

## A Ramadan Blessing

Dear Muslim Friends –

There are many meaningful experiences ahead for you this season. Perhaps you will make memories that will last a lifetime. Certainly challenges will face you daily, as you deny your physical appetites in favor of spiritual discipline; but you will have renewed appreciation of the simple pleasures, and delight with delicacies at every Iftar.

Being Christian, I have only experienced Ramadan peripherally, by attending the occasional banquet, and by fasting with you and for you. I have heard you say that besides the spiritual benefits, your fasts help you identify with and care for the poor, and that the fellowship you have through these common experiences strengthens your sense of ummah and unity.

For this alternately solemn and joyous occasion, I prayed about what words of blessing to share with you. The contrast Ramadan brings of both the hardship and the goodness of life is a little sample of our world, isn't it: hurricanes destroy cities and bombs kill Ramadan worshipers, on the same globe that offers glorious gardens and loving friends. These things make me think of words from the Sermon on the Mount, given by Jesus (Prophet Isa):

***“Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.***

***Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted.***

***Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth.***

***Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled.***

***Blessed are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy.***

***Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God.***

***Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called sons of God...***

*You have heard that it was said, ‘Love your neighbor and hate your enemy.’*

*But I tell you: Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, that you may be sons of your Father in heaven. He causes his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous. If you love those who love you what reward will you get?... And if you greet only your brothers, what are you doing more than others?*

*When you give to the needy, do not announce it with trumpets like the hypocrites do...they have received their reward in full. But when you give to the needy, do not let your right hand know what your left hand is doing, so that your giving may be in secret. Then your father, who sees what is done in secret will reward you. And when you pray, do not be like the hypocrites...they have received their reward in full. But when you pray, go into your room, close the door and pray to your Father who is unseen. Then your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you. When you fast, do not look somber as the hypocrites do...wash your face, so that it will not be obvious to men that you are fasting, but only to your Father, who is unseen; and your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you.*

*Seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well. Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own.*

*So in everything, do to others what you would have them do to you, for this sums up the law and the prophets.”*

*Injil, Surat Matthew 5-7*

**Ramadan Mubarak wa Kareem**