Synopsis of Friday Sermon
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Synopsis - Lessons from the Prophet's Farewell Sermon

The month of Zhul Hijja is a special month. It is the month of Hajj. Just as the last ten nights of Ramadan are the best nights of the year, so are the first ten days of Zhul Hijjah. In fact, they are the best ten days of the year filled with immense blessings. One should increase his/her acts of worship (ibadat) through fasting, charity, zikr, additional prayers, supplications, and of course, *udhiyah* or animal sacrifice, a tradition commemorating the legacy of Ibrahim (AS) for his willingness to sacrifice his son Ismael. This occasion occurs on the tenth day of Zhul Hijjah.

In the tenth year after migration to al-Madinah (hijrah), Muhammad (SAW) performed his only hajj along with thousands of companions. The journey of hajj was indeed a significant event. The Prophet (SAW) established the rites of Hajj, an important mode of worship incumbent upon every able Muslim once in his/her lifetime. Additionally, according to some scholars, it is believed that on the ninth day, the day of Arafat, he (SAW) received the last revelation, “This day, I have perfected for you your religion (deen), completed my favor upon you and am pleased with Islam as your deen (way of life).” (al-Ma’idad, 5:3)

The companions rejoiced. However, upon hearing the ayah, Omar (RAA) cried. The Prophet (SAW) asked, “What makes you cry O’ Omar?” “Although nothing is perfect, our deen is perfect now and I fear that with time it is going to deteriorate,” Omar replied. The Prophet (SAW) agreed and said, “You have spoken the truth.” He (SAW) then said, “Islam began as something strange, and shall return to being strange as it began, so blessed are the strangers.”

Indeed, the same *jahili* practices that were prevalent before Islam such as tribal wars, bloodshed, intoxication, music, adultery and fornication, interest and usury, etc. can be seen today everywhere in the world and just as Islam was conceived to be strange back then, the same teachings today are considered to be strange. Therefore, blessed are strangers who adhere to the deen dearly while sharing its message with others.

Throughout the journey of hajj, the Prophet (SAW) would admonish and advise his people. His speeches were collected in what is commonly known as “The Prophet’s Farewell Sermon” or *Hajjatul Wada’*. The sermon highlighted the most significant teachings of his prophetic mission of twenty-three years. Such pearls of wisdom have been etched in the books and minds of many Muslims for all time to come. It was, among others things, a document of human rights.

After praising and thanking Allah (SWT), the Prophet (SAW) said, “O people! Lend me an attentive ear. For I know not whether after this year I shall ever be among you. Therefore, listen to what I am saying very carefully and take these words to those who are not present here today.” Months after he delivered the sermon, the Prophet (SAW) returned back to His Lord leaving behind a great legacy.

The Prophet’s speech began with a word of caution. He addressed the sanctity of human lives. He (SAW) reminds, “O people! Just as you regard this month, this day, this city as sacred so regard the life and property of every Muslim as a sacred trust. Return the goods entrusted to you to their rightful owners. Hurt no one so that no one may hurt you. Remember that you will meet your Lord and that He will indeed reckon your deeds.”

The Prophet (SAW) took advantage of the most blessed and sacred day of Arafat in the sacred month of Hajj, in the most sacred place in the world, Makkah to make a point. Bloodshed is forbidden due to the sanctity of human life. In addition to human life, people’s properties are also sacred. In a hadith the prophet insisted, “The blood, wealth and honor of the Muslim are sacred to all Muslims.” He (SAW) stressed, “The destruction of the world in the sight of Allah is lighter than the killing of one Muslim man.”
The Qur’an is very clear on this subject as many passages address the sanctity of human lives. In one place Allah emphatically stresses this point, “And do not take any human being’s life – (the life) which God has willed to be sacred – except through (due process of) law.” (17:33) The Qur’an clearly states that whoever kills an innocent soul has committed an act akin to murdering all of humanity. “If anyone kills a person; unless in retribution for murder or spreading corruption in the land, it is as if he kills all mankind, while if any saves a life it is as if he saves the lives of all mankind” (al-Ma‘idah, 5:32).

The US declaration of “War on Terrorism” has left millions dead. The imperial wars succeeded in dividing Muslims creating a rift between Muslim nation states sowing the seed of discord and disparity. Muslims killing other Muslims, complete destruction of cities and towns, people leaving their homes and properties to be plundered and looted by gangs that allege to be good Muslims - apparently the teachings of the Prophet (SAW) have fallen on deaf ears.

In addition to the sanctity of human lives, the Prophet mentioned the sanctity of properties, “Return the goods entrusted to you to their rightful owners.” This statement echoes Allah’s mandate, “Allah commands you to return the trusts to their rightful owners.” (an-Nisa’, 4:58) One of the main qualities of a true believer is that they safeguard their trusts and fulfill their promises.

Muslims who have betrayed any trust, big or small, to any person, Muslim or non-Muslim, must settle it before meeting his/her Lord. Those who don’t will have a difficult time on the Day of Judgment as such matters will be settled by Allah (SWT) on the grand day of accountability, “And He is the Best of Judges.” (al-An’am, 6:57) The Prophet (SAW) made it very clear, “Hurt no one so that no one may hurt you. Remember that you will meet your Lord and that He will indeed reckon your deeds.”

In his sermon, the Prophet (SAW) touched upon something of great importance, the subject of interest and usury (riba). Riba was introduced in Arabia by the Jews who lived there. The practice of riba is so abhorrent that even the polytheists (mushriks) of Quraish would not accept a penny earned from interest when rebuilding the Ka’bah. Originally the Ka’bah extended to the extremities of Hijr of Ismail (semi-circle). However, due to shortage of funds, they built the Ka’bah into the cube as it is known today. The polytheists of Makkah recognized the filth of riba and knew very well its negative implications and how such a practice could invite the wrath of God.

The Prophet (SAW) in his farewell sermon cautioned, “Allah has forbidden you to take usury (interest). Therefore, all interest obligations shall henceforth be waived. Your capital is yours to keep. You will neither inflict nor suffer any inequity. Allah has judged that there shall be no riba and that all interest due to Abbass Bin Abdul Muttalib be waived.”

The entire world economic system is based on interest (riba). This practice strengthens some countries and weakens others. It makes the rich richer and the poor poorer, thus widening the gap between the haves and the have-nots. This is purely contrary to the teachings of Islam. Fair distribution of wealth based on fair dealing and equity is the spirit of Islamic economics. The main principal clause in the Islamic economic system is “So that it (wealth) does not circulate between the rich among you.” (al-Hashr, 59:7)

The statement “Your capital is yours to keep” meant that whatever interest you may have earned is yours to keep so long as you give up the practice of riba. In other words, because of your repentance, the unlawful (haram) money earned through riba becomes lawful (halal) for you. However, Allah warns, “But whoever returns (to riba), such are the dwellers of the Fire, they will abide therein.” (al-Baqarah, 2:275)

Those of us living in America may justify dealing with interest based on decades old fatawa. However, there can be no justification today now that Islamic finance institutions are available to mortgage homes, buy cars or get loans. Use of credit cards may be justified in the US only if paid in full or in installments for the duration of 0% interest. One may be cautioned regarding the severity of dealing with interest.

It is easy to live on borrowed money. Any Muslim who does not take heed to such an ultimatum is in fact at war with Allah (SWT). Such people are under the curse of Allah (SWT). Jabir Bin Abdullah (RAA) said, “The Messenger of Allah (SAW) cursed the one who consumes riba and the one who pays it, the one who writes it down and the two who witness it, and he said, ‘they are all the same.’” As a matter of fact, “A dirham (penny) which a man consumes as riba knowingly is worse before Allah than thirty-six acts of zina (adultery),” according to the Prophet (SAW). He (SAW) warned, “Riba and adultery do not become widespread among a people except that they will become vulnerable to the punishment of Allah the Exalted.”

Conscious believers who believe in Allah and the Last Day go the extra mile to save themselves from the wrath of Allah on the Day of Judgment by staying away from all usurious transactions.

Another important subject mentioned in the farewell sermon was satan the accursed enemy of man. We must recognize that satan, may he be cursed, is the root cause of all evil. Allah is kind and loving and satan is full of hate and rage. We may point the finger at this person or that person, whose actions are indeed evil. However, the Prophet (SAW) reminds us of our real enemy. “O people! Satan has lost all hope that he would be worshipped in this land of yours ever.”
Satan, for centuries, has appealed to people the worship of idols among other objects. In Arabia he appeared as Lat, Manat, Uzza and Hubal among other big and small idols that were taken as gods besides Allah (SWT). Muhammad (SAW) along with the companions (RAA) destroyed the 360 idols that surrounded the most sacred place of worship, the Ka’bah, cleansing all of Arabia from idol worship. He (SAW) was supremely successful in defeating satan, our archenemy. In his sermon, the Prophet (SAW) insisted that satan will never be worshipped again in Arabia, however, he (SAW) warned, “he lost hope in leading you astray in big things so beware of following him in small things.”

To understand our enemy, satan, one must read the Qur’an. He is very patient and has time on his side. His troops from jinn and human kind are dispatched to lead astray all sincere believers who worship God alone and are on the straight path, the path of monotheism (tawheed.) He obstructs their way to salvation by attacking them from nearly all directions. He knows our weaknesses and strikes when the moment is right.

His goal is to lead us astray in big and small matters. He wants us to keep him company in the Hell Fire, may Allah save us from it, Ameen. Allah (SWT) makes it very clear, “Satan is your enemy, so treat him as an enemy. He calls on his followers to be among the companions of the blazing fire.” (Fatir, 35:6) We must outsmart satan and not allow him to destroy us. We must defeat our archenemy, learn his ways, plots and schemes and take him only as an enemy.

We must recognize, however, that sometimes our very own desires and lusts compel us to commit evil deeds. The moment we begin to resist those desires, satan adorns the path of evil for us. He persists on misleading us and often times we find ourselves victims to satan. Often times, due to our weak faith, we surrender to him, thus committing indecent and immoral acts.

One need only read the Qur’an to learn about his devious plans. Our weapon against him is to seek refuge in God. Many times we feel pulled toward him. Allah (SWT) showed us the way out. He (SWT) revealed, “And when satan tempts you with an evil suggestion, seek refuge then in God. For indeed, He is the all-hearing, all-knowing.” (Fussilat, 41:36)

Another important subject the Prophet (SAW) mentioned during his farewell sermon was women, their rights and their treatment. Before Islam, men had no respect or regard for women. They were thought of as objects for pleasure. A noble companion described their treatment in the pre-Islam era, “We use them, abuse them and discard them.” That was the status of women then.

Allah (SWT), with the advent of the final Prophet and Messenger, brought justice and liberation to women. They were given rights to education, inheritance, to keep their maiden names, to own businesses among other rights. The Prophet (SAW) in his final speech addressed very fundamental rights. He (SAW) said, “O people, it is true that you have certain rights with regard to your women, but they also have rights over you. Remember that you have taken them as your wives under Allah’s trust and with His permission. If they abide by your right, then to them belongs the right to be fed and clothed in kindness. Do treat your women well and be kind to them for they are your partners and committed helpers.”

Muslim women demand respect. It is the responsibility of men to work hard and provide for the wife and children. Basic needs of food, clothing, and health care among other needs must be provided to them by their husbands. They must be well cared for, physically, mentally and psychologically. Such God given rights must be preserved and never violated. Sadly, this is not the case today. Many of our women are victim to abuse and domestic violence and that is unacceptable. The Prophet (SAW) insisted, “Do treat your women well and be kind to them for they are your partners and committed helpers.” We must treat the women in our lives the way we want to be treated.

The Prophet (SAW), commanded good treatment of wives and explained their condition by way of analogy, “And I command you to take care of women in a good manner for they are created from a rib and the most crooked part of the rib is its highest point; if you were to straighten it, you will break it, and if you leave it, it will remain as it is, so I command you to take care of women in a good manner.”

The Prophet (SAW) explained that wives and mothers deserve our kindness and good treatment because they are our partners in the journey of marriage. They are our committed helpers; they cook, clean, wash our clothes and care for our children. They carry the baby for nine months and endure intense labor pains at time of delivery. They nurse the newborn and stay by the child’s bed deprived of sleep. If we could only understand and appreciate what mothers go through, we would understand the Prophet’s statement, “Paradise lies under the feet of mothers.”

Like all marriages there will be highs and lows. The Prophet (SAW) never lifted a finger at any of his wives ever. So let us follow this great sunnah and treat our wives as he (SAW) treated his wives; with love, care and compassion. Therefore, let us take heed of the Prophet’s last advice. “Do treat your women well and be kind to them.”

Finally, the declaration of equality among human beings. The Prophet (SAW) in his farewell sermon sums it up, “O people, your Lord is one and your father is one. An Arab has no superiority over a non-Arab nor a non-Arab over an Arab; also a white has no superiority over a black nor does a black have any superiority over white except by piety and good action. All mankind is from Adam and Eve, and Adam from dust.”
Let us come together as a community and truly work on eradicating divides between race and ethnicity as a single nation of brothers and sisters in Islam.

Were we to take heed of the Prophet’s farewell sermon, we would not be in such a humiliating condition. After all, Omar (RAA) was right, Islam deteriorated, but not because Islam is deficient. Rather because we Muslims corrupted Islam by being oblivious and heedless of the Prophet’s gems of wisdom and by failing to uphold his teachings and directives of the Qur’an, the final Word of God preserved until eternity. Let us not forget Allah’s legislation is established for once and for all. Islam is complete and perfect.

End.