

Saturday 12th May 2007

بِسْمِ اللّٰهِ الرَّحْمٰنِ الرَّحِیْمِ

إِنَّ الْحَمْدَ لِلَّهِ ، نَحْمَدُهُ وَنَسْتَعِينُهُ وَنَسْتَغْفِرُهُ ، وَنَعُوذُ بِاللَّهِ مِنْ شُرُورِ أَنْفُسِنَا
وَمِنْ سَيِّئَاتِ أَعْمَالِنَا. مَنْ يَهْدِهِ اللّٰهُ فَلَا مُضِلَّ لَهُ، وَمَنْ يُضِلِّ فَلَا هَادِيَ لَهُ.
وَأَشْهَدُ أَنْ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا اللّٰهُ وَحْدَهُ لَا شَرِيكَ لَهُ ، وَأَشْهَدُ أَنَّ مُحَمَّدًا عَبْدُهُ وَرَسُولُهُ.

All Praise be to **اللّٰهُ**.

We praise him and ask him for help and forgiveness. We ask him for protection from the evilness in ourselves and from our own bad deeds. Whom-so-ever God guides to the truth no one will lead astray, and whom-so-ever He leads astray, no one will ever guide.

I testify that there is no God but **اللّٰهُ** to whom there is no partner
and I testify that Muhammad **ﷺ** is his servant and messenger

قُلْ لِمَنْ مَّا فِي السَّمٰوٰتِ وَالْاَرْضِ قُلْ لِلّٰهِ كَتَبَ عَلٰی نَفْسِهٖ الرَّحْمَۃَ

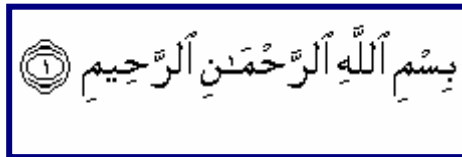
“Say To who belongs what is in the heavens and the earth? Say: To Allah; He has ordained mercy on Himself” (S6, A12)

May I first thank you for inviting me to talk to you today. I am a great believer that one of the best ways to learn is to teach. The effort that goes into preparing such a talk will inevitably have a positive impact on me. I sincerely recommend that if you want to learn more about our beautiful Islam, and if you want to effect a change in your lives, there is nothing better than getting involved.

The topic given to me for today was “Mercy”. My initial response was that this should be straight forward. Every one here, and everyone that knows something about Islam, knows that Islam in essence is the religion of mercy. The difficulty in a topic like this is how to hit the message home, and how to make it relevant to our everyday life. The other difficulty of course is how to cover such a vast topic in less than an hour.

For this reason, I will divide the talk into three sections. The first relates to the concept of the “divine mercy”. The second relates to our beloved prophet, and this hopefully should lead us to the main aim of this talk; the application of mercy in a Muslims life.

To talk about divine mercy is an endless task. We all know that the religion of Islam opens with the words:



We all know about the beautiful names of Allah, and yet, as we open ourselves to Islam, Allah(SWT) wants us from the start to appreciate these particular two beautiful names: Ar-Rahman Ar-Raheem.

Some scholars explained “Ar-Rahman” as being an essence of mercy, and “Ar-Raheem” as being the application of mercy. These beautiful names are repeated at the beginning of each surat in the Holy Quran (except surat 9), and are also repeated over 80 times within the text of the Holy Quran. We sometimes hear in the media provocative questions such as “What sort of God is yours?”, We should be left in no doubt as to the forefront attributes that determines our relationship with Allah(SWT), and that is a relationship of mercy.

The mercy of Allah is manifest in everything and encompasses everything:

الَّذِينَ يَحْمِلُونَ الْعَرْشَ وَمَنْ حَوْلَهُ يُسَبِّحُونَ بِحَمْدِ رَبِّهِمْ وَيُؤْمِنُونَ
بِهِ وَيَسْتَغْفِرُونَ لِلَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا رَبَّنَا وَسِعْتَ كُلَّ شَيْءٍ رَّحْمَةً وَعِلْمًا

“Those who bear the Throne and those around Him praise the glory of their Lord and believe in Him and ask forgiveness for those who believe: Our Lord! You have encompassed everything in mercy and in knowledge” (S40, A7)

Allah(SWT) is telling us that His Mercy has encompassed everything. However, in this aya, it is interesting to note that Mercy is linked to knowledge.

Allah also tells us that the perfection of creation is also encompassed with mercy:

الَّذِي خَلَقَ سَبْعَ سَمَاوَاتٍ طِبَاقًا مَّا تَرَىٰ فِي خَلْقِ الرَّحْمَنِ مِن تَفْوُتٍ
فَارْجِعِ الْبَصَرَ هَلْ تَرَىٰ مِن فُطُورٍ ﴿٣﴾

“Who created the seven heavens one above the other; you see no incongruity in the creation of Ar-Rahman; So turn your vision again, can you see any disorder?” (S67, A3)

In this aya, we are informed that in the creation of the “Merciful”, there are no faults. Allah(SWT) could have used other attributes to define His divine ability of perfection, such as the “Al-Aziz”, “Al-Jabbar”, “Al-Azeem” and so on. However, in defining the perfection of creation, Allah(SWT) used the beautiful name of “Ar-Rahman”, thus telling us that in perfection there is mercy.

Does this make sense? Does it make sense that in knowledge and in perfection there is indeed mercy? Imagine a world without eyes, a world without taste, a world without an immune system, a world without flowers, birds or butterflies. A world without insects or bees. A world without rivers, lakes, forests and deserts. A world without night and day. It is simply un-imaginable. The perfection in creation is something that we have taken for granted, and many claim that it is simply the result of chance.

Sometimes the mercy of perfection is only appreciated when something goes wrong. I am recovering from a simple cold that gripped me for the past ten days. Some of my bodily systems have been put under strain, and quickly one realizes how perfect this body is.

When the nose is slightly dry it is too painful to breathe, and when it is slightly moist, it is too difficult to breathe. When it is working perfectly well, it is indeed a great mercy.

One of the greatest mercy of Allah, is that this perfection has been granted to everyone, believer and non-believer alike. We come across many examples of this in the Quran:

وَهُوَ الَّذِي يُرْسِلُ الرِّيحَ بُشْرًا بَيْنَ يَدَيْ رَحْمَتِهِ^ط

“It is He Who sends the winds in glad tidings, going by His mercy” (S7, A57)

The winds that take the clouds and irrigate barren lands to bring them back to life is a sign of His mercy.

وَمِن رَّحْمَتِهِ^ه جَعَلَ لَكُمُ اللَّيْلَ وَالنَّهَارَ لِتَسْكُنُوا فِيهِ وَلِتَبْتَغُوا مِنْ
فَضْلِهِ^ه وَلِعَلَّكُمْ تَشْكُرُونَ ﴿٧٣﴾

“And of His mercy He has made for you the night and the day, that you may rest therein, and that you may seek of His grace, and that you may give thanks” (S28, A73).

فَأَنْظِرْ إِلَىٰ آثَارِ رَحْمَتِ اللَّهِ كَيْفَ يُحْيِي الْأَرْضَ بَعْدَ مَوْتِهَا إِنَّ ذَٰلِكَ
لَمُحْيِ الْمَوْتَىٰ وَهُوَ عَلَىٰ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ قَدِيرٌ ﴿٥٠﴾

“Look then at the signs of Allah's mercy, how He gives life to the earth after its death, most surely He will raise the dead to life; and He has power over all things” (S30, A50)

أَلَمْ تَرَ أَنَّ اللَّهَ سَخَّرَ لَكُمْ مَّا فِي الْأَرْضِ وَالْفُلْكَ تَجْرِي فِي الْبَحْرِ
بِأَمْرِهِ وَيُمْسِكُ السَّمَاءَ أَنْ تَقَعَ عَلَى الْأَرْضِ إِلَّا بِإِذْنِهِ إِنَّ اللَّهَ بِالنَّاسِ

لِرَعُوفٍ رَحِيمٍ ﴿١٥﴾

“Do you not see how Allah has made all that is in the earth subservient unto you? And the ship runs upon the sea by His command, and He holds back the heaven (rain) from falling on earth except by His leave. For Allah is Most Kind and Most Merciful to people” (S22, A65)

وَتَحْمِلُ أَثْقَالَكُمْ إِلَىٰ بَلَدٍ لَّمْ تَكُونُوا بَلَغِيهِ إِلَّا بِشِقِّ الْأَنْفُسِ إِنَّ رَبَّكُمْ

لِرَعُوفٍ رَحِيمٍ ﴿٧﴾

“And they carry your heavy loads to lands that you could not (otherwise) reach except with distress; for your Lord is indeed Most Kind, Most Merciful” (S16, A7)

Again, what is amazing about these mercies is that they are prescribed for everyone without exception. For those who believe in Allah and for those who are ardent disbelievers, these mercies are for everyone. Sometimes you hear a disbeliever arguing with some tongue in cheek; what is the point? Your God will surely punish me without mercy, so I might as well carry on as I am. Where is the mercy of your God. It is as if they completely disregard all the mercies around them as being pure chance. May Allah open our eyes and make us among those who truly appreciate all these mercies.

Coming now to the mercy of our dealing with Alla(SWT). This is what defines our relationship with Allah. We know of all the warnings of punishment and hell fire and so on, but what about Mercy. When we teach our children about Allah, do we first start by warning them about the punishment or do we start by telling about the merciful nature of Allah:

﴿٤٩﴾ نَبِيُّ عِبَادِي أَنِّي أَنَا الْغَفُورُ الرَّحِيمُ

“Tell My servants that I am indeed Most Forgiving, Most Merciful;” (S15, A49)

Alla(SWT) reminds us in the Holy Quran repeatedly of his Mercy, and guides us to the fact that forgiveness is closely linked to mercy (Al-Ghafoour ArRaheem).

There is mercy in perfection, there is mercy in sub serving this world to us, and there is mercy in forgiveness. Does Islam leave any doubt about the Divine mercy.

In a Hadith Qudsi: On the authority of Abu Hurayrah(RAA), who said that the Messenger of Allah(SAAWS) said: *When Allah decreed the Creation He pledged Himself by writing in His book which is laid down with Him: My mercy prevails over my wrath.*

(This hadith was related by Muslim, by al-Bukhari, an-Nasa'i and Ibn Majah).

Do we Muslims, after listening to all these examples, and the ample evidence, do we still ever feel in despair of the Mercy of Allah. Do we feel that for ourselves, or do we feel it for others. Do we despair of Allah's mercy for those in Chechnya, Palestine, Iraq or anywhere else in the world. Should we ever let such despair creep into our understanding of Islam. If so, let us keep this aya close to our minds:

وَالَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا بِآيَاتِ اللَّهِ وَلِقَائِهِ أُولَٰئِكَ يَئِسُوا مِن رَّحْمَتِي وَأُولَٰئِكَ لَهُمْ عَذَابٌ أَلِيمٌ ﴿٢٣﴾

Those who reject the Signs of Allah and the Meeting with Him (in the Hereafter),- it is they who despair of My Mercy: it is they who will (suffer) a most painful punishment. (S29, A23)

A sign of a believer is that they should never despair of the mercy of Allah.

Another aspect of Mercy in our relationship with Allah is encompassed in all the licenses we are given in our acts of worship and daily lives. Whether we look at wudu', prayers, fasting, food and so on, we find Islam is a message full of appreciation of the difficulties of this life. Allah(SWT) has been most merciful in that:

إِنَّمَا حَرَّمَ عَلَيْكُمُ الْمَيْتَةَ وَالدَّمَ وَلَحْمَ الْخِنزِيرِ وَمَا أُهْلَ بِهِ لِغَيْرِ اللَّهِ
فَمَنْ اضْطُرَّ غَيْرَ بَاغٍ وَلَا عَادٍ فَلَا إِثْمَ عَلَيْهِ إِنَّ اللَّهَ غَفُورٌ رَحِيمٌ ﴿١٧٣﴾

“He has only forbidden you what dies of itself, and blood, and flesh of swine, and that over which any other (name) than (that of) Allah has been invoked; but whoever is driven to necessity, not desiring, nor exceeding the limit, no sin shall be upon him; surely Allah is Forgiving, Merciful” (S2, A173)

فَمَنْ شَهِدَ مِنْكُمُ الشَّهْرَ فَلْيَصُمْهُ وَمَنْ كَانَ مَرِيضًا أَوْ عَلَى سَفَرٍ
فَعِدَّةٌ مِّنْ أَيَّامٍ أُخَرَ يُرِيدُ اللَّهُ بِكُمُ الْيُسْرَ وَلَا يُرِيدُ بِكُمُ الْعُسْرَ

“And whosoever of you is present, let him fast the month, and whosoever of you is sick or traveling, (let him fast the same) number of other days. Allah desires for you ease and does not desire hardship for you” (S2, A185)

Allah does not want our relationship with Him to be based on hardship and distress, but on ease and mercy, even when it comes to compulsory acts of worship, and to forbidden food.

As I said at the beginning, the topic of Mercy in Islam is so vast, it is impossible to give it due attention in a limited time. I would therefore like to move on to mention a few points relating to our beloved messenger, Muhammad(SAAWS).

This is one of the descriptions given in the Quran:

لَقَدْ جَاءَكُمْ رَسُولٌ مِّنْ أَنْفُسِكُمْ عَزِيزٌ عَلَيْهِ مَا عَنِتُّمْ حَرِيصٌ عَلَيْكُمْ

بِالْمُؤْمِنِينَ رَءُوفٌ رَّحِيمٌ ﴿١٢٨﴾

“There has come unto you a messenger, from among yourselves; it grieves him that you should fall into distress: is full of concern for you, and to the Believers he is kind and merciful” (S9, A128)

As believers, what more reassurances do we need to believe that Islam is the religion of mercy. Allah(SWT) has ordained mercy on Himself. Our beloved Prophet is described as merciful to the believers. However, the aya that polarizes this for me is this one:

وَمَا أَرْسَلْنَاكَ إِلَّا رَحْمَةً لِّلْعَالَمِينَ ﴿١٠٧﴾

“And We have not sent you but as a mercy to all creatures”(S21, A107)

There was mercy in the perfection and the creation of this world. There is mercy in our relationship with Allah. There is mercy in the way we apply ourselves to our religion. The message of our Prophet, the message of Islam, is that of mercy.

Do we feel that there is a message for us somewhere. If so is this message getting home.

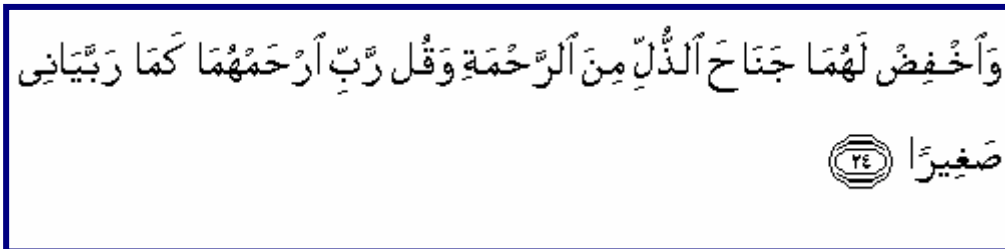
Why all that mention of mercy. Why is there all the association of mercy with perfection, generosity, forgiveness, care on so on.

Probably this can be exemplified in the incident in the battle of Uhud:

We all know of the situation when the Disbelievers were able to go round the mount of the archers and attack the Muslim army. The situation was dire and many companions were killed on the day. The Prophet(SAAWS) was badly injured. He was tripped into a ditch and was hit on his helmet with such a force that the metal sides pierced the skin of his face, and his front teeth were cracked, and his face was bleeding. He was surrounded by fighters with the single wish, and that is to annihilate the Muslims and kill their leader. There was no mistaking the feelings between the two factions.

The companions rushed to the Prophet(SAAWS) and pleaded with him to raise his hands and curse the disbelievers. In this desperate moment, how did the messenger of Islam react, and does his reaction teach us anything:

Have we been taught how to have mercy in our hearts, and how to express it. Again, somehow in a religion full of mercy, mercy does not come natural to us. The closest one comes to mercy in our lives is the relationship of a mother to her child. And this is one of the reasons why the Quran asks us to lower a wing of humility based on mercy to our parents. (surat 17)



This was one of the biggest problems for me when talking about this topic. We Muslims can talk at length about the mercy of Allah, the mercy of our Prophet, the mercy of our religion, yet, if we ask ourselves do we have mercy in our hearts, we are found wanting.

The message for me was clear. If I want to have that feeling in my heart, I will have to start working on these characteristics every day, and put my hope and trust in Allah that I stay on the straight path.

The Prophet(SAAWS) said: Iman does not come by wishing, but Iman is what settles in the heart and was testified for by actions.

Our actions as Muslims must testify to our Iman and must testify to our merciful religion.

Ja'far Bin Abi Talib described the society in Jahiliah as worshiping of idols, eating dead meat, committing adultery, abandoning kinship, being bad neighbors and the strong eats the weak. Then he describes what Islam has brought to them by saying, This was until Allah has sent to us a messenger from amongst ourselves asking us to worship none but Allah, asking us to be honest and truthful, to keep to our promises, to keep our kinship ties, to be good neighbors, and we were asked to stop evil deeds, asking for revenge, stealing the money of orphans and uttering falsehood. We believed him and we followed him.

When one looks at the society with and without Islam, one quickly sees where the mercy lies. It lies in our behavior. It lies in our conduct. It lies in our feelings towards each other. It is very difficult to define a single person as being merciful, as for all the qualities to lie in one person is just asking for too much. However, it is not difficult to ask for a merciful society, where one person completes the other. All having the same aim, to bring the mercy of the message of Islam into the society that we live in.

A heart that is connected with Allah must be a heart that is seeking mercy, while a heart that has no mercy in it is a heart that is far removed from Allah.

Let us remember that mercy comes from forgiveness, mercy comes from perfection, mercy comes from compassion and so on. The examples in the Quran and hadith are plenty.

I finish with another beautiful aya:

وَلَا تَسْتَوِي الْحَسَنَةُ وَلَا السَّيِّئَةُ ادْفَعْ بِالَّتِي هِيَ أَحْسَنُ
فَإِذَا الَّذِي بَيْنَكَ وَبَيْنَهُ عَدَاوَةٌ كَأَنَّهُ وَلِيٌّ حَمِيمٌ ﴿٣٤﴾ وَمَا يُلْقَاهَا
إِلَّا الَّذِينَ صَبَرُوا وَمَا يُلْقَاهَا إِلَّا ذُو حَظٍّ عَظِيمٍ ﴿٣٥﴾

“Nor can good and evil be equal. Repel (Evil) with what is best: Then will he, between whom and you was hatred, he becomes as it were a close friend. But none is granted such goodness except those who are steadfast, and none is granted such goodness except those of mighty good fortune” (S41, A34-5)

فَمَنْ تَبِعَ هُدَايَ فَلَا خَوْفٌ عَلَيْهِمْ وَلَا هُمْ يَحْزَنُونَ ﴿٣٨﴾