



Majlis Ugama Islam Singapura

Friday Sermon

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**Understanding The True Meaning Of Gratitude**

الْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ الَّذِي جَعَلَ الشَّمْسَ ضِيَاءً وَالْقَمَرَ نُورًا، وَأَنْزَلَ الْقُرْآنَ  
لِلْمُتَّقِينَ ذِكْرًا، أَشْهَدُ أَنْ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا اللَّهُ وَحْدَهُ لَا شَرِيكَ لَهُ وَأَنَّ  
مُحَمَّدًا عَبْدُهُ وَرَسُولُهُ، اللَّهُمَّ صَلِّ وَسَلِّمْ عَلَى سَيِّدِنَا مُحَمَّدٍ وَعَلَى  
آلِهِ وَأَصْحَابِهِ صَلَاةً وَسَلَامًا دَائِمِينَ إِلَى يَوْمِ تَجِدُ كُلُّ نَفْسٍ مَّا  
عَمِلَتْ مُحْضَرًا. أَمَّا بَعْدُ، فَيَا عِبَادَ اللَّهِ، اتَّقُوا اللَّهَ حَقَّ تَقَاتِهِ وَلَا  
تَمُوتُنَّ إِلَّا وَأَنْتُمْ مُسْلِمُونَ.

Blessed Friday jemaah,

Let us extend our utmost gratitude for being bestowed with iman in this life. In this blessed moment, let us ask from Allah s.w.t. that He places us among those who have taqwa in Him and are able to fulfil His commands and abstain from His prohibitions. Hopefully by doing so, we will placed among the dwellers of Paradise who continuously express their gratitude, as mentioned in Surah Az-Zumar verse 74:

وَقَالُوا الْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ الَّذِي صَدَقَنَا وَعْدَهُ، وَأَوْرَثَنَا الْأَرْضَ نَتَبَوَّأُ

مِنَ الْجَنَّةِ حَيْثُ نَشَاءُ فَنِعْمَ أَجْرُ الْعَامِلِينَ ﴿٧٤﴾

Which means: *“And they will say, “Praise to Allah”, who has fulfilled for us His promise and made us inherit the earth [so] we may settle in Paradise wherever we will. And excellent is the reward of [righteous] workers.”*

Dear brothers, we often catch ourselves saying *“Alhamdulillah”*. We do so as it reminds us of the concept of gratitude, and to always be grateful to Allah, The Giver. Unfortunately, at times, because of how easily we utter *“Alhamdulillah”* to the point that it has become habitual, we may start taking for granted the underlying concept of gratitude and its importance in lifting our spirit and developing our potential.

It is this trait that drove Rasulullah s.a.w. to wake up in the wee hours of the night and stand in prayer until his legs were swollen. And it is gratitude that gave Prophet Muhammad the strength and determination to diligently offer tahajjud prayers. In a hadith reported by Imam Muslim, Saidatina Aishah r.a. said: *“The Prophet (s.a.w.) used to stand (in the prayer) or pray till both his feet or legs swelled. I asked him: “Ya Rasulullah. Why are you doing this when all your past and future sins have been forgiven?”* Rasulullah then responded with an answer that

should move the hardest of hearts. He said, *“Should I not be a thankful slave then?”*

Jemaah, let us reflect upon this hadith. Rasulullah s.a.w. has been promised Paradise and all of the privileges in the Hereafter by Allah. In other words, the Prophet s.a.w. has been promised eternal success. If we were to go by human logic, when one has been guaranteed Paradise, one can rest and relax as one does not need to worry about one’s position in the Hereafter. Hence, it is only natural for Saidatina Aishah to ask such a question.

But if we were to look at those who have acquired a special status in the sight of Allah, we would learn that their acts of worship were not done because they felt they were compelled to do so. It was also not because of their desire to earn a special place. Because if that was what they were aiming for, they would surely stop striving once they were guaranteed Paradise. However, the reason they performed their acts of worship is out of gratitude for all of the blessings that Allah has bestowed upon them. The more blessings they were given, the stronger their determination and spirit to be in worship of Allah, to bring themselves closer to The Creator. And it is such attitude that we have to instil in ourselves, for example, when we rise to perform our Friday prayers. We do so not simply because it is obligatory upon us to perform our Friday prayers,

but we prostrate to Allah out of gratitude; to thank Him for blessing us with health, family, iman, and sustenance. Dear jemaah, when was the last time we prostrated and said earnestly: *“Ya Allah, thank you for all the blessings You have bestowed upon me!”*

Beloved Jemaah,

Al-Imam Al-Ghazali in his book *“Ihya Ulumuddin”* gave a very interesting analogy about the three levels of gratitude. He wrote that a grateful person is similar to one who joins the king’s entourage, and the king then gives him a horse.

**The first level of gratitude**, which is the level felt by many, is happiness because he has received a horse that can be used as a mode of transportation, or because it is simply an extremely valuable gift. This means that even if the horse was not from the king – even if it was given by someone else or if it was found in the middle of the desert – his level of happiness will still be the same. This is an example of gratitude of the common man, where his gratitude and happiness is determined by the gift or the blessing, and not by the giver.

**The second level**, is felt by those who were happy to have received the horse not because of the gift itself; rather, it is because of whom the gift was from. To them, this shows that they have been given attention by the giver (in this case, the

king). This level is closer to the true meaning of gratitude. This is when we remain grateful no matter the gift – or even the trial – that Allah has given to us, as it is an indication that Allah still loves us and that He has us in His sight. This is hence an indication that we learned to focus our gratitude and thankfulness to the giver, and not the gift itself. An example is when we love someone. No matter the gift that we receive, we feel happy to accept it not because of the gift itself, but because we feel appreciated by the giver.

**The third level**, as explained by Imam Al-Ghazali, refers to one who truly understood the meaning of gratitude. He is the one who continues to serve the king even after receiving the horse, just so that he can get closer to him. Even when the gift is withdrawn from him, as long as he is allowed to remain close to the king, he is far contented as that is his only desire. And this, my dear jemaah, is the true essence of gratitude. The more blessed we are, the more we see it as a motivation and drive for us to strive towards closeness to Allah s.w.t.

So that was it, my dear jemaah; a short introduction on the value of gratitude which we will continue to discuss for the rest of this month. May Allah make us among those who are grateful of Him, because of Him. And may Allah place us among the dwellers of Paradise who are always praising Him. Amin Ya Rabbal 'Alamin.

بَارَكَ اللهُ لِي وَلَكُمْ فِي الْقُرْآنِ الْعَظِيمِ، وَنَفَعَنِي وَإِيَّاكُمْ بِمَا فِيهِ مِنَ  
الآيَاتِ وَالذِّكْرِ الْحَكِيمِ، وَتَقَبَّلْ مِنِّي وَمِنْكُمْ تِلَاوَتَهُ إِنَّهُ هُوَ السَّمِيعُ  
الْعَلِيمُ، أَقُولُ قَوْلِي هَذَا وَأَسْتَغْفِرُ اللهَ الْعَظِيمَ لِي وَلَكُمْ، وَلِسَائِرِ  
الْمُسْلِمِينَ وَالْمُسْلِمَاتِ، وَالْمُؤْمِنِينَ وَالْمُؤْمِنَاتِ، فَاسْتَغْفِرُوهُ فَيَا  
فَوْزَ الْمُسْتَغْفِرِينَ وَيَا نَجَاةَ التَّائِبِينَ.