

بِسْمِ اللّٰهِ الرَّحْمٰنِ الرَّحِیْمِ

On the Occasion of the Mawlid of the Prophet Muhammad (sal):  
The Exemplary Character of the Prophet (sal)

Allah says in the Holy Qur'an:

**Truly in the Messenger of Allah you have an excellent example for one who hopes for Allah and the Final Day, who remembers Allah abundantly.**

And in the same *surah* al-Ahzab:

**Muhammed is not the father of any man among you, but he is the Messenger of Allah, and the seal of prophets. And Allah is aware of all things. (It's interesting to note what follows that): O you who believe! Remember Allah in abundance. And glorify Him in the morning and in the evening.**

Sometimes we don't understand why things follow one another in Qur'an. The Holy Qur'an reveals to us that we have a very good example in the Prophet Muhammed (sal). I'm very thankful to Allah (swt) who has brought to us this time of year where we celebrate and remember the birthday of the Prophet Muhammed (sal), and [remember] the unique characteristics of his character in *Sīrah*, the record of his life. In talking about this, I sincerely pray that we all will start a process of transformation to acquire many of the character traits of our beloved Prophet (sal), and apply them, certainly starting with our own self. As we change, *inshā'a-LLāh*, to the better, to being better people, better Muslims, then all people, Muslims and non-Muslims alike, will see that positive change in us and hopefully start to turn their attention to such change in themselves, because the Prophet Mohammed (sal) was an example. If we can be exemplary in our lives, then others will follow that example.

Rasūlullāh (sal) received his mission on approximately the 12<sup>th</sup> of February in the year 610 AD / CE. He was the last Seal of all the Prophets. Prophet Muhammed (sal) provided a model of how men and women should live their lives individually and within society. The truth revealed to and taught by Prophet Mohammed (sal) stresses that this world did not spring up by itself, but was created by one God / Allah, Who continues to watch over it. All men and women are His servants, and all are responsible to Him for their actions. Death is not an end to one's life; rather, it is the beginning of another permanent world, where the good ones will enjoy the bliss of Paradise and the wicked ones will be raging in hellfire, according to scripture. But we want to turn our attention to the good ones, I think.

It's important to realize that is the eternal world. Allah revealed to the Prophet Muhammed (sal) that life in this world is not the only life. It is only a small fraction of this continuum into this eternal life after we depart from this world. From that moment on, life took a new meaning, because Prophet Muhammed (sal) changed the tide of human history. He captured the hopes and aspirations and imaginations of the people of the world by the Will of Allah (swt). He taught that religion is based on the worship of an immortal God or Truth. It is based on Reality, not on supposition or superstition. Teaching men and women to conquer nature, instead of worshipping nature in fearful ways, paved the way for a new era of understanding and development in science.

He gave political power to people, and took it away from the hands of a one-hereditary monarchy or chieftans of tribes. He showed the people of the world through his example how to live, cooperate, and work together in justice and peace, and not in cruelty and not in oppression. That's what he showed us. It's a whole other story about what we learned, unfortunately. We still see that people hold onto power. We still see that people don't trust science. We still see that people impress one another, and don't understand or care about justice and peace. He tried to teach also that if men and women fear disappointing

Allah, this is the only thing one should fear, and therefore try to live a life pleasing Allah by following the guidelines that Allah has revealed in the Holy Qur'an and the life of the Prophet (sal). That means if one rises above negative impulses, above pessimism and greed and doubts, one can win over everyone, even their enemies. There are many examples of that in his own life. If one sacrifices in this world for the next world, he or she will have the best of both worlds.

His mission we know extended over 23 years. Prophet Muhammed (sal) was entrusted with propagating Allah's words and messages to others. It wasn't something he kept to himself. His role brought him on a collision course with his fellow countrymen and women. All forms of adversity came to him from the pangs of hunger to the anxieties and losses in battle, to the pains that were inflicted upon himself, his followers and others. Yet through the 23 years of his mission, he always remained a person who was just and reflective in his actions. His conduct was governed by his fear of displeasing Allah (swt) Who had revealed to him the Truth. The potential of his life and the lives of others who would follow the way that would become known as Islam.

During this period of 23 years, he changed the history not only of Arab lands, but he laid the foundation for a permanent change in the world, which accounts for us standing here in the US in Bedford, Virginia, speaking of something that happened 1433 years ago, in a pretty lonely place in the desert. In a hundred years, this revolution caused a decline and change in empires from Persia to the Byzantium; and not very long after into Uzbekistan, Bokhara, Central Asia, Palestine, Egypt, North Africa, Indonesia, Malaysia, and the West. Contrary to what we hear today, this process of transformation came with the objective of intensifying and confirming what Allah revealed in the religions of Sidna Ibrahim and his offspring, Ishmael and Izak, and their descendants in Judaism and Christianity.

This process of transformation, which was started in that age with the intention to preserve the essence and efficacy of the Qur'an, opened up new and unexplored areas for humanity. It brought and introduced an age and concepts of democracy and freedom of speech to the world. It helped make new discoveries possible in science, which allowed human beings to use their minds and intellects in a new way. It allowed people to seek religious truth and explore the phenomena of life. And it raised the standard and quality of life for all people. The big question is: how did he, and his well-trained believing companions and students accomplish that – people who were themselves certainly not intellectuals or internationalists? How was it that in very few years, with very little human loss of life, he was able to achieve all of this? We have to look to his character and try to emulate those qualities and characters which transcend the limitations of time and space.

He had a very balanced personality. He was tolerant, truthful and generous. He presented a very high example of nobility to humankind. He disciplined himself to stay aloof and away from arguments and disputes. He never indulged in foul language or utterances and abuse. He was called the truthful and trustworthy, al-Sadiq al Amin. He had every opportunity to live a comfortable life. He probably could have become the king of Arabia, but he refused in order to establish what we would call today a new world order of Islam and to pursue the truth of Allah (swt). One has to really make an effort, unfortunately in the days we live in, to separate the untruths and assumptions of the Prophet Muhammed (sal) that have been perpetrated – not only by non-Muslims, but indeed by Muslims themselves – as to the character of Islam. That's why you have to go to his character to understand what the truth is.

He once said a person should have some special moment; a moment of communion with Allah (swt), a moment of self examination, a moment of reflection over the mysteries of creation, and a moment which he puts aside for eating, drinking and enjoying life. The Prophet Muhammed (sal) was an example of humility and forbearance. We can look at

some of the stories of the *Sīrah* to understand that. Again, I remind you that one should not fall victim [to untruths about the Prophet or Islam]. In each generation there are people who will try to bring this image of the Prophet (sal) down, either because of historical or cultural reasons, or to accuse him of winning converts to Islam by the sword. The truth of the matter is to understand the history, time, place and people who were pretty constantly at war, either tribal or national war; and [to understand that] what he did was with really relatively little loss of life. Some would say that in all the wars he fought, there were less than 180 or 300 people lost. This is much less than what is lost in a day in a war today.

Prophet Muhammed (sal) lived among people as equals. No bitter criticism, no provocation would make him lose his composure, and no praise would make him vain. You can all check that off that you have attained to all that already yourselves. He lived in such awe of Allah that he was always an example of humility and meekness. Here's another thing we can all claim. And he spoke very little. He walked in a way that suggested reverence and humbleness toward Allah. When criticized, he never became angry. When he used to put on his clothes, he used to say, "I am Allah's servant and I dress as befits the servant of Allah." He was very sensitive about relating and referring back all things to Allah (swt). *Once a Companion started to say to him, "If it be the will of Allah and the will of the Prophet ..." and the Prophet showed his disappointment when he heard this and said, "Are you trying to equate me with Allah? Why don't you just say, if Allah alone wills?"*

Toward the end of his life, his Egyptian wife bore him a beautiful child, Ibrahim, around the end of the 8<sup>th</sup> year of the Hijra. When Ibrahim was a year and a half in the 10<sup>th</sup> year of the Hijra, in January of 632 AD, he died. The Prophet (sal) wept upon the death of his son. In deepest grief, he uttered these words: *"Allah knows, Ibrahim, how we sorrow at your parting. The eye weeps and the heart grieves, but we will say nothing that may displease Allah."* The death of Ibrahim happened to coincide with a solar eclipse. People

from those times believed that solar and lunar eclipses were caused by the death of some important person. The people of Medina began attributing the eclipse to the death of his son, Ibrahim. This caused the Prophet (sal) a great displeasure. He gathered the people; and in his address to them, he said *“Eclipses of the sun and moon are not due to the death of any human being. They are just two of Allah’s signs. When you see the eclipse, you should thank Allah and pray to Him.”*

*On one his journeys, the group was roasting a goat. One volunteered to slaughter the animal, and another to skin it, and another to cook it. The Prophet (sal) said he would collect the wood. The Companions protested, saying, “O Messenger of Allah! We will do all that work.” He responded, “I know you CAN do it all, but this amounts to discrimination which I don’t approve of. Allah doesn’t like his servants to assert any superiority over their companions.”*

*Abu Dharr one day was sitting next to a Muslim who was an African man. He addressed him as a black man. And the Prophet (sal) was displeased and said to Abu Dharr, “Whites are not superior to blacks, nor blacks superior to whites.” Abu Dharr became conscious of his error and cast himself to the ground in remorse and said to the person he offended, “Stand up and rub your feet on my face!”*

*He once saw a rich Muslim with a loose and flowing garment, gathering it up so he maintained a distance from a poor person sitting next to him. He told him, “Are you afraid that his poverty might cling on to you?”*

*Three years after migration to Medina, the Meccans mounted an assault against the newly emerging Muslim community and the battle of Uhud took place. In the beginning, the Muslims had the upper hand, until mistakes were committed in the battlefield that caused the Meccans to attack from the rear. The Prophet (sal) was*

*left alone, encircled by the armed forces of the enemy. They advanced on him. The Prophet started calling his Companions. Abdul Ibn Shabab Dhuhuri threw a stone at the Prophet and injured his face, broke his tooth, and he started bleeding profusely and fell down. When the Companions found the Prophet, he said, "How can people who wound their prophet ever prosper?" Even with this light objection, Jibreel was ordered by Allah to descend with this 'āyat: **"It is no concern of yours whether He will forgive or punish them. They are the wrongdoers."** The Prophet (sal) realized and he started praying, as Abdul Ibn Masood relates: "O Lord, forgive my people, for they know not what they do."*

Sound familiar?

These are just some of the ways in which we can try to restructure our own understanding of Rasūlullāh (sal). When we come to the time of the birth of an individual, or of the death of an individual, it is a time when we reflect very much on their lives, and we tell the stories of their lives. We try to understand what their good character and good qualities, not dwelling on things that are controversial. Indeed, with the Prophet (sal), people have to go a very long way to think about what is controversial in terms of his life and his existence. It's very important to look for good in him and the good in ourselves. We can certainly emulate a lot of what I talked about today in this brief *khutbah*. There are countless stories we have in Sīrah and the Hadiths you can read, day and night. But it's all going to tell you the same thing. It certainly is a good thing, at the time of the Mawlid of Rasūlullāh (sal), to reflect on these things and on the good qualities of ourselves and of others, both individuals here and who are beyond.

O Allah (swt), this week since we last met, we have lost our brother Musa to You. He was a gift from You to us, and the lease that You give us had run out. We ask You, Allah (swt), to assure us in our hearts and minds of the light of his life in Your Companionship. Bless us all with only the fondest memories and the most humble love, not only for him but for You, Allah (swt). Bless us, Allah (swt), to know and believe that on the day of

awakening, in Jannah, we will all be together and have eternal light in Your life and Your light. O Allah, these losses are difficult for us to understand, but we can understand love, and gratitude, humility and patience, and steadfastness. Help us to be that way Allah (swt). We are all on the journey; make our way open and make our work and the memory of our work something beneficial to You, Allah (swt). *Amin.*