

August 12, 2011

Khutbah

Title: [The Purpose is to Remember](#)

DVD title: The Goal is Dhikr: Allah has the Power over All Things
Ramadan: the Bashara (Good News) and the Mazara (Warning)

Opening duas. *Asalaamu aleykum, Ramadan Karīm* again. *Bismi-Llāh*. Allah (swt) says in the Holy Qur'an:

Any sign that We cancel or consign to oblivion We replace with a better or similar one. Do you not know that Allah has power over all things? (2:106)

And also, Allah says in another *surah*:

O humans, surely you have been struggling toward your Lord arduously, and ye shall encounter Him.

Dear brothers and sisters, the *khutbah* today continues on the theme of last night. Allah has made a world for us out of challenges and opposites: days and nights, high places and low places, oceans and skies, mountains and deserts, beauty and ugliness, sickness and health, grief, loss and happiness. Because it reflects the inner aspects of life, it gives us a way to understand to whom the power is given. Even in the opening of the recitation it is said, "If you hear the call to prayer on the day of congregation, run to the *masjid* in remembrance of Allah." Not run to prayer, but run in remembrance. The purpose of the prayer is to remember Allah. Allah also said in Qur'an:

Such of Our revelations as We abrogate or cause to be forgotten, We bring in its place one better than it. Know ye not that Allah is able to do all things?

Allah is so constant in presence that there are places in the Qur'an that are abrogations of what has been given before. If everything was static, Allah would reveal the Qur'an and that would be it, and nothing would influence that force, that knowledge, that wisdom and that truth. The fact that Allah can abrogate – for you young people, abrogate means change – things means that there is a constant consciousness and awareness of what is needed. We might call it micro-management in a way, or attentiveness.

Whatever communication We abrogate or cause to be forgotten, We bring one that is clearer or better.

Also this is a lesson for us of the fact that there is *ijtihad*. Changes can come about and observations are being made on a continuous basis. What does this tell us in light of what I have been speaking about? That Allah (swt) has the power over all things—to make mountains into dust, to have air carry oceans, to cause illness to become wellness. This is all part of the miracle that Allah has for us. If we really know in our hearts that Allah (swt) is able to do all things, then we don't have to ultimately be trying to do everything and anything ourselves. But we can put our trust in Allah (swt) and understand that all actions we try to make are not originating with us.

That's not to say we don't make effort. We do. We make the greatest effort that is possible to be made. We summon all of our knowledge, our forces, our capabilities to make decisions. But we must remember that all of that power is coming from Allah. If you pick up a glass to drink, it's not just that the hand is provided by Allah, or the water or glass, but the power to grab that glass is provided by Allah. Of course, our conditioning, culture, attitudes, likes and dislikes, but mostly our fears and worries intervene and make it difficult for us to remember. One of the things that is most important for those of us who are on the path of Tasawwuf is to remember not only the love of Allah, but that all of the *shuyukh* are with us at all times.

It's very easy to forget, easy not to see. Allah reminds us of this in so many ways in Qur'an: "**You have eyes but you do not see.**" It means there is something to see that you are not seeing. I used to say to you that when I lived by the ocean, after three months I stopped seeing the ocean. One difference between what happens in Jannah and what happens in *dunya* is this: in Jannah, you are always remembering Allah. You see something beautiful, "Ah!" It's like the first time. In *dunya*, you get tired of seeing things and you forget. In Jannah, you never forget where it comes from. As people of Tasawwuf, we can have that attitude if we practice. We take the moments of prayer to remember, and we also try to remember through other means. All those means mean that tremendous blessings come to us: blessings of health, of knowledge, of patience, of trust. All these come to us as we surrender in that way. Allah says in Qur'an:

O man! Surely you have to strive to return to your Lord, a hard striving. A striving until you meet Him.

Not a hard striving until you get tired of striving. The word for striving is *sabr*; in this case it means to persevere. Sometimes patience is one of the most difficult things for us. Many of us feel that striving is wonderful, and that persevering no matter what is difficult. But the message of the Qur'an is to persevere until Allah reveals to us our ability to see that Allah is present. In shortspak, it's: "Allah has revealed Himself to us." But what does that mean? It means it reveals to us the capability we have to see that Allah is present in everything. It doesn't mean appearing to us in some image or beam of light, but He reveals Himself to us when he reveals patience and perseverance to us, and love to us and compassion and kindness and *sabr* – mercy, love, knowledge. When it comes to us, we remember Allah. That's the goal: to remember Allah.

During this month of Ramadan, we are given the opportunity to persevere, to be patient, to strive, to feel the pangs of hunger and other things we have talked about over these months and years, but we want to understand that Allah (swt) has brought good tidings to

us. Whenever there is a good tidings, a greeting, a message, there is also a warning. A parent says to a child when they go out: have a nice time; be careful. Enjoy yourself; don't forget to call. Go have a nice time; drive carefully. It's very dark; do you have a flashlight with you? Have a nice time; it may rain tonight, carry an umbrella. There is always a good tidings and a warning. We train each other. "If you are going to go shopping, read the labels. See what's in the food." Go buy some nice food for dinner; read the label. So we say with *bashara*, there is also *mazara*. With good tidings, there is also a warning.

The universe balances like a balance scale with opposites. We need to take some time with good tidings in Ramadan as we begin to enter close to these last 10 days of the holy month, in which the revelation of the Qur'an comes and also Laylatul Qadr. I encourage us all to take a moment and stay up late and look for that moment, but also to stay up late and pray the *salati qiyam* in many different ways. There are many things you can do during this month: the *shas* prayer. I will give you another document about the different *nawafil* prayers you can be doing, and not just in Ramadan.

We are comfortable, often, in our own thoughts and feelings. Somehow the greatness and magnanimity of moments like Laylatul Qadr evades us; we really don't understand them. All the things that come during this month cause some change in us; stir up things. Our temperament may be stirred up because we are a little grumpy because we are fasting. Or our desires become clearer to us. Or our faith becomes deeper. Or our passions become quieter and we are able to be more patient. All the nuances of life become magnified during this month. This is the good news: the *bashara* is Ramadan.

What is the *mazara*/ warning? "Look, don't mess up this month. Don't let it pass by without taking advantage of it." You know you can't recreate it during the year. You've tried. You try to make up fast days, and it's not the same. You try to have days when you will be pious and read Qur'an, something happens. Allah says in Qur'an, do you think

you can write a better book than this? Just take ten verses and try to re-create them. You can't do it. The *mazara* is that you must be careful to make great effort and strive—all of us. There is no end to that effort, no end to striving. It becomes something that we embrace. It's like a person who is a long-distance runner. They don't run 25 miles, collapse and do it only once a year. We don't wish that the results of Ramadan go away after Ramadan. We want them to stay. We want our accomplishments in Ramadan to be a companion to us. The month cannot be a companion to us year round; but the results of the month can be—not just for the year, either, but for a lifetime. It's important that we don't just sit or stand here and say, "Everything that comes to us is a blessing; therefore, pay no attention to it." "Oh, look at the ocean, how beautiful it is," and then forget about it, or write it off as a blessing.

People, we, write things off as blessings. Blessings are also tests. Whether the weather is going to stay warm or hot, or whether or not the flowers will bloom again next year, or as we fear, it will get snowy and cold in a few months – it's all up to Allah (with a little help from us with global climate change). We don't know what's going to happen tomorrow. We don't know what kind of fanatic will do something and shame themselves and the Muslim community. We don't know what kind of fanatic will do something in the name of Jesus or whatever. We have no idea what is going to happen tomorrow. But we can plan for tomorrow by planning our responses to be calm, collected, faithful, and have deep love and understanding.

We do know what good news would be. Good news would be that there is peace, that the people in Somalia are not hungry anymore, that the promises that were made are being kept, which they are not. Good news would be that there are breakthroughs in the healing of pancreatic and ovarian cancer. Good news would be that work comes to us that we love to do and we can do it with ease. We know we can recognize good news. Good news would be that we learn how to love one another unequivocally without any doubt in our hearts and minds, and we know where that love comes from. The good news is that

we know there are special things within ourselves that give us light and insight. But we can't be here today without warning about what's happening in the world we are living in.

We have to practice a true path of Islam based on Tasawwuf, not some extreme stupidity that grows out of the swamps of people's *fitna*, minds and desires, and out of the deserts of people's hearts that have grown hard and hot or cold. We have to be able to practice our Islam properly and inwardly, and to try to stay on the *siratal mustaqim* at a time when it is very difficult. We have to understand where the guidelines and rules come from, and be able to say to ourselves that this is the right way, even though it is a difficult way. We have to be able to practice without being attacked, or attacking anyone.

No matter where we look in the world, there are problems. As Muslims we are exposed and endangered. Christians, Copts in Egypt, live in trepidation. All over the world, minorities suffer. Muslims in China suffer. Poor people are dying because others have greed. We are all exposed. We have to understand that Allah is the power behind all things. If we ask for the power to do wrong, then the power is there to do wrong. Tyrants have so much power! Where is Allah in all this? Allah has the power. Understand that we have temporary access to that power. Allah tells us, if you misuse this knowledge, this power, forget about Jannah. You're going to go to the barbeque. You think it's hot standing in front of a barbeque cooking your dinner, think about how it will be to be IN the barbeque.

Our vulnerability lies in our inability, in our reluctance to put that extra effort forward. I spoke about the *nafle* prayers a few weeks ago. The little extra effort for the, *sunnah*, the *wudu*, the kind word. We all fail. We all have different illnesses: mental, emotional, spiritual, physical. To recognize the illness means you can attempt to cure it. If we know the physical illness, we try this and that. We go to the allopath, to the Homeopath, to the Chinese doctor. We use this machine and this and that. These are the options. Mental

illnesses? Thank God, we don't have mental illnesses here that I know of, but it's the same procedure. Emotional illnesses? Well, where do you find emotional peace and rest? Spiritual illnesses? We have those!

Is it not clear where to go to heal the spiritual illness? Do you think the spiritual illness is less important than the physical illness? If you don't achieve certain things spiritually, when this body goes, where are you? You don't know, do you? But you could be not in a good place. Allah tells you where you are. Every religion tells you where you go, and what the options are. But somehow we don't believe it. But think, if you cure the physical illness, you get to live longer. If you cure the mental illness, you get to be at peace in your mind. If you cure the emotional illness, you get balanced. So, if you cure the spiritual illness, you are not only happy here but in the Hereafter. If you don't take it seriously, it becomes chronic, harder to cure. After five years, ten years, fifteen years it's harder to cure, unless something BOOM hits you, and shakes you out of your torpor, your ignorance, your laziness.

We've seen cases like this. A person who has not really put out the spiritual effort, gets shocked. And then it becomes real. "I have to get my spiritual life together." It doesn't always happen, but sometimes it happens. The truth is, we all have a kind of spiritual narcolepsy. We start down the path of spirituality, and we fall asleep. Maybe we all have a kind of spiritual dementia! The world keeps us very engaged. People keep us engaged. We keep ourselves engaged, and then we get married to the world. If we can really do things, work with one another, care for one another, our children, our world, our Lord, then we have accomplished a purpose in life and we can be balanced. When we look and see that there are institutions, universities, schools where all these different things are being taught, we are happy because we can see that this is how you get knowledge. You take courses, get a degree, and then get a job. Only in the world today, you get a degree and don't get a job.

What are the institutions and organizations that teach Islam? Oh, they teach Arabic, and religious studies, and *fiqh*. But what are the day-to-day life essentials of being a real Muslim and Sufi? You need a *khanqah*, a *tekkia*, or *zāwiya*. That's where you learn it. It's both an inner and outer institution. You know how I feel: unless one practices Islam in a Sufic way of seeing, with the idea of seeing that there are certain phenomena in our life, and practices that bring us closer to Allah, I don't think that just being a member of a religion would be very attractive to those of us. It would just be a cultural phenomena.

In the world we live in today, we have to rely on the power of Allah (swt) to move us from our torpor, and we have to make our effort. How is that possible? Well, we have the vehicle, the destination, and the intention. We just need to connect the current to it. You put the fuel in the airplane. We know how to do that: through prayer and meditation. It was long after Sidna Isa that Christianity became misunderstood. It was not too long after the Prophet Muhammad (sal) that Islam started to become misunderstood. What we can understand is the power that is in our heart and our faith.

With the good news, comes a warning. The good news is you have all the tools. The good news is you have made the choices. The good news is you are in the right place. You are at the right time. You have love and respect. You have the support; you have the *subhat*. You perform *khidmat*, and it is Ramadan on top of all that. What's the warning? You tell me. What's the *mazara* that goes with the *bashara*? My question is rhetorical. Take a moment and ask yourself what it is. That's a message of Ramadan, and I remind you of that message. *Asalaamu aleykum*.

So many people are suffering in our world today, and it's not even covered in our news media. People don't even know how great the suffering is in Somalia and other places in the world today. Give us means to help these poor people, Allah. No one should have to see or go through what they are going through. And still the oppressors are trying to oppress, and people are trying to undermine the good changes. In our country, our leader

has lost his way unfortunately, and has no strength of character yet. O Allah, give him the strength of character to put his foot down on the heads of these terrible people who would compromise all goodness and all the history of goodness in this country, and all the generosity in this country, and all the power use for good. And, Allah, raise up this leader to realize that he can lead, and that sometimes compromise comes from a position of strength, not of weakness. O Allah, help us all to support our community at this time of need. We ask everyone to make sacrifices, to show our gratitude to You for all that You have given us over all these years. And give us more means to do more good and feel safe and secure within the boundaries of our community. Protect our children and make them understand that Ramadan is not about food, but about great blessings. Take a moment and ask Allah for what you need.