had the thought, even if I do go in, I will just be thinking about this arm anyways. But then I suddenly remembered the verses on the Four Clear and Definitive Instructions on Purity: "I affirm that, after my nirvana, a Bhikshu whose resolve in the practice of samadhi is unshakable can, in a single moment repay his debts from all his previous lives since time without beginning by burning lamp-oil on his body before an image of the Buddha, or else by burning off a part of one of his fingers, or else by burning a piece of incense on his body. Then he will be able to bid a final farewell to this world and be forever free of outflows." After the Chan session, the scab was completely healed as if nothing had happened.

On the last day of Chan session, I got news that my grandfather was in the late stages of terminal lung cancer. It had already spread into

作更是以身作則，也不以公謀私；甚至有提升的機會外公都會讓給年輕人。如今的他皮包骨頭，已經站不起來，因為骨頭已經像蜂窩狀，床上多鋪了幾層棉被，可還是會覺得痛。

媽媽說，家人做了一份假的檢查結果給外公外婆，不敢讓他們知道。我問為什麼？媽媽說：「怕死呀！」這答案，讓末學再說不出話來。這生老病死，有哪一個是不苦的呢？死是因為有生，為什麼只怕死，而從沒聽過怕生呢？

之後的每天，末學就常常在心裏對外公說：「外公，不怕！」可是回頭想想，自己怕嗎？也許會說不怕，可是如果有一天真的面對死亡，我準備好了嗎？我可以放下一切只念彌陀聖號？可以一心不亂求願往生極樂嗎？

記得禪七晚間聽的錄音開示中，一位弟子請問上人，《彌陀經》中佛說若一日、若二日、若三日、直至若七日，能一心不亂，即得往生極樂世界，為什麼有個時間限定？上人回答說，這個不是時間限定，而是說在這個佛七期間，這七天之內，一天也好、兩天也好，你能念佛念到一心不亂，將來就一定會生到極樂世界去的。並不是說你一定要一天或者七天都一心不亂，也不是說七天之後一直一心不亂，只要你能有一心不亂的念佛，這就種下了將來一定會往生極樂的因。

由此想來，往生極樂世界其實也不難，只要能一心不亂地念佛。可是，眾生念念不住，代謝生滅；當靜坐下來，更是看到那不勝數計的妄想紛飛；每一個妄想都是一個「苦」——讓自己不得清靜、不得自在的苦。而這個世界上最不缺的就是苦，可我們眾生卻總喜歡抓住每一個苦緊緊不放；於是，「一心不亂」就變得好難。所以，每一次打坐、每一次經行、每一次念經持咒拜佛，都要練習是否能多一分「專一其心」。每一次失敗，每一次從頭再來，希望有一天自己可以和「一心不亂」成為形影不離的好朋友。

也祝願大家在新的一年里裏都能常得清淨，六時吉祥。阿彌陀佛！

the bones, so he left the hospital and stopped all treatment. My grandfather had always been a very strong and healthy person. My grandpa was raised by his adoptive mother and was a very filial child. He was never picky about food, clothing or living conditions. At work, he was a role model; he never abused his power for any personal gain. He even passed up promotions so that the younger generations would have the opportunity for advancement. But now, my grandfather is so emaciated that he is just like skin and bones. What's more, because his bones now have become so infected with cancer so that they are like a bee hive, he feels pain even when someone places a few more layers of blankets on his body.

My mother told me, they presented a fake test result to my grandparents so they would not know the truth. I asked why? She said "because they are afraid of dying". This left me speechless. Birth, old, sickness and death; which one of them is not suffering? There is death because there was birth. Why are people only worried about death? Not once have I heard them say they worry about birth.

After that, I started to say in my mind everyday: "Grandfather, don't be afraid!" But then I thought about myself, would I be afraid? I might say no, but when I really face death one day, will I be ready? Will I be able to let go of everything and only be mindful of Amitabha's holy name and single mindedly wish for rebirth in the land of ultimate bliss?

I remember during the Chan session's recorded lecture, a disciple asked the Venerable Master about a passage in the *Amitabha Sutra*. The Buddha said "If one can be single minded for one day or two days or three days even until seven days, then one can be reborn in the pure land." The disciple's question was why is there a time limit? The Venerable Master said: "This is not a time limit. Rather it is saying during the seven days of Buddha recitation session, for even just one or two days, if you can be single minded, you will in the future definitely be reborn in the western pure land. It is not saying that you have to have one whole day or seven whole days with a single mind. It is also not saying that you have to be single minded after the seven days. As long as you have a single mind when you recite the Buddha's name, you have planted the seed for rebirth in the western pure land."

From here, we should know that it is not very difficult to go to the western pure land, as long as we can recite the Buddha's name single mindedly. However, we living beings have thoughts that go out ceaselessly. When we sit in meditation, we can even see those countless thoughts flying around. Every single one of them is "suffering". These thoughts make us ill at ease; they do not purify or produce peace. Suffering is the least thing that is lacking in this world but we living beings are particularly adept and happy at grabbing tightly to it. Therefore becoming "single minded" is such a difficult thing to do. So every time I meditate, walk, recite sutras and mantras, or bow to the Buddhas, I strive to be single minded. Every time I fail I will try again. One day I hope that I will become best friends with the single mind that is not confused.

I also wish everyone peace, purity and prosperity everyday! Amitabha! ❀