[Arabic Supplication along with the following *ayah* (verse) from *Qur’an*]



(Famaa ooteetum min shai'in famataa'ul hayaatid dunyaa wa maa 'indal laahi khairunw wa abqaa lillazeena aamanoo wa 'alaa Rabbihim yatawakkaloon) (Verses 42:36)

It was very difficult for me to choose an *ayah* (verse) for today’s *Khutbah* (sermon) and I have been thinking about it for some time. But I realized at the end of all that thinking that, our religion - by definition - is simple, and its teachings are straight forward. And so I don’t have to make something complicated when by definition it‘s supposed to be straight forward and simple. And so, today’s *Khutbah* (sermon) is about a reminder that I need, that I think everyone in this room needs, and is something that we have to live with. And it’s so easy to remind ourselves of [it], but at the same time, it’s very, very easy to forget. And I want to start with just a rough translation of the *ayah* (verse) that I recited before you.

Allah *Azzawajal* in *surat Ash-Shura* (this is the forty-second *surah*), Allah *Azzawajal* says, “*Fama ooteetum min shay-in famataAAu alhayati a****l****ddunya:* “Then whatever you have been given,” *Fama ooteetum* and the word “*ma*” already suggests that there’s an openness, anything that you have been given, and in addition to all of that, it’s *min shay-in. Y*ou could say, *Ma ooteetumoho da’a,* it could have been a pronoun. But instead of adding a pronoun, it’s *min shay-in* and not even *shay-an;* it is *MIN shay* - which is very unusual language. To suggest any at all things that you can imagine, that you have been given. Now in using those two words together in the *ayah* (verse), Allah is talking in this *ayah* (verse) now about every single object, physical object that you own, whether it’s clothing and car and house or whatever you own, whatever - down to a pen that is in to your name. But in addition, Allah is also talking about whatever I have been given in my life experiences, what kind of parents have I been given, what kind of youth was I given, what kind of…you know, what kind of opportunities were I given, what kind of friends was I given. Everything that I have been given, everything that I have experienced in my life thus far is inside, “*Fama ooteetum min shay,*” it’s captured within it. So this *ayah* (verse) is going to make a commentary about my entire existence on this Earth. And before I go any further, a reflection just on the fact that the passive form was used, “*ooteetum”* that you have been given.” In other words, none of the experiences I have enjoyed, not just the things that I own (or that I think I own), rather; none of the experiences that I have had in life are actually mine. They were a door that was opened to me by Allah *Subhaana Wa Ta'aala*. He was the one that opened every chapter of my life, one adventure to the next, to the next, to the next. You know for those of you that are married, who you married, and if there was a process before you got married, every piece of that process was actually from Allah; every single conversation was from Allah. This entire story of ours…and we don’t remember so much of it. When you look back, you don’t remember so many things that happened in your own life. Actually, for the last ten years it’s becoming more and more of a blur for me. I don’t know what I was up to in 2007, I can’t tell you. I don’t know - you know. It’s just becoming blurred together. I can’t tell you what happened in 2011 or 2012. I can remember some milestones here and there. I might even have to look at those in a calendar, because I can’t tell. I look at my children; they are growing. And my ten-year-old, my now almost twelve-year-old also. I look at her but it’s hard for me to remember what she looked like when she was four; I have to look at a picture to try and remember. I can’t remember that anymore. But Allah *Azzawajal* gave me each and every one of those experiences - whether I remember them or I am conscious of them, or not. All of them together, Allah sums it up in one phrase: “*famataa'ul hayaatid dunyaa.” B*asically, the combination of all of yours and my life experience, whatever good, whatever bad, or whatever we think was good or bad, happened to us [and] boils down to one thing: “*mataa'ul hayaatid dunyaa,”* which is roughly translated [as] “the enjoyment of worldly life.” All the things that you have been given, [and] then all they are is enjoyment of worldly life.

But I wanted to explore in this *Khutbah* (sermon) the meanings of the word “*mataa”* a little bit deeper; more than what we have heard before. I mean, those of you that have been listening to my *khutoobs (sermons)* and *duroos (lectures)* before, I have talked about “*mataa”* before as “*mataa”* is something to utilize but not necessarily to enjoy - which is the part of the base meaning. Like the little girl [Arabic] that was scrubbing dishes at the bank of a river and her goat came and grabbed the scrubber and it ran away. So, she started crying and saying *[Arabic],* “He took my *mataa* away, the brush away, that I was scrubbing with!” Right! So from it we derived that “*mataa”* must amount to a thing like a spoon or a fork, or a shovel, or something that you use but you don’t necessarily enjoy. Nobody grabs a spoon and says, “Check this out! Check what I got!” You know; nobody does that. You know! Nobody shows off their spoons and forks and shovels, unless they are in the industry or something. But typically, you don’t do that. So it’s something you use but you don’t necessarily enjoy. But I decided to dig a little bit deeper into this word and see what else has been said in the literary precedence of the Arabic language, because at the end of the day, this word, as per this *ayah*, has pretty significant importance, because my entire life is being summed up by this one word. My whole life amounts to – [on] this planet - my entire life amounts to this one word, so I should understand what connotations this word possesses. So the first thing I found (interestingly very recently, actually) *[Arabic],* for wine (this is pre-Islam, obviously). So, we know about this from pre-Islam, *[Arabic]* when the wine gets redder and redder, it matures. When it reaches the point where it possibly can’t mature anymore, that is it; it’s reached its climax. That’s when they say it has reached the state of “*mutaa*.” The act of “*mataa”* has happened to it, that’s what happened to it. In other words, when something reaches as far as it can go, when something reaches maturity.

Let’s go a little further. The Arab says *[Arabic]* which is actually used for a rope that is twisted and coiled well together, something that is tangled and well, and it also not only does it have this idea of being tangled, but also the idea that the rope is now ready for use. Because when you coil a rope properly, it’s matured; no more work needs to be done at it; now it can be put to use. They use it for people *[Arabic]* when a person becomes a man, becomes mature, and he becomes refined in his character, meaning he can now go out and deal with the world, he can go do business now, he is matured; he is graduated from certain prerequisites. So he is ready for success kind of thing, so, ready to be used. That’s the idea of a human being reaching “*mataa*.” Then *[Arabic]* at the end of the day, this is the most comprehensive definition I’ve found. And I want to finish these definitions before I share some thoughts with you about this *ayah* (verse). *[Arabic]* that anything that reaches “*mataa*,” anything that becomes “*ma-te*,” (that’s the “*ISIM FA’IL*” form), anything that becomes this is actually something that has reached the most maturity it possibly can, *[Arabic]* as possible within it. *[Arabic]* “*Mataa”* is actually something that can be benefited from. Let’s stop there for a second (we will stop at each piece of this definition). First it was mature [and] it can’t mature anymore. So, Allah is saying whatever experiences happened to you, part of the reason for giving you these experiences is they are going to mature you. This is part of you growing. The good things and the bad things that happen to me and you are part of us growing. And part of our growth is sometimes things that we are proud of and sometimes things that we are not proud of. Things that we have done, we look back and we say we are glad we did those things and there are things that we look back and we say, “I wish I never did those things.” Well actually that was part of your *“mataa*.” It was part of your growth and maturation process. Even that regret that you feel looking back, that regret is a gift from Allah; that regret alone might save you; that might be the reason for you and me to enter Jannah…it’s just that regret over what happened in the past. I am reminded in *Surat ul Kah’f* of the Gardner who at the end of his tragic experience of losing his beautiful garden says *[Arabic]* he has regret [when he says] “I wish I never did *Shirk*! Look at what has happened to me.” But actually that regret is a happy ending to that story because at least now he has turned back to Allah - he has changed his ways.

So now the first thing: everything in life is there to mature.

Second *[Arabic],* what can be benefited from.

[If] we think about this definition of *mata*; every experience in life is something you can benefit from. Allah chose this word for a reason: there is some good in it for you. You may not be able to see it, you may not be able to recognize it at face value, and I may not be able to see, may be frustrating; at that very moment it may be something like the first response:

“Why would this be happening to me?” And Allah’s way of responding to us is that Allah is saying it is something you could have been benefited from *[Arabic]* then *[Arabic]* it can be put to use, it can be put to use *[Arabic]*. Now Allah is saying every single object that we own, every last bit of our possessions and every single experience, is actually supposed to be utilized. Adversity and good times all together are supposed to be put to use. They are part of something greater. Meaning this life, the things that we are given, they are given [to us] to be put to use. And you go back to the original meaning of “*mata.*” What happens to wine (not by Muslims but by non-Muslims), what happens to “*mata*” or to alcohol or to wine when it matures? It gets drunk. What happens to the rope when it gets twisted? It gets used. When your life is full of *“mata*.’ And now it’s time for you, yourself, to put yourself to use.

Looking back, for a lot of people they look back in their life and their past experiences and their failures and their tragedies, they debilitate them and they are not able to do anything in their future. And for people who understand what “*mata*” is, what this world is for, they look at their past experiences and they make them stronger; that, “Allah put me through that, that must mean I am stronger than this and maybe I can help a million other people, help them go through these experiences and see them is the way that they are supposed to see them.” This would be looking at one’s own experiences as “*mata*.”

Now going a little further *[Arabic]* part of the definition of “*mata*” is something that will come to end, will not last (part of its definition) it cannot be used forever. Even that scrubber will break eventually or won’t scrub as good as it used to. Even that rope will eventually snap. Even that wine will eventually be no good. So, every single thing that we possess is not there forever. We are now - you know – seniors living you know, in a facility where people that have a difficult time in taking care of themselves, are being taken care of. And here we are the average age among our students and you know the faculty that’s here, we are younger people. There is a young audience you know in the *Jummah* (Friday) today. And we feel like we have something that they don’t have. You might feel like, as you walk by someone who is in their 90’s you know, and someone who is on a cane, or somebody who can’t even take two steps by themselves, and you might look at that and say, “*Subhan Allah*! You know, I feel bad for these people, but you know what? Either we are going to be in the ground or be one of these people; we are going to be in that state one day.” And they, if you ask them, “Look back at what you had in life.” They will say that, “It felt like a day; or felt like the blink of an eye *[Arabic];* that’s all it felt like.” And if you look at your life right now from the time you guys came, you know some of you who came to Texas, now what does it feel like? It feels like a minute; feels like nothing. First time I saw Brother Robert a few months ago when I came to see him, feels like I just came here like yesterday; time passes by so, so quickly. *Subhan Allah*! So we have to be conscious of the fact that time is leaving us. This *“mata”* is not staying. Your entire life is passing you by, and the only thing at the end of it that we can put it to use is for is the *Akhirah* (The Day of Judgment). So Allah says, “W*a maa 'indal laahi khairunw wa abqaa.*”

In the few minutes that I have left with you - because I don’t want to make this a long *Khutbah* (sermon), the few minutes that I have left with you, what I want to share with you is: in this life sometimes we make a plan for like the next ten years or five years, this is what I want to accomplish, this is how much *Qur’an* I want to memorize. This is how much I would like to be able to make in terms of money. This is when I would like to get married. We set goals for ourselves and we strive towards those goals and there is nothing wrong with that. But I tell you if you internalize this *ayah* (verse), you learn to put those plans in one compartment in your head, and in the other compartment you realize that all of that means nothing if I am not building my *Akhirah* (The Day of Judgment). All of those plans are worthless, they are meaningless, [and] they are not any kind of accomplishment at all if this is not building me towards Allah, if it is not taking me closer, if it is not making me a slave of Allah. There are people’s perceptions of us and then there is the reality. People’s perception, our own perception, and then reality; people’s perception may be you are successful; people’s perception may be you are knowledgeable; people’s perception may be you have accomplished something. And the opposite is to people’s perception might be you are worth nothing. But you know what? People’s perceptions at the end of the day mean nothing (it really means). It stands to benefit you nothing before Allah. It will not add to your deeds. It won’t take away from them. People’s criticisms will not take away from you, and people’s praise will not add to you, it will not. And at the end of the day when people get praise and criticism from others all the time, you know what starts happening? They start getting effected by it. so they start seeing themselves in light of how other people see them. So their image of themselves becomes polluted because they are not seeing themselves for who they really are, they are seeing themselves in light of other people’s words; that’s a human phenomenon. This is why we have Allah’s word, so we can see ourselves in light of Allah’s words, and that will help us see ourselves for who we really, truly are. And at the end of the day, really, truly we can have friendships and family and loved ones and community; we can have all of those things - but at the end of the day we are in this world alone, we came alone and we are going to leave alone and in that solitude if you don’t find a connection with Allah, then all these fake connections that you have and I have, that are not really based in the relationship with Allah, they will all disappear, they will not last, the *Fasaad* (uproar) will dissipate eventually, if not in this life then in the next. So we have to internalize a very powerful reality that Allah has given us in *Famaa ooteetum min shai'in famataa'ul hayaatid dunyaa*. We treasure all of our relationships so long as they are something that are building us towards the *Akhirah* (The Day of Judgment).

So, I want to leave you with this picture “*wa maa 'indal laahi khairunw wa abqaa.”* What Allah has in His possession is better. Now what we have right now is also in Allah’s possession. It’s not like this is not in the possession of Allah. But this as though by using the word *ma* here, it is as though Allah is saying I don’t wanna tell you what I have yet, I have a mystery for you. There’s something I have in my possession and it’s better, and it’s better. In other words, it hasn’t been given to you yet. Now one would immediately think, what Allah has? He must be talking about *Jannah* (Paradise), but as a matter of fact because he opened the door by saying, W*a maa 'indal laah* not *wal jannah tun khairunw wa abqaa.”* He said, “*maa 'indal laahi khairunw wa abqaa.” W*hatever Allah has, whatever Allah has. And what Allah has some of which he gave to you now, not just in terms of *duniya* (world) but He also gave you in terms of that road to *Jannah* (Paradise). That road itself is better. The revelation of Allah is better than everything else you have been given. The word of Allah is better because that word of Allah if you and I can live by it, it will get us somewhere far better. And so in this *ayah* (verse), there are two comparisons (there are my last reminders for myself and you); two comparisons that we constantly have to make if we are going to survive this world and not be taken in by the perceptions that are actually not real: the perceptions of people or the false self-image that we might develop.

What is that reality check? “W*a maa 'indal laahi khairunw wa abqaa lillazeena aamanoo.*” Whatever Allah has is (1) better, (2) lasts longer – [is] longer lasting as far as those who really have *Imaan* (faith) are concerned.

So now every experience in life is compared to something else that Allah has and what Allah has must be better, what Allah has must be better. It is a small reminder. You go into a store to buy yourself some new clothes. The moment you grab this thing and you are putting it on the cash register, just at that moment, think! “*WA maa 'indal laahi khairunw wa abqaa lillazeena aamanoo.*” What Allah has, the clothing Allah will give me is better. Whatever is acceptable with Allah in *Jannah* for me is better for those who believe. Then of course, this is not just for the believer in terms of the things that are *Halal* (permissible). We are about to eat some good food, you enjoy the good food, if you can tell yourself right as you are eating “*wa maa 'indal laahi khairunw wa abqaa lillazeena aamanoo.*” You don’t become, the *Akhirah* (The Day of Judgment) doesn’t just become some cliché thing you bring up, or you only bring it up when somebody is going through trouble. No, no! Insha’Allah! Allah will give you in the *Akhirah* (The Day of Judgment). Not only that, it becomes a part of your life. The *Akhirah* (The Day of Judgment) becomes something you think about all the time because Allah didn’t just described it as something that is there in the heavens, He described it as something that is with Allah. Now, what “*inda*” means and “*inda*” suggests closeness, so *Jannah* (Paradise) is, the acquisitionof Jannah necessarily means closeness to Allah. So, what Allah is offering in the *ayah* (verse) is also closeness to Him. “*wa 'alaa Rabbihim yatawakkaloon.*” They place their trust in Allah. I tell you if you develop, and I develop this attitude then worldly possessions and worldly gain and worldly loss will become easy to deal with. It becomes easy to deal with. Relationships become easy, because if you realize this, what Allah has is better, then the next time you get into a quarrel, some kind of tension between you and a friend, you and a family member. You, your pride gets in the way of fixing those tensions. But when you realize what Allah has is better, and this world this going to go before I know it, before I know it this would mean nothing. There are people that have ruined relationships for years because their pride gets in the way of apologizing; they can’t get themselves to say, “Sorry!” No, it’s not I going to say, “Sorry!” It’s the other one’s fault. Why should I say sorry?” And they are going to take that to their grave. They didn’t have much time here. And by the way, when we are standing in front of Allah, the pride is going to be gone. You and your brother that you were angry with are both standing in front of Allah and you are both begging Allah for mercy. And had you forgiven each other, you could have both earned *Jannah* Paradise) just by the act of forgiveness. When you put it in perspective, is your pride really that much worth it? Is your anger really that heavy that you couldn’t earn yourself, you know, what Allah was offering you? Things when they are put in this perspective, life becomes easy to deal with. You know how we learn the expression *[Arabic]: m*ake something big, it becomes a big deal; make something small, it becomes a small thing. Well you know what? This *ayah* (verse) is about making *Akhirah* (The Day of Judgment) big and making *duniya* (world) small. That’s all it’s about. We are going to go through life, we are going to have careers, we are going to have educational accomplishments, we are going to have challenges, all of those things are going to be there, but you know what, these are all temporary, there are all temporary, one day will come and there will be a congregation and they are going to make *Salah* (Prayer), and they are going to make an announcement that there is a *Janazah* (funeral) and it’s going to be mine and it’s going to be yours. It’s going to happen. And people are going to pray over us and then we are going to be gone. And it’s sooner rather than later, I mean, quite a bit of our life has already passed us by. So it’s not like we are going farther away from that day; we are only getting closer. So, the sooner we internalize that what Allah has is better because we are heading towards it anyway; we are just doing ourselves a favor. If we can just learn to utilize our time the right way; and like I said, we make ten year plans and fifteen year plans and we don’t think about the *Akhirah*, then how do think about the *Akhirah*, how do you practically plan for the *Akhirah*; you don’t make a ten year plan, you don’t make a fifteen year plan for the *Akhirah;* you make a daily plan. It’s not about making long term goals, it’s about how did you spent today, what are you going to do afterwards, how you are going to spent tomorrow, when are you going to wake up, what are you going to do with your free time, when are you going to erase those useless games on your phone? When are you going to stop watching so much T.V? When are you going to stop? When are you going to stop wasting time, you know, just chatting away or trolling? When are you going to stop? When are you going to hold yourself to a higher standard if not today? If you don’t make your change in your day, how you go to sleep, how you wake up, how you go to sleep, what you say and what you do, how especially, how you spent what you think is free time because it’s not free? You are not paying for it now; you and I will be paying for it with Allah, we will be paying for it; there is a price, we don’t realize we are going to be paying for it but it’s on record. You know how people feel relaxed when they are off the clock, when they punch out of the office? But we are constantly on the clock with these angels; they don’t take a break. But when they do, they put the other alternatives on shift, you know, so that plan has to be made for our day! Our day! And *Inshallah o Ta’la,* Friday is the great day to start new habits. Friday is a great day for, you know, introspection. We take extra time out for *Ibadah* (worship) anyway; we take extra time out to get ready to meet Allah anyway on this day, you know. Allah already enables us to become spiritually more powerful, more strengthened this day than other days, so why not make some serious commitments to yourself? This is not for you to share with anyone else; this is just you and yourself. You are your worst critic when it comes to this. And you and I have to decide how we are going to live our lives differently, because *Wa Allahi* the moment we start saying, “I am doing pretty good; I actually don’t have nothing to change in my life; I am set!” That delusion, that must, it must be that so many other people have given you that false sense of delusion; they blinded you for so long; they have poured so much dust in your eyes [that] now you can’t even see who you are for yourself.

I pray that Allah *Azzawajal* does not make us of those that are blinded to their own reality; I pray that Allah *Azzawajal* constantly makes the Book of Allah a mirror through which we can see the truth of who we are and [we] constantly seek to improve ourselves.

[Arabic Supplication]