

October 9, 2009

Khutbah

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

Title: To Forgive is to Give of Our Compassion

DVD title: To Forgive is to Give of Our Compassion

Opening duas. Allah (swt) says in Qur'an,

Surely, Allah has brought from the believers their souls and their wealth in exchange for the Garden. They fight in the way of Allah, and they kill and they are killed. It is a promise binding to Him in the Torah, in the Injil, and in the Qur'an. Who fulfills the covenant better than Allah? Rejoice then in the bargain you have made, for that is the supreme attainment.

Triumphant are the repentant, the worshipers, the praisers, those who wander, seeking truth. Those who fast, those who bow down, those who prostrate, those who order the good and forbid the evil, and preserve the limits set by Allah and give good news to the believers.
(9:111-112)

In these two 'āyāt from Sūratu Tawbah, Allah tells us the realities of life, and the covenant we have made with Allah. He revealed the covenant not only here, but wherever we look in the Qur'an and in Hadith. Again and again we are reminded that

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there is a balance between our choices and our potential as human beings. We have to struggle in life and fight for what is right and good. We are reminded there is a balance between what our choices are, and what our potential is as human beings to do good or to do wrong. What is the criteria, and what really makes a human being compassionate and really loving? We have the potential for the Divine Compassion. Allah (swt) has placed a small bit in us or reflected upon us. Our journey is one toward awakening, toward healing, toward confronting reality, toward overcoming certain human tendencies: to avoid pain, to avoid anger, to avoid difficulties. These are things we all struggle with. So Allah gives us also repentance when we fail, or when we come up short, shall I say.

The seed that is planted in us to help us overcome our trials and tribulations, our upsets and angers, our pains, our confusions, doubts, self-centeredness, lack of confidence in our own selves, our greed and judgmentalness is compassion/*rahmat*. It is compassion in the sense of Divine Compassion that arises when our self, our I-ness is affected by observing the pain, suffering, needs, and losses of other creatures—not just people. How many of us have driven along a road and seen a dead animal along the side of the road, and a little shiver goes up your spine. That's sort of hard-wired into us. This is compassion.

Allah puts that in us, and reminds us that we see death all around us, pain and suffering all around us. We are to compare it with our own, and measure our own against it: the poverty, the genocide, the struggling, the starvation, the people without anything, where everything has been taken, left without family, friends, guidance or help, without belief.

If you walk out the door today and find that Jezbah has a thorn in his hair, you will think, “Oh, that poor cat.” Sometimes we feel bad for a tree, when the branches are broken, or the flowers are beaten down by the rain, or when the ice comes and bends over the bamboo. We don't have to worry about that yet. What arises in our hearts when compassion enters is a sense of forgiveness, also; a sense of something greater than ourselves. When we see these things, we can't give the cat a lecture, “Be careful of the

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thorns. Don't get a thorn in your foot!" You can tell the raccoons all you want, but they won't change their ways, same thing with people. People will experience difficulties in life, and we can look at the misery, terror, and horrors all around the world. We shake our heads and ask, "How can people treat each other like that?" But we know it happens. We have been treated like that to a lesser degree. God forbid, we have treated others that way. That's why peace, understanding, compassion, love and mercy are important things. We believe that when it is really genuine compassion, there is always forgiveness. I didn't say forget; I said forgive. We will always remember.

To forgive is to give of our compassion. It is not a weakness; it's a strength. It doesn't mean we compromise our values or give up what we know is right. It is just compassion, love for Allah, because we were placed here by Allah. We hear the word compassion being used a lot. We heard it in previous years by a leader in our country, and you don't want to hear the word anymore when it comes out of certain people's mouths. We heard the word peace, and care and concern today out of the new leader's mouth, and we want to see the results. We want to see the peace from the peaceful. We want to see compassion from the person who says the word compassion. We want to hear the truth from someone who uses the word truth. It still doesn't mean we don't feel it.

I always give the example: if you see a child fall down, immediately you run to help the child. It doesn't matter if it's your child or a stranger's child, because the compassion is there. When you feel bad for someone who has difficulty and you talk to them, you say, "Don't worry. It will be all right. *Ma'lesh. Allahu Akbar.*" You need to ask yourself, "Do you believe that?" If you believe that, you will make it happen. That's the power of your compassion, your love, your concern. Now show it. Give form to it; give meaning to it. This aspect of the Merciful is made clear to us when Allah (swt) says, "**My mercy precedes my wrath.**" Most of us don't know how to forgive ourselves. Indeed, we find that often our wrath precedes our mercy. It happens all the time. Sometimes we get a

little angry, and say something we don't mean. We should have just forgiven and been merciful and compassionate. Someone does something, we get angry, and then we get compassionate. If something happens, first Allah forgives, then decides what punishment should be meted out.

A believer, one who guards the heart, always acts with mercy and compassion toward the heart, because it is the heart that embraces and encompasses and contains the Mercy of Allah. A person with compassion has no other agenda. We are not compassionate to someone so we will be appreciated by them. We are not merciful so that they will thank us. We don't trust because we will benefit from their trust. It's for their own sake. Allah (swt) makes it clear how powerful the heart is when He says, "**My heaven and My earth cannot embrace Me, but the heart of My believing servant embraces Me.**" We know that the heart is powerful. It is a muscle that never stops flexing. It can squeeze you very hard. In *hadith*, the Prophet(sal) said, "**The heart of a believer is held between two fingers of the Merciful. He turns it about as He wills.**" Not between two fingers of the Creator; he didn't use that name. He could have said two fingers of the Lover, or of the Patient, but he said of the Merciful. There is a nice little quatrain from Mevlana Jelaludeen Rumi (ra):

The overwhelming light from the fingers of the Divine Light is safe from dimming or eclipse. The Divine dispenses that light upon the self, and the blessed hold out their robes to receive that light. Whoever is favored by that is one who has turned his face from all but Allah.

For those of us who would attempt to strive, to walk on the path of awakening; who would make *jihād* on the lower self, the one who would seek on the path of knowledge, those of us could be called spiritual warriors. If we are among those, this taking of life for Allah, the killing as we quoted in Sūratu Tawbah, is not the killing of people. It is the

killing of the lower nature, the killing of evil. These two ‘*āyāt* are about *maruf* and *munkar*: stand for what is right and what is good. These people are the forgivers, the destroyers of what is ill, the forgivers of our own past mistakes. We don’t add an ounce of our own past mistakes without the forgiveness coming. That forgiveness means giving up the idea that one is going to punish or be punished for wrongdoing. It means giving up the rewards for good actions. The power to forgive is sufficient.

We don’t repent out of fear; we repent out of love of Allah. Whoever commits a wrongdoing and is punished for it in this world, Allah’s Justice is such that punishment for a such a devotee is not repeated in the Hereafter, *alhamdulillah*. When one in this world commits a wrongdoing that is covered by Allah (swt), Allah does not re-judge something that has been covered up and thereby forgiven by Him in this world. We know the statement, “*Allah is forgiving and Allah is forgiveness.*” The point is if Allah does this, why should we be different? If we cover the faults of someone, their error, their mistakes, their misunderstandings, why would we later seek to punish them? If Allah covers their mistakes, why would we seek retribution. If Allah punishes them, why would we seek to add to the punishment? This is compassion.

Compassion and forgiveness are what we strive for on this path, because with that compassion there is humility and understanding. Imam al Ghazālī (ra) defines a person who is humble as *one who intentionally gives up something he deserves*. A sign of humility is you accept true words, no matter who has spoken them. If there is someone here you don’t respect, and they speak the truth to you, you accept it because it’s the truth, not because of the person who spoke it. It’s also said you never admire yourself for any action you, yourself, perform. The servants of the All Merciful are those who walk this earth with modesty. It’s also to stand humbly before that truth, before Allah, guarding the truth, striving to fulfill the truth. Believers, in their hearts, are people who guard the truth in a very conscious way. They don’t aggressively guard it, unless that

truth is attacked. They defend the truth, they are not aggressive in the name of the truth.

These are different facets in the name of compassion. *Inshā'a-llāh*, we can count ourselves among these people at some point. They are zealous in the way they guard the truth. But all the courage, the strength, the power lies in being displayed at the right time. A person who just displays power over individuals is called a bully. A person who displays power when a person is being bullied is called a hero. A person who restrains until he is forced to act is a humble person. A person who gives compassion and love at the right time for the right reason has greatness, uniqueness. In other words, to be zealous in and of itself is not a great characteristic, not even zeal toward Allah.

When Shaytan was told to bow before Adam, he zealously said, he would not because he would only bow to Allah. That was misdirected zeal. "I am made of fire, while Adam is made of earth" implied that Shaytan was made of a higher quality. So his zeal was misplaced, and he had no effect on Allah because it didn't rise out of humility and respect. In the Tradition, it is said that Allah is zealous, talking about Allah's relationship with His creation. The Qur'an asks, **"Is it not the time that the hearts of those who have faith should be humbled in the remembrance of Allah and truth which He sent down?"** (57:16) Why? Because it will then become quiet. It will quiet our false image of Allah, of our self. We will begin to recognize the blessings that are really given to us, that we can only know through our compassion, through our humility, through our remembrance. When we become angry and upset, and lose our compassion, it's because we have forgotten. We are not looking, not seeing. We are forgetting. People strive to keep themselves in that state of forgetfulness.

Being humble also means having *adab* and being courteous. The false self is made strong by being arrogant and discourteous, demanding, and having no good behavior. The heart instinctively wants to have good *adab*. The ego is really driven by opposing the heart.

The heart tries to hold the ego in control by humility, and kindness and modesty, compassion and love. Those who have *adab* are referred to as “*those who have kept the bonds of Allah.*” *Adab* is for the spiritual seeker to live within the boundaries of compassion and of mercy, and to walk with compassion, and to lead the way. When circumstances come about, as they do, first [one should try] to be compassionate, and then otherwise. If one needs to invoke some kind of retribution or punishment by law or by form or by custom that is appropriate, [they may], but only if it is appropriate.

There is a story on the immediate needs of this.

Abu Zayyid was traveling from the city where he lived to another city. He was riding on a horse, and got ahead of his followers. He found himself alone and came near to a village called “Nobahar.” A group of Turkomani dacoits, bandits, approached him. They had just invaded that area, and literally raped, pillaged, and looted. They said they wanted his horse. Abu Zayyid said that it took four murīds to help him down from his horse. Once they arrived, he would happily give the horse to them. They agreed. (They weren’t very smart). A few minutes later, the murīds caught up and Abu Zayyid ordered them to help him dismount from his horse and to give the horse to the bandits. The disciples protested, saying they were a much larger group and could easily beat the bandits in battle. Abu Zayyid said, “No, I’ve given my word. Give them the horse.” So the bandits took the horse and left.

A few hours after the master had taken lodgings for the night, another group of Turkomanis appeared, not only with his horse but also another one, as a gift to him. These Turkomanis were apologetic, saying the bandits were a group of youths who did not know what they were doing. (How strange!) Abu Zayyid, however, did not accept the gift. He said, “Whatever we let go, we don’t take recapture.” The bandits were so impressed by his courtesy and compassion that

they repented of their deeds. They vowed never again to harm anyone.

How humble and how merciful can you be when you are the target, and the first thing you think of doing is to give, and to trust in the Divine? It is very, very different and very difficult. It seems to me, my dear brothers and sisters, when we look around the world today and see all the misery, isn't it strange that Allah (swt) has provided misery in one place and relief in another? Isn't it strange that the misery of one person evokes the compassion of ourselves, and gives meaning to our own misery and difficulty? It's a mystery. I could have been here, but I was there. It could have been me, whose village was raped and pillaged. But I am here, and I'm just absorbed in my own problems. I give a donation to there, and I care about there. But is it possible that if we are compassionate here, the mercy goes there? I'll leave you with that to think about, *inshā'a-llāh*. Duas.

O Allah, You are the Responder, so feed us, succor us, because You are the best to aid us and help us, and the best of forgiving, and the Most Merciful, the Most Compassionate, and the Best of providers. Guide us and deliver us from the hands of oppressors, indeed from our own oppressions. Grant us fair wind in accord with Your Knowledge wafted upon us from the treasure of Your Mercy. Transport us by the convenience of Your Generosity and Compassion, with peace and well being in our worldly life and in the life to come. Truly, You have power over all things.

Ya Allah, make order easy for us. Give us serenity in our hearts and our bodies, peace and well being in our worldly life and our spiritual life. We beseech You for a faith that is everlasting, and for a submissive heart. We beseech You for knowledge that is beneficial and for a certainty that is genuine, and for a religion that is straight and for a well-being free from afflictions. We ask You for your complete well being, and for continual well being, and thankfulness for that well being. Make our faces shine with

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Your Light and Your Attributes, and make us laugh and rejoice on the Day of

Resurrection with your friends, and make Your Hand be spread upon us and our families and our children, and those who are with us by Your Mercy. Be our Companion in our traveling and Guardian in our families. Efface the face of our enemies, and freeze them in their places, so that they are unable to go up against us, O You Who are the most Gracious Responder.

Ya Allah, I ask for Your special blessings today on those who are suffering among us, and on those who have burdens, who are near to us, those who are in need. We ask You to heal those among us who are ill. For those among us who are charged with trying to heal their illnesses, give us the means to heal them. Uplift us, guide us, give us strength, give us wisdom and patience, and help us to return to You and recollect ourselves, and be ready for the shower of Your Blessings. Amin.

SECOND KHUTBA Duas.