

Profit and Merit

Hello, my name is Yugen Saito.

Today I would like to talk about "profit" and "merit".

Most people would read "rieki" when presented with the word "rieki," but this word has a much longer history of being read as "riyaku". It would be more familiar to say "go-riyaku" with "go" indicating respect. The meaning of "rieki" and "riyaku" are completely different.

Rieki means profit in general, so it involves profit and loss, whereas riyaku means benefit.

Riyaku, on the other hand, is given by God and Buddha to any person without discrimination, and no one loses anything.

Furthermore, riyaku is the result of receiving good favors from strangers to the gods and Buddha.

Also, while rieki can be predicted, riyaku cannot be guaranteed in advance.

A similarly nuanced term, riyaku refers to the benefits that come as a result of one's actions. Unlike riyeki, there is no immediate reward, and the word is also used with the implication that, for example, the effects will show up long into the future in the generations of descendants.

Since the recipient is a god or Buddha, his or her intentions cannot be measured. So, for example, we cannot be sure when and where the results of our actions, such as reading sutras or making offerings, will appear. Therefore, they may not be passed on to you as merit, but to a stranger in an unknown place as "riyaku.

Even so, I think it is the attitude of those who walk the path of the Buddha to be prepared to do this good deed, or rather, to do it because of that.

Let me tell you a story about merit.

Around 500 A.D., Emperor Wu, the seventh emperor of the previous Han Dynasty, was the most cultured and cultured man of his time, and he was very passionate about Buddhism, donating and supporting it in many ways. This Emperor Wu was a renowned monk from India.

He met Master Daruma, the founder of Zen Buddhism in China.

He said, "I have built temples, copied sutras, and helped monks. What merit do you have?" Daruma replied, "What kind of merit?"

Daruma replied, "There is no merit".

The emperor Wu was expecting praise, so he asked, "What! Why is there no merit"? He asked, "Why don't you have any merits"?

Then Master Bodhidharma replied, "They are just a small retribution of karma in this lost world".

They are illusions. They are just a small retribution of karma in this lost world and are illusory.

This is the famous "no merit" of Daruma.

Well, what the Emperor Wu did was a noble act, and from a social point of view, it may have been meritorious.

However, historians also point out that the emperor Wu's excessive protection and support of Buddhism led to the deterioration of the country's finances and the decline of its national power. What was easy and convenient for the monks may have been negative and meritless for the common people. The original meaning of the word has been inverted.

Most people live a serious life in the world, but most people are not so successful. There are people who have to suffer through disasters and car accidents for which they have no responsibility, and there are others who are able to swim through the world by doing things just right.

That seems to be the way of the world.

The emperor Wu, who was thinking about success or failure in such a world, said to the emperor: "If you are a true Buddhist, you will be able to succeed in the world".

If you are a true Buddhist, you must transcend the world. If you are a true Buddhist, you should transcend the world, and think not of the success that will return to you now, but of the merits and benefits that will extend into the future. I believe that this is what Master Bodhidharma was trying to teach us.

When we look at various phenomena in the world, we think of the law of direct cause and effect, but we should think bigger. Our good deeds, even if they do not come back to us, will benefit someone else. It may be a descendant or a complete stranger.

If we do this, then one day, in our selfless hearts, which have forgotten Rieki, a wonderful Riyaku will suddenly and unexpectedly descend upon us like a butterfly.

The postcard sermon series was given by Rev. Yugen Saito of Hagyu-ji temple . Translation and voice in English by Hirokazu Kosaka.