

18th July 2008

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 يُضِلِّهِ فَلَا هَادِيَ لَهُ.
وَأَشْهَدُ أَنْ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا اللّٰهُ وَحْدَهُ لَا شَرِيكَ لَهُ ، وَأَشْهَدُ أَنَّ مُحَمَّدًا عَبْدُهُ وَرَسُولُهُ.

All Praise be to **اللَّهِ**.

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

﴿ يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا اتَّقُوا اللَّهَ ، وَالتَّنظُرْ نَفْسٌ مَا قَدَّمَتْ لِغَدٍ ،
وَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ ، إِنَّ اللَّهَ خَبِيرٌ بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ ﴾ (الحشر ، 18)

"O you who believe, fear Allah, and let every soul look to what (provision) it has sent forth for tomorrow. And fear Allah, for Allah is well-acquainted with (all) that you do" (S59, A18)



Dear brothers and sisters, ASA.

Following on from last week, something happened earlier this week which is worth mentioning. I think most of you may have seen the program on C4 at the beginning of the week about the Quran, and there has also been a daily 10 minute short program at peak TV viewing on C4 looking at a number of Muslims of different backgrounds on their journey to Makkah. This morning, we heard that the government is setting up a forum to look at interpreting the Quran to counteract the extremist views. There is obviously a pre-determined agenda and time will tell where it is heading. On the surface, it seems to be heading in a positive direction, but we have been here before, and it is not surprising that we have to have some scepticism until the dust settles.

If you did not have the chance to watch the program, please make every effort to get a copy and watch it. It was a two hour program. It looked at many Muslim sections and it was very revealing. To some it may have been too revealing, and for others it may have misrepresented their particular sect of Islam, but on the whole, I felt that a great deal of effort went into preparing the program, and I felt that it was as balanced as it can be. In any case, we had the chance to discuss the program to some extent at the Wednesday men's study circle, and I would like to take this opportunity to invite you to that circle. We still have two more sessions before we break for summer. This particular circle is open to all, and is not strictly limited to Muslim brothers only. It is a good opportunity to discuss many of our issues.

The presence of such a detailed program on mainstream TV at peak viewing time is a significant step. It is keeping the Muslims and Islam on the public agenda. It appears to be giving some grounds for mainstream Muslims like you and I. I sensed that it was a positive step, and hopefully most of us felt the same. But again, if you want to discuss it, please feel free to attend on the Wednesday study circle at this centre at 7.30 pm.

Last khutbah, we asked what does being a Muslim mean to you. For today, I would like to ask another question: What does being happy mean to you? Probably, as Muslims, some of us may understand the question as am I happy being a Muslim. But that is not the question I had in mind. It is more of a general question that can be asked of anybody; are you a happy person? Am I a happy person?

I do not have enough knowledge of psychology to give you an elaborate scientific answer, but from my experience I am aware enough to say that every single person that is living today, has lived in the past or will live in the future, will at some stage in their life seek happiness.

I also know that in order to answer the question, am I happy, we will at least need to define for ourselves what happiness is. I also know that the definition of happiness will vary greatly from one person to another, and most likely this definition will be the key in answering the question, am I happy. It is therefore instinctive that even though as humans we are all seeking “happiness”, we are probably looking for it in different ways based on our definition of happiness.

This is where we need to be smart. This is where Islam can actually be a lead on this issue. I believe that Islam deals with the human heart and the human mind in a very unique fashion. A Muslim scholar once said: “we feel a sense of happiness that if the Kings and their children knew of it they would have fought us with the sword to take this happiness for themselves.”

In this statement, the scholar recognised the level of happiness that his understanding of Islam has bestowed on him. He recognised that such level of happiness is not forthcoming even if you are a King or the son of a King. Wealth, power and status are somehow not enough. He recognised that the value of this happiness is so immense that metaphorically speaking people would fight for it. In that sense, we know that over the centuries, people have consistently fought for power, for wealth and for status but the happiness that Islam can provide is valued above all that.

Brothers and sisters, one of the most important lessons for us in this day and age is to understand very clearly what happiness means to us as ordinary human beings. This initial understanding has nothing to do with Islam. Every single human being on earth wants happiness and every single human being on earth deserves happiness. The problem that we go back to again and again is that humanity does not have the answers to what happiness means. Because of that, and as a Muslim, my starting point needs to be the Quran and the example of the Prophet(SAAWS). Let us start by considering this aya:

رُيِّنَ لِلنَّاسِ حُبُّ الشَّهَوَاتِ مِنَ النِّسَاءِ وَالْبَنِينَ وَالْقَنَاطِيرِ الْمُقَنْطَرَةِ مِنَ
الذَّهَبِ وَالْفِضَّةِ وَالْخَيْلِ الْمُسَوَّمَةِ وَالْأَنْعَامِ وَالْحَرْثِ ذَلِكَ مَتَاعُ الْحَيَاةِ
الدُّنْيَا وَاللَّهُ عِنْدَهُ حُسْنُ الْمَبَاقِ ﴿١٤﴾

“For people, the love of desires has been made beautiful, from women and children; from hoarded treasures of gold and silver, from well bred horses, from cattle and land. These are the joys of the life of this world. But Allah has the more excellent abode” (S3, A14)

“These are the joys of this world”. When we read this aya, aya 14 from Surat Al-Imran, does it reflect the desires of ordinary people like you and me, and people anywhere and every where. I think it is mostly there. These are the joys of this life. As Muslims we believe in creation, and this aya tells us that this is the way Allah(SWT) has created us. These are the desires that should bring joy into our lives. However, and I strongly believe that this is where the critical problem of understanding lies, do we gain happiness by fulfilling these desires.

I honestly believe that as Muslims, one of the biggest mistakes or traps that we have let ourselves fall into is that we automatically assume, like everyone else, that by fulfilling our desires we gain happiness. Big house, big car, big plot of land, big salary, many children, big status and so on. These are the desires that should bring joy into our lives. Many people, Muslim and non-Muslim alike have let themselves believe that their ultimate happiness lies in fulfilling these desires. If only they had this aya, and if only we had understood this aya!

We the Muslims have been gifted this aya, and when we read it fully, we find that it ends with:

وَاللَّهُ عِنْدَهُ حُسْنُ الْمَبَاقِ

“But Allah has the more excellent abode”

What? Are we to really believe that Allah has better than all that?

Well, let us read the next verse, aya 15:

﴿قُلْ أَوْفَيْتُكُمْ بِخَيْرٍ مِّنْ ذَٰلِكُمْ لِلَّذِينَ اتَّقَوْا عِندَ رَبِّهِمْ جَنَّاتٌ تَجْرِي مِن تَحْتِهَا الْأَنْهَارُ خَالِدِينَ فِيهَا وَأَزْوَاجٌ مُّطَهَّرَةٌ وَرِضْوَانٌ مِّنَ اللَّهِ وَاللَّهُ بَصِيرٌ بِالْعِبَادِ﴾

“Say: Shall I reveal to you of something better than all that?”

Can we imagine anything that is better than all the joys that we just heard of? And more important, do we actually believe that this is the case? Do we really believe that Allah(SWT) has better than all that? Are we truly convinced? Let us read what the rest of the aya states:

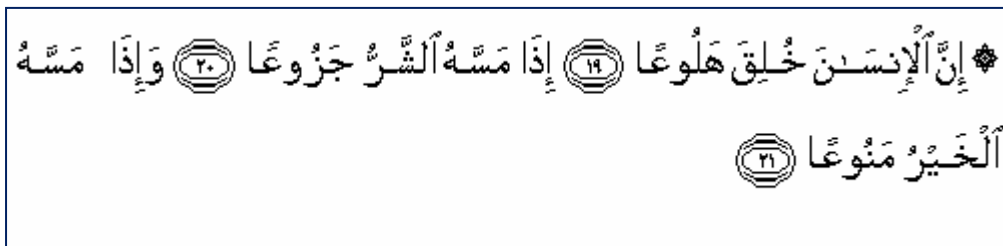
“Say: Shall I reveal to you of something better than all that? For the righteous are Gardens in nearness to their Lord, beneath which rivers flow; therein is their eternal home; with companions pure; and the pleasure of Allah. For Allah is sightfull of (all) His servants” (S3, A15)

To me as a human being, this is very interesting. I am being told in aya 14 of all the potential things that will bring joy into my heart and into my life, and in aya 15 I am being told that all that is nothing compared to what Allah(SWT) has for me in the Hereafter if, and what a massive if this is, if I am righteous; **“For the righteous are Gardens”**.

So where is the catch? Why can't I have it all in this Dunia? Why can't we have it all?

This is again where Islam is unique in letting us understand ourselves. Islam gives us a framework to work within. This framework does not appeal to everyone, and to some, they do not even believe that there is a God. Nevertheless, this is the framework we have been given, and we need to understand it. This framework includes angles, includes shaitan, includes Nafss, includes the delicate heart, includes the love of Dunia, includes our whims, includes the Jinn and includes many other issues which are firmly based within our system of belief. When we start looking at all this, we start to realise that as humans, there is more to us than just the desires mentioned in Surat 3, aya 14.

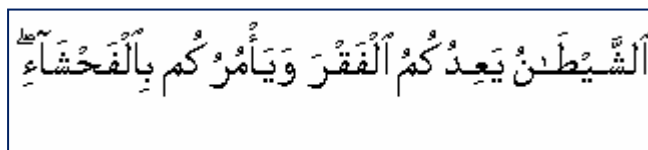
In surat 70, Al-Ma'arej, Allah(SWT) tells us more about our makeup as human beings:



“Truly the human was created of an impatient temperament. Greatly grieved when evil afflicts him. And very petty and mean when good befalls him” (S70, A19-21)

Is this an accurate reflection of the human being? Impatient, easily grieved and can be tight and mean. What does your experience tell you?

Another revealing aya:



“Satan threatens you with poverty and bids you to be obscene” (S2, A268)

It seems that when ever we talk about satan, he is lurking for us somewhere. Is the picture getting a bit clearer for us? This is where Islam is so unique. It gets us to understand ourselves and work within a framework of believing in Allah and the Hereafter, knowing our own makeup

and being aware of the pitfalls. This is Islam, you either believe in it and take it as it is, or you can leave it. There is no compulsion.

When we get back to the issue of happiness, the picture that starts to emerge is not so straight forward. Fulfilling our desires in Surat 3, aya 14 somehow does not automatically provide us with happiness. The Quran tells us in Surat Al-Ma'arej that we do not respond very well to our fortunes or to our misfortunes, and in Surat Al-Baqara, we have sheitan messing things up for us.

So where do we go from here? How and where do we seek true happiness? Where can we find that fulfilling feeling that can grip our hearts and make us feel secure, feel content, feel easy, feel comfortable and feel on top of the world.

Where can we get this security whether we have one penny in our pockets or we have a million pounds? Where can we get this happiness whether we have one child or ten or none at all? Where can we get this happiness while we continue to interact with everyone around us witnessing their fortunes and their misfortunes? Where can we get this balance when if you have the million pounds you will still look at the penniless as an equal, and if you are the penniless you will still look at the millionaire as an equal. Isn't that what Islam tells us? Are we not all equal in the sight of Allah(SWT).

يَتَأْتِيهَا النَّاسُ إِنَّا خَلَقْنَاكُمْ مِنْ ذَكَرٍ وَأُنْثَىٰ وَجَعَلْنَاكُمْ شُعُوبًا وَقَبَائِلَ
لِتَعَارَفُوا إِنَّ أَكْرَمَكُمْ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ أَتَقْوَاهُ إِنَّ اللَّهَ عَلِيمٌ خَبِيرٌ ﴿١٣﴾

“O mankind! We have created you of a male and a female, and made you into nations and tribes, that you may know each other. Surely the most honoured of you in the sight of Allah is the most righteous of you. And Allah has full knowledge of all things” (S49, A13)

Interesting that the term righteous is again used in this aya.

So what should Muslims do to seek happiness?

فَإِمَّا يَأْتِيَنَّكُمْ مِنِّي هُدًى فَمَنْ اتَّبَعَ هُدَايَ فَلَا يَضِلُّ وَلَا يَشْقَىٰ ﴿١٢٣﴾

“So there will surely come to you guidance from Me. whosoever follows My guidance, he shall not go astray nor be unhappy” (S20, A123)

Whosoever follows My guidance, he shall not go astray nor be unhappy.

We then read in the next aya:

وَمَنْ أَعْرَضَ عَن ذِكْرِي فَإِنَّ لَهُ مَعِيشَةً ضَنْكًا

"But whosoever turns away from My Message, to him is a tight restricted life" (S20, A124)

أقول قولي هذا وأستغفر الله لي و لكم

2nd Khutbah:

الحمد لله ثم الحمد لله. الحمد لله نستعينه ونستغفره ، ونعوذ بالله من شرور
أنفسنا وسيئات أعمالنا . أما بعد :

"Whosoever follows My guidance, he shall not go astray nor be unhappy. But whosoever turns away from My Message, to him is a tight restricted life" (S20, A123-4)

Brothers and sisters, people, Muslim and non-Muslim alike, are involved in a multi-billion Dollar industry to provide us with happiness through fulfillment of our desires. I and everyone else run incessantly after our desires in the pursuit of happiness. This has been my understanding of happiness, and it is most likely the same understanding for most of us. Yet, when I read these two simple ayas, the message is far removed:

"Whosoever follows My guidance, he shall not go astray nor be unhappy. But whosoever turns away from My Message, to him is a tight restricted life" (S20, A123-4)

The clear message is that happiness lies in following the guidance of Allah(SWT), and misery lies in turning away from Allah(SWT). That is the message of Islam. You want to be happy, turn to Allah, you want to be miserable, then turn away. No ifs, no buts. The message is clear, but it demands a lot.

الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا وَتَطْمَئِنُّ قُلُوبُهُمْ بِذِكْرِ اللَّهِ أَلَا بِذِكْرِ اللَّهِ تَطْمَئِنُّ
الْقُلُوبُ

"Those who believe, and whose hearts find tranquility in the remembrance of Allah: for without doubt in the remembrance of Allah do hearts find tranquility" (S13, A28)

We started the khutbah with these two ayas from Surat Al-Imran:

“For people, the love of desires has been made beautiful, from women and children; from hoarded treasures of gold and silver, from well bred horses, from cattle and land. These are the joys of the life of this world. But Allah has the more excellent abode. Say: Shall I reveal to you of something better than all that? For the righteous are Gardens in nearness to their Lord, beneath which rivers flow; therein is their eternal home; with companions pure; and the pleasure of Allah. For Allah is sightfull of (all) His servants” (S3, A14-5)

We noted that the term righteous was mentioned, so what are we to understand from this term. Praise be to Allah, the answer lies in the following two verses:

الَّذِينَ يَقُولُونَ رَبَّنَا إِنَّا أَمَّا فَاغْفِرْ لَنَا ذُنُوبَنَا وَقِنَا عَذَابَ النَّارِ ﴿١٦﴾

الصَّابِرِينَ وَالصَّادِقِينَ وَالْقَانِتِينَ وَالْمُنْفِقِينَ وَالْمُسْتَغْفِرِينَ بِالْأَسْحَارِ ﴿١٧﴾

“Those who proclaim: Our Lord we have believed. Forgive us our trespasses and protect us from the fire of hell. Those who are patient, and those who are truthful, and those who spend in the way of Allah and those who ask for forgiveness in the hours of dawn” (S3, A16-7)

If you want to look for happiness, look for it in these four ayas from Surat Al-Imran, ayas 14 to 17. Four verses that guide you to who we are, what makes us tick, what we can expect in this life and in the hereafter. Four verses that guide you to the value of Iman and the value of righteous work. That is where happiness is.

In Islam, happiness starts with a firm belief in Allah and is reinforced with righteous work. If we want to teach our children where they should go searching for happiness, this is exactly where I will tell them to look.