

## Dalai Lama Assembly

I would like to make the wit and wisdom of the Dalai Lama the focus of the assembly this morning. The Dalai Lama is quite a character. The spiritual leader of Tibetan Buddhism, he has taken a central role in the lives of Buddhists and in non-violent resistance to the Chinese occupation of Tibet. He is considered to be the reincarnation of the first Dalai Lama in 1391 and is the 14<sup>th</sup> to have been recognised in that line of succession. So although in one sense he is 82 years old, he would probably regard himself as 626 years old.

One of the things that the Dalai Lama has done is make Tibetan Buddhism accessible to the world. His quirky sense of humour, charisma and skill in bringing ancient Buddhist principles into modern life have all made him instantly recognisable around the world. He seems to me to be one of the few examples of a genuinely wise person we have. So I thought I would take some of his advice to live by and share it with you this morning. Here is some wisdom from the Dalai Lama.

### **Take into account that great love and great achievements involve great risk**

Nothing important can be done without total commitment to it. You have to give yourself up to love completely – you have to throw yourself into the task you have set yourself. Being half-hearted won't do it. And that means that you must be prepared for loss. That should not stop you, it should spur you on. Great people, and I hope you want that of yourselves, live dangerously and accept that their determination and involvement mean that they can lose greatly and win greatly.

### **When you lose, don't lose the lesson**

Notice that the Dalai Lama does not say 'if you lose'. He says when you lose. We cannot all win all the time. We must be ready for failure and be prepared to run its risk. And from losing, we learn the most valuable lessons of all. The Japanese have a saying – "Nana korobi ya oki" It means 'fall down seven times and get up eight'. It is not the falling - or losing – that counts, it is what happens next. Do you get up and get on with it, adding a valuable life lesson to your wisdom? Or do you stay down and feel sorry for yourself? It is when we are tested by failure that we begin to understand ourselves and our character.

### **Remember that not getting what you want is sometimes a wonderful stroke of luck.**

May you be spared having all your dreams come true. You will find that what you think you want is not always what you should have. And further, in not getting what you want, you must become more inventive in converting what you have into what you want or in discovering that you really wanted something else all along.

### **Learn the rules so you know how to break them properly.**

I suppose that I ought to frown at this – but I'll tell you what I understand by it. The rules are important – that is why you need to know them. But for things to change and develop, we cannot always do what we did in the past. That is why the rules sometimes need to be broken, but in a thoughtful way, not in a silly or simply destructive way.

**Don't let a little dispute injure a great relationship.**

Friendship means more than you can know – companionship, camaraderie, trust, laughter and community all flow from it. Without it we are less than a whole person – with it we are more than we could otherwise be. So we should protect and nurture our friendships. They are more valuable than almost anything else in your life and will bring you more joy than any material possession.

**When you realize you've made a mistake, take immediate steps to correct it.**

Sounds obvious, doesn't it? Who would persist in ignoring an obvious mistake? But don't underestimate the power of pride. There are people who would rather carry on with something they know to be a mistake than admit they made a mistake. We must have the humility to know the truth and act upon it. When we do, we find that other people respect someone big enough to see the problem and make the necessary change much more than they admire someone who is stubborn.

**Spend some time alone every day.**

You need this – it recharges your batteries and refreshes you. Beware the person who cannot be alone or seeks continual distraction.

They are trying to hide from something in themselves. Solitude, in moderation, is a wonderful thing.

**Live a good, honourable life. Then when you get older and think back, you'll be able to enjoy it a second time.**

I imagine one of the worst things must be to look over what you have done with your life and feel ashamed of it. To have worked so hard, for so long and to have faced so many difficulties and think 'Was that it?' Or worse, to feel embarrassed or guilty. May I suggest that you do not allow it of yourselves. Only do things that you can remember with pride. Please don't do anything that you would be ashamed of if others found out.

**A loving atmosphere in your home is the foundation for your life.**

Love your family. Build your life upon it. Never underestimate your parents. One day, perhaps, you will be a husband and father. Be the man upon whom and around whom a happy home can be built.

**Judge your success by what you had to give up in order to get it.**

Sometimes we have to give up too much. If your job brings you wealth and power, but no time for family and love... what have you really gained?

And a final thought from the Dalai Lama, and this one is my personal favourite:

**Be kind whenever possible. It is always possible.**