

# 1. Roots of the Tree, Source of the Waters: The Heart-Method of the Three Treasures

Congratulations to all of you -- today you have received the Heavenly Dao. This is entirely a matter of affinity. As the old saying goes: "Those with affinity can meet across a thousand miles; those without affinity will not encounter each other even face to face."

What does it mean to have affinity or to lack it? A person with affinity possesses good roots and moral virtue. Even from a thousand miles away, such a person can come to seek and obtain the Great Dao. A person without affinity, even if they live right next door -- even the very closest of kin -- cannot be ferried across. Because their conduct is not upright, even if you bring them here, they will refuse to kneel and seek. For this reason, the distinction between those with affinity and those without arises.

What have we sought today? We have sought the primordial Great Dao descended from Heaven -- the True Transmission of Nature and Principle. This Heavenly Dao did not come into being only now. It has existed since antiquity. In ancient times, however, the Great Dao was transmitted singly and bestowed upon one person at a time. It was not given universally.

Now, in the Final Catastrophe of the Three Eras, people's conscience has changed from what it was in ancient times. Because too many sins have been committed and too much evil done, Heaven is wrathful, and eighty-one kinds of heavenly disasters descend upon the world all at once. All the immortals and buddhas of the heavens, unable to bear this in their hearts, knelt and implored the God of Luminous Radiance to save the good and faithful. Therefore Heaven opened its grace: the True Dao descended into the world, and the great universal ferrying was opened wide. Heaven specially commanded the Holy Teacher and Yuehui Bodhisattva to descend in reverse incarnation into the earthly realm, to receive the Heavenly Mandate, and to universally ferry the Three Realms. Good men and faithful women who have affinity may all receive and hear the Heavenly Dao.

That we are able to seek and obtain the Great Dao today is truly the fortune of three lifetimes and the accumulated cultivation of many past lives. Since antiquity, those who cultivated the Dao abandoned their families, gave up their livelihoods, traveled a thousand miles to visit an enlightened master, and journeyed ten thousand miles to seek the oral formula. They cultivated merit and established virtue. Only when three thousand merits were fulfilled and eight hundred fruits completed would Heaven secretly dispatch immortals and buddhas to offer guidance. Of those who could attain the Dao, out of a hundred, it was difficult to find even one.

Nowadays, seeking Dao is far too easy. In the past, Patriarch Lü once said: "A human body is hardest to obtain; to be born in the Central Land is harder still. The True Dao and an enlightened

master are yet harder to encounter. Having obtained a human body and heard the Great Dao, one must cultivate early and ascend early." These were originally the Four Difficulties, but now they have become the Four Easies. Today we spent a little money, bowed a few times, and obtained the Great Dao. But what everyone must understand is this: the primordial Great Dao cannot be bought with money. Because all of you possess this portion of buddha-affinity, your Introducer and Guarantor Masters expended countless words to persuade you, guide you, and ferry you here. Today they led you to seek the Great Dao, to kneel before the altar, to establish your great vows, and to guarantee that you are a person of upright conduct and clean standing -- a good person. You yourself, just now before the altar, also established a vow. Only then could you receive the pointing of the enlightened master. Without Introducer and Guarantor Masters to take their vows and provide their guarantee, even if you brought ten thousand taels of gold and wished to seek the Great Dao, it would be impossible.

This Great Dao does not require money. It seeks to save people -- to enable them to transcend birth and death, to escape catastrophe and avoid calamity. This is the Great Dao that since antiquity has never been lightly transmitted. Unless the Final Catastrophe of the Three Eras arrives, it does not descend. Unless one is a royal embryo, a primordial seed, one cannot receive the pointing transmission. Now the Third Era has arrived in accord with destiny. Good and evil must all be distinguished and judged. Dao and catastrophe descend into the world simultaneously. Maitreya, the Ancestral Teacher, presides over the Heavenly Governance. The Holy Teacher and Yuehui Bodhisattva together hold the Heavenly Mandate, universally ferrying the Three Realms and carrying out the Great Gathering on a grand scale. This is the primordial Great Dao, come in response to the time and in accord with destiny.

## The Three Treasures

Today we have received Dao. What have we received? Three treasures: the Pass, the Formula, and the Seal.

## First Treasure: The Mysterious Pass

The first treasure -- the place that was pointed to -- is called the Mysterious Pass. This is the gateway through which our spirit enters at birth and departs at death. It is also called Spirit Mountain, Spirit Platform, and the Seamless Lock. The Daoist tradition calls it the Gateway of the Mysterious Female. Jesus called it the Cross. Long ago, Zigong sighed and said: "The Master's literary refinement can be heard, but the Master's words on human nature and the Way of Heaven cannot be heard." Therefore the saying goes: "Reading through a thousand scriptures and ten thousand classics does not compare to one pointing from an enlightened master."

Today everyone must understand where this original nature resides. The sages of the Three Teachings all began their cultivation from this point and only then succeeded. Confucius said: "If one hears Dao in the morning, one may die in the evening and it is enough." What does "enough" mean here? It means one may be freed from the suffering of the cycle of rebirth. If people of the

world do not encounter the pointing of an enlightened master, their spirit cannot exit through this aperture. Therefore it is said: "The Mysterious Pass, the Isle of Penglai -- once opened by the touch, it is a priceless treasure."

The True Dao has true proof. In the future, when one reaches old age, at the time of passing and returning to emptiness, the face will appear as it did in life. The body and limbs will be soft as cotton. In winter the body will not stiffen, and in summer it will not decay. Having received this one aperture today, everyone can truly say they have gained a priceless treasure -- in one step, directly transcending to the Realm of Non-Ultimate Principle.

## Second Treasure: The Oral Formula

The second treasure, the oral formula, is the true words. The Great Dao is the wondrous Dao of the Three Ultimates. It universally ferries the Three Realms. Only because Maitreya, the Ancient Buddha, has come in accord with destiny do we receive this true word of Buddha.

Should you encounter great disasters or great calamities, silently recite the true words in your heart. Lao Mu will naturally command the immortals and buddhas to protect and shelter you, turning misfortune into blessing and transforming disaster into good fortune. (Lao Mu is the true sovereign of all spirits, who gave birth to heaven, to earth, and to all things.) Having received this formula today, you must not take it lightly. To take it lightly is to take lightly your own life and destiny. Guard it strictly. You must never casually speak it aloud.

## Third Treasure: The Combined Seal

The third treasure is the Combined Seal. "Zi and Hai interlocking, held embraced at the breast -- it can deliver one through the eighty-one great catastrophes." This is the ancient Combined Seal that Maitreya Buddha received from Lao Mu, and it can deliver one from the eighty-one great catastrophes.

Why are there such numbers? Because since the creation of heaven, it was established that ten buddhas would come in accord with destiny: seven to govern the world, and three to carry out the Gathering. Among the three, the first was Dipamkara Buddha, who descended into the world to universally ferry all beings. This was in the era of Fuxi, during the Blue-Green Era. He presided over the Heavenly Governance for fifteen hundred years, ferrying two hundred million buddha-children back to heaven. Because people's hearts were upright at that time, only nine catastrophes were sent down. The second universal ferrying came when Shakyamuni Buddha descended at the end of the Zhou Dynasty. People's hearts had greatly changed, and eighteen catastrophes were sent down. This was the Red Era. He presided over the Heavenly Governance for three thousand years, ferrying another two hundred million buddha-children to the West.

Now, in the Final Catastrophe of the Three Eras, Maitreya the Ancient Buddha presides over the Heavenly Governance, while the Holy Teacher and Yuehui Bodhisattva preside over the Dao

Governance -- universally ferrying the Three Realms. Because the people of the world have accumulated too much evil karma, eighty-one catastrophes are sent down. Adding the numbers from the Blue-Green and Red eras, the total comes to one hundred and eight catastrophes. The one hundred and eight beads of the Buddhist rosary -- that is the number of catastrophes.

Our Patriarch and Matriarch received the Heavenly Mandate and universally ferry the Three Realms. Above, they ferry the stars of the Milky Way. Below, they ferry the ghosts and spirits of the netherworld. In the middle, they ferry the good men and faithful women of the human world. If we had not encountered this time of the Final Catastrophe of the Three Eras, how could ordinary people like us ever have obtained such a supremely noble and precious Dao?

## Closing

In the more than sixty thousand years since heaven was opened, earth was separated, and humans were created -- living and dying, dying and living, turning in the cycle of rebirth -- the sins and karmic debts owed across accumulated lifetimes have become too many. Now Heaven has come to settle humanity's karmic debts. After receiving Dao, we must constantly study and understand its meaning. We must diligently cultivate merit and establish virtue in order to clear and repay the debts of many lifetimes. In the future, we may even elevate nine generations and redeem seven ancestors, all returning together to the Heavenly Hall.

We have received the Three Treasures today -- the Pass, the Formula, and the Seal. Remember this absolutely: upward, do not transmit them to parents; downward, do not transmit them to spouse or children. You must never casually reveal Heaven's secrets.

“ The time has come -- the White Era under the Third-Era heaven, universally ferrying the Three Realms, what excellent affinity! The enlightened master, in accord with destiny, hurries east and west, everywhere establishing altars, pointing the wondrous mystery. We earnestly urge those with affinity: awaken quickly! Swiftly seek the Great Dao and illuminate your original source. Receive Heaven's Three Secret Treasures; with a sincere heart cultivate and practice -- and become a sage or worthy.

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