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Khutbah

Title: [Farewell Khutbah: Humility and Gratitude](#)

DVD title: (same title) Farewell Khutbah:  
Humility and Gratitude: Living the Commitment to Change

Opening duas. Allah (swt) has given us many great guidances in His Holy Book, and today we seek three of them. Allah (swt) says in Surah al Baqarah,

**O you who securely believe! Do not be of those who cover up the truth, and who say of their brothers who died after traveling in the earth and engaging in battle, “If they had stayed with us, they would have not been slain,” for Allah will cause such thoughts to be of bitter regret in their hearts. And it is Allah who gives life and death, and Allah sees all that you do.**

And in Surah Yunus, Allah says:

**They said, “We trust in Allah. Our Lord! Do not make us a target for torture and torment from an oppressive people, and by Your Mercy, save us from the people who cover the truth.”**

My dear brothers and sisters, *asalaamu aleykum*. There is a wonderful poem, if you call it a poem, or guidance that comes to us on a subject that touches our lives in these days in which we live. And it will be of utmost importance to us in this month of Ramadan. It goes as follows, from a Persian poet:

*Are you fleeing from love because of a single humiliation? What do you know of love, except the name? Love has a hundred forms of pride and disdain and gain*

*from a hundred means of persuasion. Since love is loyal, it purchases one who is loyal. It has no interest in a disloyal companion.*

*The human being resembles a tree. Its root is a covenant with Allah. Its root must be cherished with all one's might. A weak covenant is a rotten root without a grace or a fruit. Though the bows and leaves of the date palm are green, greenness brings no benefit if the root is corrupt. If the branch is without green leaves yet has no good root, a hundred leaves will put forth their hands in the end.*

It's very difficult to think in terms of such love and peace, even in this Ramadan season, when all around us we find dissension and trial, torments, violence, anger and war, devastation, hunger, and fear, and inhuman treatment of our brothers and sisters, fellow human beings, by people who call themselves by the same name. Our hearts yearn to express the love we feel. We are so blessed here. We have deep hope in our souls, but on the news there is only talk of violence, hostages, and battles being fought. There is talk of people who are ill and threatened with illness, people who are starving. We are starving ourselves in the month of Ramadan, but some people have no choice in their starvation. Starvation especially is due to the displacement of huge populations, and illness because of lack of sanitation, lack of care, lack of concern. We hear of exploitation and destruction of whole cultures due to apparent differences, and then the questions come, the conditioning rises, and the tendency to retreat from reality enters our minds and hearts. And cynicism begins to show its ugly head.

It is this cynicism that most people call reality. We say, "That's the way life is. People will never change." Then of course it's one small step to say, "I don't believe there can be change. I don't believe I can change, either." Then it's just another small step to say, "In fact, I don't even want to change. Why should I try to change myself? Why should I try to change others in this world?" To survive and try to find your way in a world like this becomes a great accomplishment. To try to accomplish even something small

becomes a way of life, and to avoid undue optimism becomes a safety net. In fact, it does seem that real change is impossible, improbable in some, if not most people at times. But after all, we tell ourselves, "I've been struggling with the same issues for years, but I don't see much progress." Then it is a small step to say, "Maybe I need not to struggle with all these issues anymore, as I'm not going to make progress, anyway." When we look deeper at the attitudes we bring to circumstances, what begins to emerge is doubt. That cynicism can easily be replaced by depression and apathy.

Still we seek inner and outer peace, peace on this earth. There are even a few of us who seek goodwill to all men and all women. We seek the blessings of Allah (swt) in the time of need, and some of us even seek the blessings of Allah (swt) in our silence. We still gravitate like celestial bodies toward the sun, toward Allah. Why do we persist? When our logic and habits whisper, "Failure, failure, failure. No progress," we become cynics. Those whispers grow to be barriers between ourselves and our Creator, between ourselves and our guide. When we persist even under those circumstances, because we have the capacity to love, we sense there is something deep within us, something deep that is hopeful. Since we have that capacity to love, we have the capacity to change.

Not many will change their lives significantly, let alone their inner states, but for those who persist and who have faith, who can find some trust and learn to listen to their hearts, they will have the chance of a lifetime. Indeed, they will have the chance of their lifetime. In fact, they will have the chance of what their lifetime is all about: the chance to change. All we need to do is to learn to open safely that Pandora's box. It is a wonderful box, by the way, not a terrible one, that surrounds our pure heart. It keeps anyone who wants to steal a good thing away from it, because they don't know how to put their hands into it. If you stick your hand into Pandora's box, you are going to get bitten. But if you know how to open it, there is no problem. All we need to do then is to learn how to give up our fears and trust our trust.

We accept our destinies, while striving to fulfill them, while making choices we have already agreed to make from the beginning of time when the souls were gathered by Allah and instructed by them that they would be given a creation. The doorway to regaining and maintaining hope and heartfelt trust lies in this. Neither love nor trust has limitations. They are not even human concepts: they are Divine and heavenly realities. They are Attributes of Allah (swt). They are imperatives that transcend the limitations of this physical world. Just as it's hard to describe hope and fear in words, it's hard to describe love. It's like describing a mango to someone who has never tasted it, or never even knew that one existed. The doorway to the inner and outer peace and trust lies in recognizing the gifts we have been given, the real gifts that we have that we need to express gratitude for—and we must express gratitude. Until we learn how to make this our focus and our center, we will vacillate and struggle with what we believe are the difficulties of our lives.

We have to face the cynicism and those words I spoke earlier. Each sentence leads downward to the next, unless we have gratitude. So this weekend will be devoted to gratitude and humility as a way of exiting from Ramadan, but bringing Ramadan with us. We here in this community have so much to be grateful for, so many opportunities for expressing our gratitude to Allah (swt). We have so many opportunities and needs to express it to ourselves and to one another; yet, sometimes we squander the time and the opportunities. Yet, we have so much to be grateful for. We allow the distractions of habits and thoughts, desires and doubts to steal precious time that we have, and effectively change our tendencies. Promises are made, yet something comes up to disturb them or disrupt them. Efforts are begun, but circumstances and conditions, inner and outer, give us the excuse to fall back to old patterns, reinforcing the erroneous belief that change is impossible.

We can say the love is the ability to see goodness and beauty in everything; or perhaps we could say that it is to be able to learn from every circumstance, or, to see the gifts of

Allah (swt) and His Generosity and be thankful. All of it is true. At the same time, it is only a very early beginning understanding and definition of love. In fact, love is a mixture of hope and frustration, of pleasure and pain, of secrets and openness. For love leads to truth, and truth is the awakening of our own humility, trust, and real servitude. It is humility which we also hope to discuss in detail. Real love lacks arrogance, even embarrasses itself with its own purity.

I remember how one of my teachers wept quietly and openly over his love for our time together. I was totally astounded. When we were parting, those tears flowed. My Shaykh was a wonderful, quiet man who never showed that kind of emotion; yet, something struck us in that moment. It was not for the reasons most of us would think, the separation or parting itself. But it was for the intense love pouring between our hearts. The power of that love caused tears and pain at the same time with joy. It is an example of love without controls, love that is so pure there is no thought of misunderstanding, no thought of exploitation, no fear attached to it, and indeed no need for explanation. It is the love that we have to nurture.

It is this love that enables us to have real gratitude – gratitude for our children, for our community, for our true friendships. We are the creators of such relationships; we are not the recipients. Whatever we get is the result of our creative ability in life. No one hidden agenda, no one held-back thing in that relationship between my Shaykh and I. Many things were unspoken, never to be spoken. Truth was not only in words, yet there was nothing but truth that was there in that moment. Being immersed in that love, our images in that moment merged. Our vision and our hearts merged, and the ocean of gratitude and love washed over our hearts, never to leave those hearts alone again. Whatever taste of love we have, it is a potion of Divine Love. What is most important is not to stifle that feeling of love in your heart, however it comes. The dervishes say,

*Love is the wine, poured by the hand of the wine-pourer. The empty glass, the seeker, will be filled, and consume the wine poured by that shaykh/guide/wine-pourer, becoming intoxicated, no longer driven by old habits and ways. "Keep drinking," says the poet. Only the lover knows the freedom of the drunkard.*

Keeping ourselves in the company of gratitude, of love, the lovers and passionate believers will break us of all of our old habits, our doubts, our conditioning, our old ways which we do not even think are so bad, but which reinforce our indolence, our lack of initiative, our fears, our limited world view, our arrogance, our lack of humility, our ingratitude for Allah's answers to our prayers that we don't even know are answers.

Ramadan. What a wonderful time. There is only one true celebration that is going on today or any day. It's in the hearts and minds of those who are grateful, those who are free, humble, and compassionate towards others less fortunate. Even then, how can we dare to block out the reality of this world we inhabit? Of course, we should look to the brighter side of things, the good news, the hopeful things that surround us. It's our spirit to do that. After all, we were created to praise Allah and to protect His creation, but we have to do more than that. We have to live the commitment to change. There is no case that can be made for the fact that things are going well in our society. They are not. Look at the issues in our own community and families. Look at the direction of our society today. Then go to some place quiet, some place by yourself, some place where you are totally alone (if you dare), and put your face on the ground (if you dare), and thank Allah (swt) for where you were born, where you live, and where you grew up, and where you are today, and for what you are trying to accomplish personally and collectively.

While you do that, think about Libya or Sinkiang or Somalia or Darfur, or the hostages in parts of the world we don't even know about, think about the latest news reports that are only about wars, armaments, new planes, or even about what's happening in our own community among the impoverished, those in need, or the sick. And remember the story:

*On Judgement Day, each soul will be asked, “What deeds did you bring with you? What good ones were accomplished to qualify you to enter the gates of Paradise?” And on the Divine Balance Scale, Allah (swt) will measure us. Goodwill will be weighed against errors. The Prophet (sal) said, **“The best of God’s servants are those who, when seen, remind one of Allah. And the worst of Allah’s servants are those who carry tales to do mischief and separate friends and seek the defects in the good.”** Let us not be of the bad; let us be of the good. When our deeds are found lacking, as most of ours will be, you will turn to your husband or wife or whoever who will testify, and ask them for some help, some credits. And they will say, “What about me? I came up short, too. To whom will I turn?” Perhaps if you have children, you will turn to your children and ask them for their credits. And they will say, “But what about me? I came up short, too! Where will I turn?” And then you will turn to your parents, and ask your parents and blood brothers and sisters, and ask them if they can spare any good deeds for you, and they will say, “What about me? I too, have the same need. Who will help me?”*

*And then you will turn, Inshallah, to the shuyukh and the ambiyā and to the Prophet (sal), and to those who have raised with you the flag of truth and loyalty, and they will say to you, “Take all of my deeds! It’s enough for me that you enter Paradise.” Not your parents, not your spouse, not your brother or sister can say that. Only those who have tread this path with you, only those who are your true brothers and sisters in spirit. Only those who have been the guides, who follow the way of Rasulallah (sal) in clearness and in openness, can say that. Divine Compassion and Justice will intercede at that moment, and will not allow that generosity to go unrewarded. All of the muridīn, all of the shuyukh, the ambiyā, and Rasulallah will be in Paradise with you, and that’s how, inshā’a-LLāh, we will all go to Paradise, hand in hand, each one of us holding on to one another.*

My dear friends, is it possible that we can go hand in hand after death if we do not go hand in hand in life? Where we have such generosity in the *akhira*, if we do not have it in the *dunya*? What will be achieved, instead of such a state of compassion after death, if we do not nurture that compassion and selfless love here? There is one possibility that mediates the situation, even if we are negligent, but it is a tricky one. Even though none of us may be deserving of the benefit of those who came before us, all the benefit of those who came before us can accrue to us if we love one another. The value in the investment of the love of our *shuyukh*, the love of Rasulallah, the love of the *muridīn* to and for each other, is beyond any worldly love. The secret is simple, but try to keep it simple once you hear it, once you begin to use it. Fill your heart with it, and see if your heart is sealed enough to keep it full without it leaking out.

When you learn how to truly love, you will have angels vying to serve your needs. How do you learn to love? Listen again to what I've said today. Next time, allow more of it into your heart. Listen again to this discourse. Listen to the discourse on fragrance. Listen to the call of your own heart. Speak from your heart; obey the wishes of your heart; obey the wishes of the One Who created your heart, Who gave the power to your heart, Who put the love in your heart, and Who put before you the person of heart in the personage of the Prophet Muhammed (sal), until you see that your wishes are one and have always been one, with the One Who loves you. Allah said, **“Man can have nothing but what he strives for.”** Yet what we strive for is within our own self. The stair is the truth that has been planted in the center of our own hearts, planted as Allah's *amanat* for safe-keeping and for our own awakening.

**“Whoever hopes to meet his Lord, he should do good deeds and associate none other in the service of his Lord.”** Through love and through good deeds, we are able to access that place. Then its beauty rises to the surface, and then it takes its form in acts and words of love, and service to one another. It is all condensed in the *kalima*, in the *dhikru-*



*Llāh*. It is first recited on the tongue, then when the heart is truly awakened, it becomes internally recited in the heart itself. As Sufis, we call this the “child of the heart.” The heart is the doorway to the truth. The baby is born in the heart and grows and lives there. Then the *bab*/door opens up, and the child of the heart is taught inner wisdom. The heart-child is pure of ego and doubt and defiance, and often takes the form of angels, or beautiful images, or hopes. It is this being within ourselves that we are seeking, our own essential beauty, our own essential purity. We begin to find it when we seek it in others, and when we create the environment for its expression.

In the 11<sup>th</sup> century, Ghaus Shaykh Abdul Qadir Jilani (rah) said:

*Enter the path. Join the spiritual caravan to return to your Lord. Soon the road will be impassable and no traveling companion will be left. We did not come to this base-ruined world to rest. We were not sent here to eat and to drink and defecate. The spirit of our master, the Prophet of Allah (sal) is watching you. He is pained, seeing your state. He knew what would come when he said, “My pain is from my beloved people who will come in later times.”*

Let’s hope to remember this, and begin this weekend with a deep hope in our heart to find the true place of gratitude and the way of humility that lasts far beyond this Ramadan.

*Asalaamu aleykum.*