

October 30, 2009

Khutbah

بِسْمِ اللّٰهِ الرَّحْمٰنِ الرَّحِیْمِ

Title: Look Back through the Heart to Original Islam

DVD title: Through Tasawwuf One Builds a Sound Heart with a Strong Foundation

Opening duas. Allah (swt) reveals in Holy Qur'an:

Surely Allah enjoins Justice and kindness and generosity to those who are near to you and He forbids all that is shameful and that which is wrong. He admonishes you that you may remember Him. Fulfill the covenant of Allah when you have taken it, and do not break your oath after you have confirmed them and when you have made Allah the Guarantor over you. Surely Allah knows what you do. (16:90-91)

In addition, Allah (swt) says:

O my Lord, give me wisdom and unite me with the righteous ones. Make the report to be truthful among people of later times and make me to be one of the inheritors of the garden of bliss and forgive my father. Surely he is from those who are astray. And do not disgrace me on the day when all should be raised from the dead. The day when neither wealth nor sons will save except one who brings to Allah a heart that is whole. (26:83-89)

Our hearts, my dear brothers and sisters, always tell us the essence of the Truth, [though] I certainly do not want to say that our hearts will never deceive us. Certainly, a heart does not deceive, but a heart put through the mind can sometimes be deceiving. We influence through our mind what is in our heart. But

if we could truly read what is in our heart we would find the Truth there. Allah tells us this very clearly because He says: **“You can find Me in the heart of a believer.”** So if you could find Allah in the heart of the believer, you would not find the untruth there. Of course, traditions and cultural inclinations can also be deceptive, as we can find in the way people interpret Qur’an today.

It is very important that Allah (swt) tells us what the requirements are for people who are complete in their faith, who are acceptable to Allah, who are in harmony. It is the one who comes with a whole heart, a pure heart, a true heart, a good heart. The heart knows what is true. Here is an example where Allah tells us [that though] we look at the heart of the human beings, at the same time, we need to use reason. He describes, for example, the gods of the Jāhiliya. These are described as pieces of stone. They couldn’t eat; they couldn’t speak. Yet people would worship them and put food in front of them. We see from reasonable thinking an unreasonable thing. We don’t doubt that the people of Mecca at that time worshipped their gods with sincerity. We can’t assume that these people were insincere.

It would be wrong. It would be ridiculous to think that people somehow were just totally ignorant and did not have any sincerity in their worship of [their gods]. However, we see how their reason is set aside. Probably people said, “Well, why do we put food in front of the gods?” The children probably said, “Why do we put food in front of these stone idols?” And the parents probably said, “That is what we do and we have always done that.” Somebody probably said, “We hardly have any food in the house. Why are you giving food to this stone? They never eat it and the animals come, or it rots.” And some philosopher at the time of the Jāhiliya might have said, “They take the purity of the food.” Or something like that.

We can assume that there was heartfelt sincerity among some of the people of the Jāhiliya. But we see how their reason was set aside and maybe they thought that they didn't deserve to be spoken to by these gods, so they appeared to them as stones. Who knows? There were 365 gods in the Ka'ba at the time. So they set their reason aside, and maybe they came to these conclusions and told their children, "Don't ask these silly kinds of questions." So the explanation to the people is that the gods eat the essence of the food, and they leave the physical aspect of it. That is certain a nice explanation. The point is we cannot assume that just because these people set their reason aside, they weren't sincere.

Individuals who are committed to trusting in Allah, trusting in God, trusting in Islam as *taslīm*, in sincerity, security, submission and trust (a true meaning of this word) are like building bricks that are fused together to form a solid wall. Each individual, as Shaykh Kaftaro (ra) used to say, is like a brick in that building. Each person has to have certain stencil strength. It has to be strong. It has to be made well. It has to be able to withstand the weight of the stress that is called upon it to bear. [It is made of just] this dirt, this clay, and water and fire. Earth, air, water, and fire. By the nature of its structure, it has to bear stress. We are of the *'ālam al-khalq*. We are made of earth, air, fire and water also. We are constructed to bear certain stresses, also.

We build with rocks, because if we build with just mud clay in this environment, the weather today would eventually destroy it. In Iran, for example, they built these domes over centuries, but the weather would make them fall down and the people inside the houses would be killed. Just like every rock or brick has to be prepared in order to withstand the weight placed on it, so too we have to be prepared in life for the trials and tribulation of day to day life—fired, if you will, by Allah. The great fires that fire the rocks to make them strong are the fires of

not just tests and trials, but of love and compassion and mercy. We can change the metaphor a little and say the warmth of love and the warmth of compassion and the warmth of mercy, the warmth of good companionship.

We know that this kind of warmth builds good character just like fire builds strong bricks. It is made out of the same materials, whether you are reading Torah or the Injeel or the Qur'an. It is totally made of the same stuff, made out of the earth, the clay. If you live in a county in the United States where you have a building inspector, those bricks have to pass a minimum standard. So too, an individual has to pass through a process of training and development in order to be an effective individual within the construct of the *dīn*, within the construct of Islam, hopefully within the construct of any religion. [One has] to be able to hold the weight, to carry the weight of the *dīn*, the meaning of the revelations of God.

True Muslims, true believers, humble people find themselves, especially today, carrying weights in many different ways, in many different places, but some of the people are not fired well. Because of some of the imperfections of those bricks that make up the structure of Islam today, the burdens are not carried well and there are cracks in it: because of the way people have been brought up to think, because of the weight and burden of cultural baggage, [because of] the misunderstandings and the mis-directions of people of ignorance. Just because a person stands at a *minbar*, like this, does not mean they have any brains. I am a witness to that. Just because an individual speaks to people in a terminology that is above their general understanding does not mean that what they are saying is true or right. It may be true, but they may not even understand what they are saying.

If you multiply that over millions and millions and millions of people who are not well prepared, who do not understand what they are saying, but are just repeating what is left in their mind and what was repeated to them; or who are repeating what was left in their mind of the person who repeated it before them, and if they don't have access to real, scholarly thought; if they don't have real access to people who have experienced the sweetness of their religion, then they repeat the laws and the rules over and over again, until they divest themselves of their heart, until all that is left are the rules and the laws. This has happened historically to every community. As Allah has said, "I have given this message to every community before you, (meaning the Jews and the Christians) and if you don't get it, I am going to have to give it to somebody else." That is what He tells us, because things become misunderstood.

Some of those bricks are weak; they don't carry the burden and they crack; and they don't build strong buildings or strong people. So people turn to the simplest explanation and follow the most simplistic reasoning. They have lost the way to the heart. There are times in the history of humanity and in the history of different religions, when certain groups of people try to rise up and recapture the heart again. Someone tries to re-capture the mood and the sense of the heart. Because in that there is not just happiness and joy, dancing and singing, or whatever they think it is in whatever religion, but there is meaningfulness. There is resonance with the Truth that we understand, that we see all the time in the beauty of nature and in the love between human beings; in the respect that you receive from people who respect you, and in the respect that you give in return; and in the compassion and the mercy and the kindnesses that evoke the same thing in others. That is the real *dīn*; that is the real religion. That is the Truth, the Haqq of Allah.

The construction of such a person who understands what is love will find also what is contentment; will also understand the meaning of sorrow, grief and loss. They will be able to bear the stresses and strains, the vicissitudes and trials and tribulations of day to day life. They will understand their role as an individual, as well as their role as part of the *jamat* (the collective), of the *umma* (the people who gather in a meeting like today), or of the Umma (the greater people). They will define that Umma as human beings, not by their language, not by their culture, not by their sect and not just by their religion. Allah (swt) said through Prophet Mohammed (sal), “***I did not come to create a new religion. I came for the upliftment, the refinement of the human character.***” Meaning, that it had gone through some entropic experience.

So we have responsibilities: how we act in the community and how we act in the family; how we act among the believers and how we act among those who don't believe or who don't practice; how we act among the people who call themselves believers but don't believe, the *munāfiqūn*/hypocrites. There is *adab* for each of these situations. By understanding that these are the ways of building character, Prophet Mohammed (sal) came to reconstruct a building that had become weakened from the inside through the misunderstandings and through the misuse of religion. He was indeed a class A contractor who specialized in renovations.

The Prophet Mohammed (sal) and all the *anbiyā* who came before him—Sidna ‘Isa/Jesus (as), Sidna Musa/Moses (as), Sidna Daoud/David (as), Sidna Harun (as), Sidna Ibraheem (as)—all came to build strength in the character of people. Now we live in a time where we see that it has weakened again. We are the people who wear the *ima*’ and who give each other the *idhn*/permission. They wear their cloaks and their garb, just like I am wearing (more or less fancy), and those people are weakening not only the religion of Islam (which is 1.2 billion people in the

world, a large percentage of the people), but weakening the world, weakening humanity.

So we have to return (*relegare*); we have to return back to the original teachings, to look back at them again and to find where the problem lies, not to reconstruct the world (like the Salafī and the Wahabī do) to the time of the Prophet Mohammed (sal), where they will gladly fly on an airplane to reconstruct a world to a time when there were no airplanes. They will drive in a Mercedes Benz when [they are trying to reconstruct a time when] there were no cars, and they will fly in lobster from Maine when there was no way to fly in lobster from Maine, or they will fight a war against the *kāfirs* while they are killing Muslims, hundreds at a time, like in Pakistan yesterday. How dare they? How dare they call themselves by any name that is associated with God? And it is not just there; it is everywhere. Everybody blames everybody, whether it is in Palestine, China, Kurdistan or Chechnya; it doesn't matter.

When we look through the original teachings, we have to look back through the heart. That is why Tasawwuf/Sufism is so important. What has the individual to do in order to prepare themselves for their role in life, for their role as a true Muslim? A true Muslim means one who is submitted in God, who is seeking the safety and the security and the cover of the Divine Presence, by whatever name you want to call yourself. Linguistically in Arabic, [you are called] Muslim.

These are very basic questions, but they are questions which have to be answered in order for us to emerge with a human community which is humane, a viable and an important and contributive Islamic, Muslim, spiritual, Judaic, Christian, Hindu, Buddhist society, a society of believers. Because we are, after all, as we have said

many, many times, all children of Adam (as). We are not just the children of Ibraheem (as), but we are all the children of Adam (as).

Those who are at peace and secure in Allah, and who are at peace and secure with each other, they can become peaceful and secure with everyone. The individual character and the individual self needs revival, *tajdīd*/renewal. The beginning of this process, we are told, lies in the heart/*qalb*. If we look at ourselves and what we are made of, inside of us, we realize that we are made of that same whole universe that we see when we look through the Hubble telescope. Universes upon universes upon universes, atoms, protons, neutrons, galaxies within us, and galaxies outside of us; and Allah (swt) placed us right at the core, right at the center, with responsibility and consciousness for all of it in both directions.

[There are] whole universes comprised of physical realities and universes: emotions and thoughts, desires, urges and instincts that create within us, even, little institutions. So it is not surprising that we create little institutions outside of us when there are these institutions within us, where there are classes of citizens also. [There are] healthy cells and parasites, and all kinds of things. There are relationships in the communities within us. There is even immigration. (We won't get into that.) There are complex means of feeding all those people, individuals inside of us. If the metaphor is correct and if the schema is correct, we should, therefore, accept that there are other universes and worlds of people beyond us. After all, He is called *Rabbi Ālamīn*/the Lord of the Worlds. It is a universe that motivates us and drives us from within, but has reason and understanding that gives us our roles and our responsibilities, our ideologies and our cultures, our Tasawwuf and our Islam as we mold our lives, hopefully, in a harmonious way. But it is molded in the heart.

The heart is the mold. The heart, this *qalb*, does not just mean the physical organ that pumps the blood, but it does mean that too. But it is the center, the axial part of our being, the center of our personality, the center of our motivation, the center of our desires, of our ideas, the sense of what is good and what is wrong, then it is interpreted through our mind. So what we want to do is not so much be satisfied just in our minds, but to be satisfied in our hearts, supported by our reasons.

Qur'an explains that this is the key for the human being. As I quoted, the success does not depend on what an individual wants physically, nor on his or her personality alone, but on what the person does, what lies at the core of an individual's character. In Qur'an, Allah reveals this message, **“None but those who come to Allah with a sound heart.”** (26:89) No one will be successful with other than that in His eyes—a sound heart. What is a sound heart?

Hhhmmmmmm: a heart that goes like that? No. The Prophet (sal) said, ***“Beware. There is a piece of flesh in the human body. If it is right, then the whole body is right. And if it is corrupted, then the whole body is corrupted.”***

That is the heart.

We all know how our hearts can be deceived. We all know how our desires move us to not listen to what the heart tells us truly. The mind captures our hearts and tells us, through the heart, what we want to do, because we will follow the heart's words. So Shaytan says, “I will speak to the heart of the person and then the heart will tell the person to do what is wrong.” I am sure most of us have had that experience. According to Qur'an, it is the basis for our happiness or it is the basis for our misery. It is the basis for rightness or it is the place of corruption. Social institutions, or other kinds of groupings or institutions, can add to the benefit of society; but they can also corrupt society, as we have seen in the world today or historically.

Look at the kind of political institutions that have corrupted our society in the previous eight, ten years, let alone what happened in the World Wars that preceded us . Look around the world and see how institutions are used to corrupt humanity, and to create poverty where there was once wealth, like in the Congo, for example. There can be institutions of happiness or institutions of terror, institutions of greed, institutions of misguidance, or institutions of love and kindness. The basis of happiness and contentment lies in the heart if it is fed in the right way, if it is developed in the right way. Even the cures of diseases lie in the heart.

We have to come to know our hearts and not to be moved or dissuaded or confused, and at the depth of our heart is a righteousness that we are looking for. That is what stops a human being from seeking what is wrong and what is corrupt and what is destructive. The Qur'an explains that it is not the eyes that go blind, but it is the heart inside that goes blind. This is the starting point of life. This is the basis of *qalb*, the basis of meditation/*muraqabah*, the basis of purification/*ataskiya*, the basis for good, strong social institutions, for honest corporate institutions, for honest government. It is the foundation for *zakat* for those who are in need of assistance, for *sadaqah*, for charity, for bringing people to the Truth—not *my* truth, *the* Truth.

So many people do service to humanity and do not realize that they are doing service to Allah, serving God. The basis of service [to Allah/God] is that *khidma*, whether it is service to a country, service to a government, service in a political/social institution, service to another human being, service through an educational institution, or service to your family. The idea is to put something before yourself, and to take all your skills, all your abilities, all the love in your

heart and put it forward to create a good product, a good service helping other human beings. This is the core of love, the core of the heart. Is it not, when we fall in love with someone, a form of service that we are trying to perform? Aren't we asking only that it be seen and it be appreciated?

There are those of us who say we are, and who live as if we are present ourselves, as though we are totally committed to our *dīn*, to Allah, to the Truth, but when we look closely at ourselves, we say, "I have this flaw in myself. I need to correct this." Or we say, "I am committed to Islam, but not what those people call Islam." [I am not committed to] what they are doing in the name of Islam or Christianity, or to what those people are doing in the name of Judaism, or to what those people are doing in the name of the Hindu community. I am committed to it in its security, its truth, its openness, its submission in the *jihad al-akbar*, in the striving in the greater *jihad*, to refine myself, to the struggle with myself.

We find that we have to always be aware of our commitments and be aware of the words that express them. Our attention should always be riveted on keeping our hearts the center of our being. Our children, who sit here and do not hear enough stories to keep them that interested, need to understand that the core of their happiness in their future, and their safety in the future (and I mean safety at every level of safety, because all we have to do is turn on the news to find out) lies in their sincere understanding, in the protection of their heart, their faith, and in their trust in their family, their parents, their society and their community. Their happiness lies in the goodness that they do and the care they take, and mostly, mostly, in the company you keep, *suhbat*.

We have to reach out to one another, and help one another and do what is prescribed, of course, in the Qur'an, the Torah and Injil, but with faithfulness,

sincerity, and self-confidence. How we prepare ourselves will be how we prepare those who come after us. And how we prepare ourselves and those who come after us is reflected in the world we live in. All we have to do is look at the world we live in, and in the battles being fought today on the battlefields, in the Congresses, in the refugee camps, in the inner cities, in the drug dens of the wealthy, and in the Muslim community, the Jewish community and the Christian community. We have to understand that the heart that has to be at the forefront of our thinking is the heart that is filled with true knowledge and true understanding, *Insh'allah. Asalāmu aleikum. Duas. SECOND KHUTBAH. Duas.*