

November 12, 2010

Khutbah

بِسْمِ اللّٰهِ الرَّحْمٰنِ الرَّحِیْمِ

Title: [The Name and Identity of a Muslim](#)

DVD title: Hajj and the Community of Islam
Communicating the Spirit of Islam to All

Open duas. Allah (swt) has revealed in the Holy Qur'an a number of 'āyāt on the subject of our *khutbah* today. It is said in Suratu-l-Ambiyā:

Surely this, your community, is one community and I am your Lord, so worship Me. (21:92)

Also in Suratu-l-Hijr:

Surely, it is We who sent down the reminder, and truly We are the Protector. (15:9)

Again in Suratu Tawbah:

O Prophet of Allah! Take from their wealth a gift freely given by which you may purify them, and cause them to grow in purity. And pray for the blessing of Allah upon them.... And Allah is all hearing and knowing.

He is referring in this verse to those who have acknowledged their faults, mixed a wholesome deed with another one, a bad one; and perhaps Allah will turn towards them forgiving and compassionate. Also, (I quoted another form of this earlier):

:

Your deen is one deen. Your religion one religion, and I am your Lord. And We are the Guardian over it.

My dear brothers and sisters, *Asalaamu aleikum*. I'll try to speak briefly today because we are coming to the time of Arafat. People are on Hajj now, and we are reminded of many things. On the Eid, *inshā'a-Llāh*, I will speak on the sacrifice, but also on the idea of what our responsibility is as people who are traveling, hopefully circumambulating our heart and being. It's a good time to remember a very simple thing: we identify, call ourselves and refer to ourselves in circumstances as Muslims. That means as those who are in submission and who are seeking the peace and security, *taslim*. We are one day, *inshā'a-Llāh*, able to call ourselves *mu'min*, people who can call ourselves true believers. [These are] people who are, in the true sense, *mujahidīn*: those who are striving and struggling, and who have accomplished some recognition of the mercy and the compassion of Allah swt.

Of course, you know that when I speak of Allah (swt), I'm not speaking of "someone" sitting on a throne somewhere, at a distant place micro-managing the universe. I think of a process, a system of attitudes and attributes, a universal compassion, a never-ending mercy, a total tolerance, a complete peace, a full understanding, a creativity that is unending in a universe that is ever-expanding. In a sense, we are striving and struggling to raise a banner of what Islam really should be understood to be. It has been given to us by Allah in our lives, and in the lives of our families and our children, and the community of human beings – some of whom believe and some of whom do not. Some believe in a different way, and some do not believe at all.

My *khutbah* today is again about community. When we see what is happening in Mecca at this moment and in Medina at this time, we see the *ummah*, the community gathering together in *jamat*. But who are these people? What really ties them together? Is it only form or practices? Is it fear/*khawf* or is it *taqwa*/piety (which is sometimes falsely

translated as fear)? When we hear this word *taqwa* in the Qur'an and it is translated as fear, we should change that translation to piety. That is its essential meaning. We realize that we belong to more than one community, and it is better that we remind ourselves about a relationship to the different communities than to pretend that we understand what they are and what the demands are.

Last night, I gave a *dars* on this community, and this community should be a model. A model is something that is always tested and re-designed. A model is a model; it's not a finished product. From a very technical and scientific point of view, we create many models. We may utilize those models for a period of time, redesign them, and hopefully have a goal and purpose in mind. Sometimes the design of the model reveals to us something more than we had conceived of at the beginning. Probably, often that happens. We find ourselves in that situation all the time. But we have to remind ourselves that in the community of believers, in this community of Muslims and of people who practice Tasawwuf, Sufism, we talk about community in a model form. We have to remember that as we belong to one or more communities (they may be defined in different ways), each one has its guidelines, each one has its expectations, and each one has its rules and processes and forms.

The community of believers who are on Hajj right now, starting tomorrow in Saudi Arabia, they are now defined as a community of *hajjis* and *hajjas* for a temporary period of time. Each one brings with them their cultural, linguistic and different sect approaches to Islam. Then, we have to remind ourselves that the basis of action that we have to take, and the jewels and the gems that are offered to us need to be put together. The jewels and gems of the Qur'an and of the Sunnah of Rasulallah (sal) are practical tools. Underlying my intention today is that we try to learn better ways to communicate with the spirit of Islam as it resides hopefully in the core of every human being, whether they call it Islam or not. It is the spirit of compassion and mercy and tolerance and understanding and love, patience, perseverance, kindness, submission, and security, etc.

It's important that we understand certain things about who we are and where we are, because a Muslim doesn't belong to just one community. A Muslim belongs to Muslims of the world, but who are they and where are they? Unfortunately, we cannot forget the old statement: "*I traveled the Islamic world and found little Islam. I traveled the Muslim world and found few Muslims.*" This old statement goes back centuries upon centuries, but it is a reality. We call ourselves human beings, but we see inhumaneness all around us. There's nothing heretical about a statement like that; it's very true. Being a Muslim, Christian, Jew, Buddhist or Hindu takes effort. It takes submission and it takes belief. It is an embracing of principles, hopefully. How many will embrace and then let go, or embrace and hold on?

Allah says, "**Lo, this, your religion is one religion; and I am your Lord, so worship Me.**" "The question is, who is He speaking to? Is He speaking to Muslims, people who will be Muslims, only the people who have embraced Islam as a religion? The word is translated as religion, but He is using the word *dīn*. *Dīn* means much more than just religion; it involves principles, attitudes and forms. As much as we say we want to believe, certainly it's true that because Allah (swt) told us something is true, it is true. At least at this point, we believe that what is revealed to us is truly revelation from Allah. We have proofs.

What is revealed to us from Allah is supported throughout the whole system. Scientifically it is supported, biologically, chemically, physically; it is all supported in this universe. There is no contradiction between the science and the spirituality. Indeed, the science is a metaphor for the Haqq that is the Truth of Allah, and it keeps being reinforced in us by our creative interface with it. We can't just say that we are a member of a community and not live by the guidelines of the community, and its rules (if there are rules), and its attitudes and hopes, dreams and philosophies that make you or me a part of a community.

Secondly, we have to realize that Islam can only prosper with us, and without any one of us. None of us is integral to the success of Islam, but each one of us is. I know that is contradictory. Allah speaks in Qur'an about the protection and preservation of the *dīn*: **“We have without a doubt sent down the message, and We will certainly guard it from corruption.”** How we approach the message determines the degree of how integral our interface is. There are things, for example, where technologically, redundancy is built into certain products and technology. If something fails, something else takes over for it. In a strange way, there is redundancy built into the human race, also. Nothing hangs on the life of one person. Yet, every person their self is a very important part, and has an important role to play. If we play our roles properly, then we can be assured that we are part of a system, a process that is designed for something purposeful and in a sense, endless.

We leave behind us impression and ideas, discoveries, inventions, inspiration, love – many things that are limited and many things that are not limited. Many things have a lifespan with us, and many things go far beyond our lifespan. Allah (swt) tells us also that we are a chosen people, and warns us that He can pick another community if we don't do well. He can create another community from amongst us, if we don't live up to what it means to be a true Muslim. What this means to us is we should be people who strive to understand what it really means to be a Muslim child, a Muslims adult, a Muslim parent, a Muslim teacher, a Muslim student, a Muslim neighbor – a *mu'min*, also. It doesn't mean that you wear it on your sleeve, your license plate, or you are out there preaching on the street corner, or trying to convert the world. To what? To the essential goodness that a human being is? We should all do that. We should encourage everyone to be the best they can be. A community of people, whether this community (which is a model for us), or a larger community of the *ummah* gathered on the plain of Arafat, should be above any difference of individuals or differences of family, as much as that is possible.

To be successful and fulfill what Allah (swt) has asked us, we should be beyond the limitations of differences. We should see them and appreciate them, but we should not be negatively influenced by them. It doesn't mean not to see them; it means [appreciate them and not be negatively influenced by them], whatever differences we find among ourselves: children arguing, husband and wife not agreeing (of course that doesn't happen here), friends not exactly agreeing (that rarely happens here!), people working with different ways of approaching things (that definitely happens!), different styles of communications. Islam is not some airy-fairy kind of mentality, an unreachable goal. It's a reality, and it is about reality. Islam is not about some dream world or utopia. It's about the reality we live in. We are placed here for a short period of time, with a very intensive dose of reality to interface with.

Allah (swt) could have made us live for 500 years. In Biblical times supposedly people lived for 500 years. We could stretch this out, but we live for 60, 70, 80, 90, or 100 years. This is an intensive retreat we are on. This is an intensive *khilwa*. We don't necessarily treat it as a retreat. What does it mean? It means that personal differences are going to exist. We have come out of Ramadan headed toward the Eid al-Adha this coming week. Ramadan was nice and difficult – something you miss when it's over – but we all want to stay on the same page. We are coming back to the fact that things change. We came back to our work; we go and do our jobs; our schedule returns to its normal / abnormal schedule. There is a grand system that Allah (swt) has provided for us as life. These physical, social, and political systems have been provided for us, and they all interface. They are all opportunities of the affirmation of a larger intention, a larger system.

That's why how we live our life in this community is not just about doing group work, or getting dinners cooked on Wednesday and Saturday, or coming to the *khutbah* on Friday, or helping one another. It demands an attitude, a devotion and dedication, and effort – whatever effort we can make. Some of us, at times, limp. Others, at times, sneeze.

Some of us are very healthy into an older age. Some of us can do great strenuous work when we are older. Some of us are very young, but we consider those little children members of the community, because it's the world. Allah doesn't say you are only a member of the community when you go through your bar mitzvah. There is no bar mitzvah. Do you understand? Up until that time you are nothing, then after that you are a cufflink, we used to say. Every day is an initiation into the community. Every day is learning responsibility. The system that keeps us together, and the interfacing of systems, is just like our physical body. When one of the different systems in our physical body doesn't function well, like circulatory, the game's over. Everything interfaces, but there is an independence. There is an interrelationship between them that is necessary. So, too, there is an interrelationship between our inner life and our outer life.

How we run the community, how we run our lives, how we interface with a larger global Muslim community, how we interface with the global community of believers, how we interface with the people of this world who are so diametrically opposed to what we say and what we do has to do with how we commit ourselves to our life, how we commit ourselves individually to this life, how we commit ourselves to our community, to our prayer, to making our *du'ā*, to making our *dhikr*, and how we are willing to take responsibility. We got up this morning and there's no heat in the school. Allaudin wouldn't look at me and say, "Go call an electrician." Allaudin would go running over to the school and check everything he knew to figure out how it would go. He wouldn't say, "I haven't had my juice this morning yet." It's not because I asked; because he might say, "Yes, Khadija already told me. I'm on my way over." It is not because the Shaykh asked, but because it is a thing that needs to be done. It's a silly example, but it's not. It happens every day here.

The people in the surrounding communities don't have that security. They don't necessarily have that faith. Some of them call up their kids and say, "I'm not feeling well today," and their kid says, "Well, Mom, I'll be back for Thanksgiving. Hang on." Or,

“Gee, that’s too bad.” Or, “Yeah, I don’t feel well, either.” It’s a common attitude. It’s not our attitude, *alhamdulillah*. We are also asked by Allah and enjoined not to be biased or prejudiced against others because of their ethnicity, race, or social or financial status. Allah says in the Qur’an, **“God demands justice, the doing of good, and liberality to kith and kin. And He forbids all shameful deeds, injustice, and rebellion. He instructs you that you may receive admonition.”**

If we are truly brothers and sisters – we are all children of Adam so at least we are cousins – we have to watch what we think and say about one another. It doesn’t mean we have to agree, or not see difficulties or cultural difficulties, or we shouldn’t discuss them. It means we should be just. The other thing we have to do in our day to day life is that some people have to lead and some people have to follow. Some people lead over here, and follow over there. The same person who is leading one minute is following the next minute. I’m going to follow the advice of many of you in this room on many subjects. I asked Abu Bakr to join us at Lowe’s yesterday and we took his advice. We then had the blessing of having Ayla with us, too. Then I’m going to lead in other subjects.

For us really to understand what it means to be a community of Muslims, of believers, of those in submission, of those who would like to seek support and respond to the needs of others in this world in terms of Islam, is we should be good examples of what we do lead in, and be good examples of followers. We should embrace others in our sincerity. We should never, ever try to remove someone from their position and knowledge of their authority. We have to live, sometimes, in times of misunderstanding. We are living at a time in this country of great misunderstanding, of tremendous strain and stress. I had lunch with the Assistant Secretary of State. Already, she’s thinking of the programs that could be blocked because of the elections that just came about.

What things are going to be blocked? Many good things that speak well of our country. Exchanges of religious leaders – this is very important for the times we live in. Bringing

young professionals in to see how things are done in our country as they build their countries, that may be blocked. Bringing in groups, like the Kyrgyz women we just brought in may be blocked. Women who are working against drug trafficking and human trafficking and ethnic violence, that may be blocked now by people who feel they can save, what \$50 million dollars? A hundred million dollars? What is that, .01 percent of the budget? It is for only political reasons. But as Muslims, we are not to be political. Yes, all around us we are surrounded by political Islam—crazy people who want to blow up things. Crazy people! But they are no more Muslim than this podium is. It's in the mosque; it's been exposed to prayer, *dhikr*, *du'ā*. Repeat after me (as if talking to the podium). Hello? Repeat after me. It can't repeat after me. Even if it could, it wouldn't mean anything. My iPhone can repeat after me, but it has no mind, no consciousness. We can erase that; that is not Islam.

Then we have to remember the enjoinders of Prophet Mohammed (sal). He told us to be loyal to the systems we are living under. It's very important, whether nations or family systems. Differences of opinions are expected, and we have to live with them though we may disagree. There are children here in this room who, when they hear something that sounds familiar to them, don't realize they are learning it for the first time. They have seen it. They have heard it uttered over the table at home, at dinner. They've heard it in a *khutbah*, but they haven't really thought about it. But because of the environment, it comes quite naturally. What are we learning for the first time?

There are things we know, but we don't have *basīra*. We make choices, but we don't have *firāsa*/discrimination. We need to know how to ask the right questions, not to be disagreeable if we are disagreeing, but to have good *adab*. We have to look at the sincerity in the hearts of people. They can come from this *madhab* or that *madhab*, this sect or that sect. We have to look at people's sincerity, to accept and be able to honor the opinions of other ways of thinking. One *hadith* tells us, “***We are all born Muslims and raised in the way our parents make us, as Jews or Christians.***” The point is we have to

respect the sincerity of others, the will of others. It is to understand that we come from the same root stock. All the apples we enjoy in this country came from Central Asia. “Oh, these are our apples here. We grew them in our orchard.” But there were no apples here before the root stock was brought over. What did Johnny Appleseed say? “The Lord is good to me.” He knew where it came from. We can all join in singing that later, if you like, like a hymn.

Another thing I want to mention is that in community, *inshā'a-Llāh*, forty-one years into this, we are not a community of rumors or backbiters. We are not a community of jealous people. On the whole, our Muslim community, our spiritual-Sufic community is one that can be a model for the global community. It is constantly being worked on. The only way I know to do this is through service and love. I don't know any other way. We all have our desires, our wants, the things that tempt us. *Alhamdulillah-Llāh*, we are all human beings. We all submit to some of those wants and fulfill some of those desires, and dabble in some of those temptations, but we should have overriding us something good, something that will divert us from catastrophe and keep us on the *siratal mustaqim*.

If you don't look around the world and see what happens. Look around this country and see what's going on. See what people are being prepared for in this country. It's not good. This morning a neighbor came over and we were talking. He is very articulate, very well educated, and an extremely liberal progressive. He said, “I think only revolution can change this country.” I said, “What kind of revolution?” He said, “Things happen and people go against it (I won't go into the detail).” I said, “I understand it, but I believe in education. I believe in trying to keep some balance and educating future generations to the values and principles that are behind this country.” You educate them, so as they become leaders and you see the benefit of it, then the “revolution” brings about change in the sense that things turn.

We had a good discussion on that this morning. It got to me talking about something I don't talk about a lot, which is the *mahdi*. I'm not a millennialist, I don't talk about Armageddon. But I said to him, understand the principle behind the *mahdi* or the messiah that is in every religion. The principle is it's a uniting moment. Of course there are people who are what we call 'collateral damage.' But look at the collateral damage in Darfur. What is the collateral damage in Aceh, or where people keep building their houses on the edge of mountains that erupt, like in Indonesia now, because they have nowhere else to go? They go back up the mountain, wait for the next explosion and try to live their lives. There is always something. But in the overall picture, goodness can come through love and education.

My dear brothers and sisters, we have to appreciate what we have, and the responsibilities that have been placed on us, whether it is cooking a meal on Saturday night, or coming to the *dhikr*, or putting new doors on the store up the hill, or caring for our elders. We have to clearly not interfere in the affairs of others, but we have to commit ourselves to applying the teachings of Islam and Tasawwuf. Everyone is enjoined to listen to one another and to take the advice of one another, or to hear it, and to be truly brothers and sisters in Islam. Because the Prophet Mohammed (sal) took advice from others, some of which was not so good, if you remember a certain battle that didn't go well.

We need to be active in creating and sustaining the systems and affirming the systems by which we live, in which we live, and through which we live – not be haphazard. We should take the guidelines we should adopt and apply them. The goal is to live in peace and harmony among ourselves as members of the human community, as members of this community, as members of the Muslim community; otherwise, we create problems. We have to remember what the Prophet (sal) said, ***“The similitude of believers in their compassion and mercy and affection to one another is like a single body. When one organ ails, the whole body is drafted with sleeplessness and its protection.”***

What is most important? I think the most important part is the affection part. If you love someone, you have compassion. If you care what is happening to them, you are merciful to them and you serve them. It's very hard to be affectionate at arm's length. Affection demands you get close enough to plant a little kiss on the cheek, a little arm around the person, a look into their eyes. We have to care for one another, to let our love and needs affect our thinking – affection / affect. I should even say, infect. We should make ourselves vulnerable to one another in trust. I'll end with a quotation from Qur'an:

The believing men and believing women are protectors of one another. They enjoin what is just and forbid what is evil. They observe regular prayers and practice charity. They obey Allah and His Apostle. On them Allah will pour His Mercy, for Allah is exalted in power and in wisdom.

We are given this template. The world we live in tells us we should pay more attention to what and who we are. We are going to establish how we live, and how we deal with our finances, and how we deal with the debt of others and the needs of others. What Allah (swt) and the Prophet said, and what the *shuyukh* said is most important. We can serve one another in being Muslim, *mu'min* and *shahid*, *inshā'a-Llah*. We all were given a name when we were born, just like everything was given a name by Adam. That name establishes an anchor for our identity. A Muslim is a name, and we want it to be a reality, also. Allah says:

Work righteousness, and soon you will be brought back to the knower of what is hidden and what is open, and then He will show you the truth in all what you did.

Asalaamu aleikum. Du'ās.

SECOND KHUTBAH Prayer for blessings upon the pilgrims on Hajj. Duas.