

FRIDAY SERMON

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وَإِذَا سَأَلَكَ عِبَادِي عَنِّي فَإِنِّي قَرِيبٌ ۖ أُجِيبُ دَعْوَةَ الدَّاعِ إِذَا دَعَانِ ۖ فَلْيَسْتَجِيبُوا لِي وَلْيُؤْمِنُوا بِي لَعَلَّهُمْ يَرْشُدُونَ

As you are all aware, we started fasting here in Mauritius on Monday 3rd April and hence tomorrow will be the 20th day of fasting for us. With the 20th day of fasting, we are entering the last ten days of the blessed month of Ramadan for this year. Usually, after twenty days of fasting, some people's bodies have well adapted themselves to the fasting regime whereas others start feeling the pain of fasting due to lack of sleep and food and drink. However, we should not lose heart and we should take it like we are running a marathon which is quite long but we do not give up. Even if we prod along, we do not give up because we have to be on the finishing line. Furthermore, when things become difficult in matters of religious duties, we should refer to our perfect exemplar (*uswatoun hasanatoune*), namely the Holy Prophet Mohammad (saw) and follow his example. Hazrat Ayesha (May Allah be pleased with her) reported:

“When the last ten nights (of Ramadan) would begin, the Messenger of Allah (peace and blessings be upon him) would keep awake at night (for prayer and devotion), awaken his family and prepare himself to be more diligent in worship.” (Al-Bukhari and Muslim)

So now is the time for those who might have been a bit negligent in the last ten days of fasting to catch up on the worship and devotion that they might have missed. For all those who have been fulfilling all their obligations, it is time to increase their efforts and try to do even more than they have been doing. We also learn again from Hazrat Ayesha (ra):

“The Messenger of Allah (peace and blessings be upon him) used to strive more in worship during Ramadan than he strove in any other time of the year; and he would devote himself more (in the worship of Allah) in the last ten nights of Ramadan than he strove in earlier part of the month.” (Muslim).

Anas ibn Malik (may Allah be pleased with him) reported that one year, when the month of Ramadan started, the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) said:

This month (of Ramadan) has begun and there is a night in it better than one thousand months. (So,) any one deprived of its (blessings) is actually deprived of all goodness. Indeed, He is truly deprived who is kept away from its good. (Ibn Majah)

Hazrat Ayesha (May Allah be pleased with her) reported:

“The Messenger of Allah (peace and blessings be upon him) said, **“Seek *Lailat Al-Qadr* (Night of Decree) in the odd nights out of the last ten nights of Ramadan.”** (Al-

Bukhari). For us it will be the 23rd, 25th, 27th and 29th of April and 1st of May if the 2nd May is not Eid.

Abu Hurairah (May Allah be pleased with him) reported:

The Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) said, “**Whosoever performs Qiyam (night vigil prayer) during Lailat Al-Qadr (Night of Decree), with faith and being hopeful of Allah’s reward, will have his former sins forgiven.**” (Al-Bukhari and Muslim)

Hazrat A’ishah (May Allah be pleased with her) reported:

I asked: “O Messenger of Allah! If I realize *Lailat Al-Qadr* (The Night of Decree), what should I supplicate in it?” He (peace and blessings be upon him) replied, “**You should supplicate: Allahumma innaka `afuwun, tuhibbul-`afwa, fa`fu `anni (O Allah, you are the Effacer of sins, and You love effacing sins ; so, efface (my sins) for me).**” (At-Tirmidhi)

Hazrat Ayesha (May Allah be pleased with her) reported:

“The Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) kept standing (in prayer) so long that the skin of his feet would crack. I asked him: “Why do you do this, while you have been forgiven of your former and latter sins?” He said, “**Should I not be a grateful servant of Allah?**” (Al-Bukhari and Muslim).

So, when we read all these hadiths, we understand that now is not the time to show weakness or negligence. Now is the time to show our sincerity in believing the message of Islam that was brought by the Holy prophet Mohammad (saw). We have an occasion, an opportunity to have all our sins removed from our book of actions and we should avail ourselves of this opportunity by waking up at night and offering as much supplications as we can so that Allah may take pity on us. We should also try to remember the wrongs that we might have committed and feel shameful for them. With this sense of shame and full of regrets, we should present ourselves to Allah and express our regrets and solicit His pardon with tears in our eyes with the hope that He would forgive us all our sins and give us a clean slate. Allah has been kind to us by granting us this new opportunity. We should make the best use of it in these last days of the Holy month of Ramadan.

Similarly, the verse that I have just recited says “**And when My servants ask thee about Me, say: ‘I am near. I answer the prayer of the supplicant when he prays to Me. So, they should hearken to Me and believe in Me, that they may follow the right way.’** (HQ 2:187)

So, we understand that Allah is always near us. We are the ones who, due to our negligence and lack of understanding, go far from Him because we become engrossed in the life of this world. So, let us all respond to Allah’s call and carry out all the obligations that He has imposed upon us and stay away from all the prohibitions that He has imposed. Under no circumstance should we entertain the idea that we know better than Him and invent a way of behaving. He knows best and He has our welfare in view for everything that He asks of us. The month of Ramadan comes back every year so that we might better realize the importance

of Allah in our life. So, let us all rise to this occasion and show that we are good servants who are eager to follow the straight path that He has chosen for us. So, let us all use these last days to fast in a better way than we have been doing by observing all the limits imposed upon us. Furthermore, let us broaden our knowledge of what Allah demands from us by reading the Holy Quran and by seeking all the ways and means by which we make the Holy Quran the Spring of our hearts like the Holy Prophet (saw) said by devoting hours and hours to its study and practice. Let us also use the time left to offer more Nawafil to get nearer to Allah and let us give as much in charity as we can.

Since Prayer and supplications are a fundamental part of our life, I will reread to us what Hazrat Masih Maood (as) has told us about supplications (*do'a*). He said:

“It is imperative that just as an individual strives in worldly matters, so should he strive in the way of Allah. There is a proverb in Punjabi: “He who asks dies a death, so die and then ask.” The meaning is that it is an afflicted one who prays and that prayer is a form of death. If a person drinks a drop of water and claims that his great thirst has been slaked, he utters a falsehood. His claim would be established if he were to drink a bowl full of water. When prayer is offered in great tribulation so that the soul melts and flows at the threshold of the Divine, that is true prayer and it is God’s way that when such a prayer is offered, He accepts it or responds to it in some other manner. [Malfuzat, vol. IV, p. 340]

“Prayer is a wonderful thing. It is a pity that those who pray aren’t aware of the true manner of prayer, nor are they acquainted with the ways of the acceptance of prayer. The truth is that the very reality of prayer today has become strange. There are some who deny the effectiveness of prayer altogether and there are others who don’t deny it, but because their prayers aren’t prayers in the true sense, their condition is worse than the prayers of even those who altogether deny the effectiveness of prayer. Their practical condition has pushed many others to the verge of atheism. The first condition for prayer is that a supplicant should not get tired and become a prey to despair that nothing will happen. Sometimes it is seen that a prayer is carried on until it’s about to be accepted and then the supplicant gets tired and the result is failure and frustration. Frustration results in the denial of the effectiveness of prayer and gradually culminates in the denial of God. It is sometimes asked that if there is a God who accepts prayer, why haven’t those prayers been accepted that have been offered over a long period ? If those who think in this manner and stumble were to reflect upon their lack of perseverance, they would come to know that all of their frustration is the result of their own haste and impatience, which generates an ill concept of the powers of God and results in despair. So, one should never grow tired of prayer.”

“Are you aware what was the wonderful event that happened in the deserts of Arabia, that hundreds of thousands of the dead came alive within a few days, and those who had been corrupted through generations took on Divine color, and the blind began to see, and the tongues of the dumb began to flow with Divine insights, and such a revolution took place in the world which no eye had seen and no ear had heard before? It was the prayers during dark nights of one who had been wholly lost in God which created an uproar in the world and

manifested such wonders as had appeared impossible in the case of that unlearned helpless one, Muhammad (saw).” (The blessings of prayer)

“Blessed are the prisoners who pray and do not get tired for they shall one day be released; blessed are the blind ones who persevere in their prayers for one day they shall see. Blessed are those who are in the graves and seek the help of God through prayer for one day they shall be taken out of their graves. Blessed are you who do not get tired in your prayers and your souls melt while you pray, and your eyes shed tears, and a fire is lit in your breasts and you are driven into dark chambers and desolated jungles seeking solitude, and you are rendered restless and mad and unconscious of self, for in the end you will become the recipients of grace. The God to Whom we call is very Benevolent, Merciful, Modest, True, Faithful and Compassionate to those who are humble. You should also become faithful and supplicate with full sincerity and loyalty so that He should have mercy on you. Withdraw from the tumult of the world and do not make your faith a matter of personal contentions. Accept defeat for the sake of God so that you might become heirs to great victories. God will show a miracle to those who pray and will bestow extraordinary favour upon those who beg.” (Lecture Sialkot)

We will end with this revelation of Hazrat Masih Maood (as):

“Inni Anallaho fa’budni wa laa tansani wajtahid an taselani was’al rabbaka wa koun sa’oula”

“I am Allah, then worship Me, and do not forget me and keep striving to reach Me and keep supplicating your Lord and be diligent in supplication.” (Tazkira, p. 502)

So, just imagine if Allah asked Hazrat Masih Maood (as) to keep supplicating how important it should be for poor sinners like us. May Allah help us and may He grant us plenty of opportunities for supplications and may He accept from us. Ameen.