

**St Margaret's Church,
Lee, London
Lent Lecture Series
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**'Values to Build a Better World'
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'We have to build a better man before we can build a better society.' **Paul Tillich**

'Try not to become a man of success, but a man of value.' - **Albert Einstein**

Values: To guard the hope, faith, love, courage, integrity, honesty, peace, justice, ecology, responsible leadership and humanity for the common good that can lead us forward, because they are the foundation for our greatest thoughts, actions, and the hope for our individual/collective sustainability and can never be cast asunder.

Revd Race, Friends, Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is wonderful to be here at this most beautiful and historical church. We gather here at the kind invitation of my dear friend, Alan Race, Rector, and a GCGI Senior Ambassador and Advisor, grateful for his warm words of introduction, hospitality, support and encouragement.

Before anything else, I wish to give all present in this hall a gift from my heart, in the form of a great Celtic blessing:

The Warmth of the sun to you

The Light of the moon to you

The Silver of the stars to you

The Breath of the wind to you

And the Peace of the Peace to you

Furthermore, I very much wish to dedicate this lecture to the youth of the world, our children and grandchildren, who are the unfolding story of the decades ahead. May they rise to the challenge of leading our troubled world, with hope and wisdom in the interest of the common good to a better future? Moreover, may, we, the older generation, be a trustworthy role model that they justifiably deserve.

Introduction

Friends, ladies and gentlemen, our country, the United Kingdom, like all nations of the world, despite many good works, deeds and actions by many individuals, organisations, civil societies and more, is facing a number of major socio-economic, political, ecological, moral, ethical and spiritual crises.

Central to this task is the urgent need to reflect on two pertinent and timely questions:

- 1- Why are we here? (That is, the world of crisis after crisis)
- 2- How can we get there? (That is, the better world we all wish to see)

In order to look at these two questions and possibly be able to offer some answers, we need to ask two further questions first:

- 1- What are the values that have taken us to here?
- 2- What might be the values that could take us to there?

This, in a nut shell, is the gist and the essence of my talk tonight.

Before going any further, let me share with you a passage or two from an article I was recently reading, very relevant to our talk and dialogue tonight.

Lest we forget: Value Crisis- We need more people and institutions whose moral values are not for sale.

"A Man for All Seasons is a well crafted play by Robert Bolt, a story of Sir Thomas More who was not only of accomplished nobility, but also a man of absolute integrity.

The play opens with these words: "Every man has his price! In money too... Or pleasure. Titles, women, bricks-and-mortar, there's always something." As the play unfolds, King Henry VIII wishes to break up with Queen Catherine and marry Anne Boleyn. But the catch is this: the Catholic Church forbade divorce. And so King Henry VIII demands of his subjects the taking of an oath that will support him in his divorce. But there is a further problem.

Sir Thomas More, who is loved and admired by the common people, will not sign the oath. He is unwilling to submit, even at the king's personal request.

His friends apply their personal charm and pressure, but he will not yield. He is stripped of his wealth, his position, and his family, but he will not sign.

Finally, he is falsely tried for his life, but still he will not succumb. They have taken from him his money, his political power, his friends, and his family — and will yet take his life — but they cannot take from him his integrity. It is not for sale at any price.

Integrity is choosing our thoughts and actions based on values rather than personal gains. A critical aspect of integrity, then, is the idea of a moral wholeness, or oneness, demonstrated by a consistency of thought, word and deed. Integrity is best described through four components: personal convictions (what we believe), stated values (what we say we believe), operational values (what we actually do), and ethical principles (what we should do).”+

Having said all these, it should become abundantly clear that at the heart of crises today is the serious erosion of moral and spiritual compass by many individuals, organisations and institutions. The time is ripe for more of us, all over the world, to be guided by the same values shown by Sir Thomas More.

Thus, we must - in the interest of honesty and integrity - admit that unless we change direction, attitudes and our current prevailing values, then, we cannot and will not change the world for the better. Let me explain a bit more:

Everyday we hear about this policy, that strategy, these goals and those targets. All promising heaven on earth and in the process delivering hell, as they have done already, again and again! Why: Because those promising all these are not sufficiently enough honest and truthful. Their hearts are not in it!

You see, ladies and gentlemen, as well as setting goals and targets every now and again, what people need to hear is an account of why there is so much suffering in this world. Why is there such a sickening level of abject poverty and inequality in and between nations? Why is there such a level of global mistrust and injustice? Why is there so much environmental degradation? Why are we told there is not enough money for education, health, sanitation, drinking water and social services, but there is always plenty for military expenditures and waging wars? If we try to answer these questions first, then there would be a greater possibility of attaining those goals.

To find those answers we need to appreciate that the ethos of neo-liberalism- the current prevailing socio-economic model and ideology- is destructive of the very heart of what we are seeking to establish in our relationships in society. The neo-liberal capitalist paradigm – economic liberalization, marketisation, privatisation, free trade, endless economic growth, profit-maximisation, cost-minimisation, fierce competition, huge bonuses for short-term gains, and more – provide strong incentives to ignore distributive justice and ecological sustainability, the very aims of our wish to see a better world.

When economics and politics are based on the worst aspects of human nature, then societies become riddled with inequality, violence and mistrust.

To try to solve global crises, without first questioning the reasons for their continuing existence, will be a wasted and costly journey to nowhere.

If we are going to realize our dream of constructing a world we wish to see, it requires a different path with a different set of values. Then an answer to these pertinent questions may be found.

Continuing my reflection on values and why we need them, now more than ever, let me share with you a very inspiring quote from a book I am currently reading, relevant to my talk and our dialogue tonight, here, in this holy place of worship, prayer, contemplation and discovery, as I so firmly believe that our crises are mainly moral and spiritual and thus, the urgent need for a spiritual path and vision to heal our broken world. The book is called ***The Impact of God: Soundings from St. John of The Cross*** written by Fr. Ian Matthew. The book was published in 1995.

As a monk in 16th-century Spain, the life of St. John of The Cross was one of suffering and imprisonment, but also of great joy. His poetry and prose tackle questions of faith with humility and wisdom and this text by Fr. Matthew examines John's spirituality, finding an echo of Christ throughout his life.

As St. John of the Cross so wisely has noted, "...Many good things come [...] when we are looking for something else. Peace comes, not if we are looking to feel peaceful, but to work for justice. Community comes, if what we want is, not to feel togetherness, but to serve. Consolation comes, if we seek not to be consoled, but to be faithful. The risen one comes when we allow ourselves to die. "In the midst of this darkness and pain where love is present, the soul feels a certain companionship..."

I very much believe that we should apply these principles to all aspects of our lives and also to the policies we might adopt to address global crises in our attempt to build a better world. For example in economic and economic policies and strategies we can create a better and more efficient business if we realise that profit maximization comes not from seeking maximum profits, but from seeking the common good, serving our customers and community.

As I mentioned already, today our global family is facing a multitude of enduring and potentially catastrophic crises. For me, the answers lie in simplicity. There is no need to complicate matters further. After all, in the wise words of Leonardo da Vinci, "Simplicity is the ultimate sophistication."

Before going on, let me share with you the philosophy, the vision and values which underpin my thinking and have guided me in offering this suggested path for the common good. Here I am most humbly inspired by Lao Tzu, a mystic philosopher of ancient China, considered the founder of Taoism. He said:

*Some say that my teaching is nonsense.
Others call it lofty but impractical.
But to those who have looked inside themselves,*

*this nonsense makes perfect sense.
And to those who put it into practice,
this loftiness has roots that go deep.
I have just three things to teach:
simplicity, patience, compassion.
These three are your greatest treasures.
Simple in actions and in thoughts,
you return to the source of being.
Patient with both friends and enemies,
you accord with the way things are.
Compassionate toward yourself,
You reconcile all beings in the world.*

Today, in many parts of the world, the so-called “free” market, the consumerist culture, and “Black Friday” sales, have become increasingly dominant, and are now seriously threatening our global future, both in terms of our care of the planet and in increasing societal rivalry and conflict.

In the process we have lost trust in everything: politics, economics, politicians, business, CEOs, governments, the media, and dare I say, even the religions. This is why I believe in the global society in which we all now live, it is vital for our common survival and wellbeing that we build cultures of trust, being prepared to take risks for the common good.

Trust surely comes from the experience of a *relationship - an in-depth experience* - which by its nature is rooted in values that are not necessarily economic or monetary.

At the basis of such trust is an understanding that, in spite of our differences, we have our humanity in common. Archbishop Desmond Tutu speaks of “that African thing, Ubuntu” – the notion that a person is only a person through other persons. A person with “Ubuntu” is open and available to others, all others, for we are incomplete without each other. Ubuntu echoes the insight of John Donne that “No man is an island I am involved in mankind”, and that was in the seventeenth century.

Let us now pause for a moment and think about the following questions:

Today’s world, it seems, has become a world of continuing and deepening crises. Wisdom, must surely compel us to ask: Why?

Is it lack of money or resources? Or Lack of technology and IT? Or Lack of people holding PhDs and MBAs? Or lack of goals set by this organisation or that? No. What we lack is moral and spiritual imagination and compass. We lack wisdom and choose wrong, harmful, and worthless ways.

Our crises can only be addressed, reversed and resolved, and our goals can only be achieved, if we change direction, adopt new values and become

concerned with life's bigger picture. We must reconnect ourselves with nature. We must begin to respect and admire nature and be inspired by it. Moreover, as members of the household of humanity, we must provide security, sanctuary and constructive engagement for all of our human family. Sustained by the bounty of all, called by the Sacred, and animated into action by the Spirit of peace, Justice, and Reverence for All Life, we must be guided by values inspired by nature, to brighten our path to build a world fit for the common good.

If we want to realise anything good in life, including any goals we may set ourselves, we must begin, first and foremost, by focusing on some fundamental and enduring questions of human meaning and value. Questions such as:

1. What does it mean to be human?
2. What does it mean to live a life of meaning and purpose?
3. What does it mean to understand and appreciate the natural world?
4. What does it mean to forge a more just society for the common good?

By their very nature, these questions involve thought and discussion around spirituality, ethics, morals and values.

This means that our lives are connected not only to knowledge, power and money, but also to faith, love and wisdom. Unless the questions we ask encompass the full spectrum of these emotions and experiences, we're unlikely to find the answers we are looking for, or to understand them in any depth, let alone solving problems and attaining goals.

The bitter harvest that neo-liberalism has brought us all is the result of its ignorance and inability to accept that our life journey is not all about economics, money and finance. We should acknowledge that our crises are not economic only, but spiritual.

This is why I firmly believe that we must begin by discussing values and to highlight why they matter.

The benefits of neo-liberal globalisation are limited and are based on individualism, greed, self-interest and economism (regarding human societies primarily as economic systems in which financial considerations alone govern choices and decisions). Other fundamental values such as faith, spirituality, justice, love, compassion, sympathy, empathy, co-operation, and the common good are neglected.

Values to Build a Better World

If we want to realise any goals, including building a better and more caring world, we must, once again, begin to appreciate the significance of the value of values in all we do, as without life-affirming values, no strong and lasting foundations can be built and no goals can be realised. Values are the deeply held principles that guide our choices and behaviours and influence our emotions and motivations. They help define who we are, what we believe in and how we live. Values can be Personal, Organisational and Societal.

"Values represent our guiding principles: our broadest motivations, influencing the attitudes we hold and how we act."

At this point you may ask why we need morals and values. Let me answer this pertinent question by recalling the wise words of Dr. Clay Tucker-Ladd, a psychologist pioneer, author of many books and articles about self-help, amongst others:

"It is important to carefully consider your values for several reasons: (1) they could guide your life minute by minute towards noble goals, rather than your life being controlled by self-serving motives, customs, accidental occurrences, bad habits, impulses, or emotions. You have to know where you are going before you can get there. (2) Values and morals can not only guide but inspire and motivate you, giving you energy and a zest for living and for doing something meaningful. (3) Sensitivity to a failure to live up to your basic values may lead to unproductive guilt or to constructive self-dissatisfaction which motivates you to improve. (4) High values and some success meeting those goals are necessary for high self-esteem. (5) Professed but unused values are worthless or worse - phony goodness and rationalizations for not changing. We must be honest with ourselves, recognizing the difference between pretended (verbalized) values and operational (acted on) values. Of course, no one lives up to all their ideals, but values that only make us look or feel good (including being religious) and do not help us act more morally must be recognized as self-serving hypocrisy.

Thus, self-help is not just for overcoming problems; it also involves learning to become what you truly value, achieving your greatest potential. That is why your values and strengths should be considered along with your problems."++

To answer the call for inclusion of moral, ethical and spiritual values in all we do, we in the Globalisation for the Common Good Initiative (GCGI) have developed a model of what it would look like to put values such as love, generosity, integrity, honesty, cooperation, friendship and caring for the common good into socio-political and economic practice, suggesting possibilities for healing and transforming our world.

To focus our minds, assisting us to see the big picture, I very much wish to offer for consideration and reflection the values of the GCGI, which we hold very dearly.

I firmly believe that if these or similar values are adopted by all stakeholders, and then seriously adhered to afterwards, then the attainment of our vision for a better world becomes much more possible.

The GCGI: Our Values

We value caring and kindness

We value passion and positive energy

We value service and volunteerism

We value simplicity and humility

We value trust, openness, and transparency

We value values-led education

We value harmony with nature

We value non-violent conflict resolution

We value interfaith, inter-civilisational and inter-generational dialogue

We value teamwork and collaboration

We value challenge and excellence

We value fun and play

We value curiosity and innovation

We value health and wellbeing

We value a sense of adventure

We value people, communities and cultures

We value friendship, cooperation and responsibility

Having noted some possible values needed to build a better world, I now wish to suggest a possible path to a better world.

A Path to a Better World:

The Globalisation for the Common Good Initiative

With a great passion for dialogue of cultures, civilisations, religions, ideas and visions, at an international conference in Oxford in 2002 the Globalisation for the Common Good Initiative (GCGI) and the GCGI Annual International Conference Series were founded.

A core aim of the Initiative has always been to focus on the “big picture” when we try to understand, appreciate, and face the challenges of the contemporary world. Whether it is war and peace, economics and the environment, justice and injustice, love and hatred, cooperation and competition, common good and selfishness, science and technology, progress and poverty, profit and loss, food and population, energy and water, disease and health, education and family, we need the big picture in order to solve the many pressing problems, large and small, regional or global.

The “big picture” is also the context in which we can most productively explore the big perennial questions of life - purpose and meaning, virtues and values, social justice and ecology. We recognise that our socio-economic problems are closely linked to our spiritual problems and vice versa. Moreover, socio-economic justice, peace and harmony will come about only when the essential connection between the spiritual and practical aspects of life is valued. In the words of Mahatma Gandhi, we should declare ourselves against the “Seven Social Sins”. These are:

Politics without principles
Commerce without morality
Wealth without work
Education without character
Science without humanity
Pleasure without conscience
Worship without sacrifice.

The principle of the common good reminds us that we are all really responsible for each other – we are our brothers' and sisters' keepers – and must work for social conditions which ensure that every person and every group in society is able to meet their needs and realize their potential. It follows that every group in society must take into account the rights and aspirations of other groups, and the well-being of the whole human family. In the words of Robert Muller, former UN Under-Secretary General, we ought: “To see the world with global eyes; to love the world with a global heart; to understand the world with a global mind; to merge with the world with a global spirit”.

We can achieve this by:

Bringing the material consumption of our species into balance with the needs of the earth;

Realigning our economic priorities so that all persons have access to an adequate and meaningful means of earning a living for themselves and their families;

Democratising our institutions to route power to people and communities;

Replacing the dominant culture of materialism with cultures grounded in life-affirming values of cooperation, caring, compassion and community;

Integrating the material and spiritual aspects of our beings so that we become whole persons for the greater good

Conclusion: Co-creating "The Future We Want" in the Interest of the Common Good

The future is indeed fraught with environmental, socio-economic, political, and security risks that could derail the progress towards the building of "The Future We Want". However, although these serious challenges are confronting us, we can, if we are serious and sincere enough, overcome them by taking risks in the interest of the common good.

One thing is clear: the main problem we face today is not the absence of technical or economic solutions, but rather the presence of moral and spiritual crises. This requires us to build broad global consensus on a vision that places values such as love, generosity and caring for the common good into socio-political and economic practice, suggesting possibilities for healing and transforming our world.

To construct the foundations which are needed to build "The Future We Want" needs a path which is not exclusively economic and monetary. A path that is led by values which lend themselves to thought and discussion around spirituality, ethics, morals and values.

Moreover, in constructing "The Future We Want" we must include in our hopes for a better world the youth of the world, the next generations. If building close relations with our children and grandchildren is an investment into the future of a sustainable family, then, engaging with the youth is a contribution to the sustainability of a society. The youth today are laying foundation for the future "Big Life". The inter-generational dialogue, the passing of wisdom, and being inspired by commitment and idealism, is the answer to the creativity crisis the world is facing.

It is my firm belief that as long as all we do is guided by the values and principles of the current dominant neo-liberal ideology, we cannot hope for a better future and are thus unable to build "the Future We Want".

The better future is guided by the common good. The idea of the common good is not some nebulous ideal, or one that only prophets, sages,

philosophers and others have spoken of and lived by. It is a call for us all to live and love for others. It is to challenge the idea that we can survive as individuals and still develop and grow. Rather fullness of life can only be achieved through a unity, seen biologically and spiritually, which seeks to support, nurture and connect with one another. And if we do this, what is the reward? The reward is a world where all people are included, all are loved and all live full and complete lives. A world where people have meaning and purpose and direction and love which expands not only their own horizon but all those around them. A world where freedom and liberation is found for the weak and vulnerable. A world where the earth from which we arose is cherished rather than used and abused. A world where those fleeing persecution are welcomed rather than turned away or locked up. A world of peace and hope. A world of equity and justice. A world of reverence for Mother Earth. A world of sustainability for all.

+ This passage is from an article by Edris Omondi, director of legal affairs at Griffin Foundation in Kisumu, Kenya, and was first published in the Daily Nation, on Sunday 15 February 2015

++Clay Tucker-Ladd, Psychological Self-Help

[Psychological Self-Help - new - Table of Contents](#)

Further reading:

[Do you want to change the world? Think generosity](#)

[Thank you Archbishops for speaking truth to power](#)

[An Open Letter to Prof. Klaus Schwab, WEF, Davos](#)

[What is this life if...?](#)

[Thanksgiving vs. Black Friday: Where is the Gratitude?](#)

[What might an Economy for the Common Good look like?](#)

[Adam Smith and the Pursuit of Happiness](#)

[Build a Better World: The Healing Power of Doing Good](#)

The GCGI: [How It Began](#)

***Prof. Kamran Mofid** (Retired) is Founder of the Globalisation for the Common Good Initiative (GCGI- founded at an international conference in Oxford in 2002), Co-founder/Editor, GCGI Journal, which is hosted at Wilmington College, Ohio, USA, and a Patron of the Human Values Foundation. Mofid received his BA and MA in economics from the University of

Windsor, Canada in 1980 and 1982 respectively. In 1986 he was awarded his doctorate in economics from the University of Birmingham, UK. In 2001 he received a Certificate in Education in Pastoral Studies at Plater College, Oxford. Mofid's work is highly interdisciplinary, drawing on Economics, Business, Politics, International Relations, Theology, Culture, Ecology, Ethics and Spirituality. Mofid's writings have appeared in leading scholarly journals, popular magazines and newspapers. His books include Development Planning in Iran: From Monarchy to Islamic Republic , The Economic Consequences of the Gulf war, Globalisation for the Common Good, Business Ethics, Corporate Social Responsibility and Globalisation for the Common Good , Promoting the Common Good (with Rev. Dr. Marcus Braybrooke, 2005), and A non-Violent Path to Conflict Resolution and Peace Building (Co-authored, 2008).

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