Synopsis of the Friday Sermon
Ameer Mustapha Elturk

Peace through Justice

Synopsis of the Friday Sermon delivered by Ameer Mustapha Elturk on March 25, 2011

Justice refers to the balance between the rights and responsibilities of people and is achieved through truth and honesty. To have justice, there should be a set of rules that directs people towards it. The rules should be just and equitable so that no one is favored over another. There is no rule or regulation made by Allah (SWT) for mankind that is without wisdom. The ultimate justice rests in the hands of Allah (SWT). “God bears witness that there is no god but Him, as do the angels and those who have knowledge. He upholds justice. There is no god but Him, the Almighty, the All Wise.” (Aal ‘Imran, 3:18)

Allah (SWT) created human beings for the purpose of worshipping Him. Throughout history, He (SWT) has been sending prophets and messengers to them from among themselves to remind them of their purpose of life—to worship Him, to submit to Him, to serve Him, and to obey Him, so that they are released from the bondage of disbelief and polytheism by believing in Allah (SWT); from the rule of injustice to justice, and from the darkness of ignorance to the light of guidance. “I did not create the Jinn and the humans except to worship Me” (al-Dhariyat, 51:56). All prophets and messengers of God have conveyed the same central message to humanity, “O my people! Worship Allah! You have no other god than Him” (al-A'raf, 7:59).

Allah (SWT) ended this long chain of prophets and messengers in the person of Muhammad (SAW). Unlike other prophets and messengers who were sent to a particular people, tribe, or nation, Muhammad (SAW) was sent to all of humankind for all times to come. The universality of the message of Muhammad (SAW) and the finality of his prophethood resonate in numerous ayat of the Qur'an, such as, “We did not send you except as a bearer of good news and warner to all mankind, but most people do not know” (Saba', 34:28).

Each of Allah (SWT)’s messengers was sent with divine law (al-Kitab) and the scale of Justice (Mizan) in order that the followers may uphold and maintain justice. It is only through justice that peace is attained. This is the very purpose for which God sent messengers, “We sent Our messengers with clear signs, the Book and the Balance, so that people could uphold justice…” (al-Hadid 57:25)

Allah (SWT) praising the ummah of Bani Israel that came before us says, “O Children of Israel, remember how I blessed you and preferred you over other people” (al-Baqarah, 2:47). The first messenger to Bani Israel was Musa (AS) who was given the Torah—the Mosaic Law. The last messenger sent to them was ‘Isa ibn Maryam (AS) who was given the Injeel (The Gospel), which confirmed the Torah. What did the Torah essentially contain? Allah (SWT) informs us about this in the Qur’an: “We have sent down the Torah, in it is guidance and light…” (al-Ma'idah, 5:44). Both guidance and light are needed to reach any destination. The guidance provides instructions and directions to proceed on the path that leads to happiness in this world and the next, and the light enables one to see that path. We started our journey, coming from Allah (SWT) and we are returning back to Him. “We belong to Allah and to Him we will return…” (al-Baqarah 2:156).

The purpose of the guidance and the light is to enable people to rule according to the Book of Allah (SWT). This is the practice of those who have surrendered and submitted themselves to Allah (SWT). “Surely We have sent down the Torah, in which there was guidance and light by which the prophets, who submitted themselves to Allah, used to judge the Jews, and (so did) the Rabbis and the Priests…”(al-Ma'idah, 5:44).

The Bani Israel had their golden era as long as they ruled by the Torah, but they also had their downfall whenever they turned away from the Book of Allah (SWT). Allah (SWT) then sent ‘Isa ibn Maryam (AS) with the Injeel which also had guidance and light so that followers of the Injeel may judge according to what God had revealed. “And in their footsteps,
We sent ‘Isa, son of Maryam confirming the Torah that came before him. We gave him the Gospel containing guidance and light...So let the followers of the Gospel judge according to what God has revealed in it...” (al-Ma’idah, 5:46-47).

After a hiatus of 600 years, Allah (SWT) sent Muhammad (SAW) as the last and final messenger to the entire humanity for all times to come. In his very first public address to his people and his kith and kin, he told them, “I am the messenger of Allah to you specifically but I have also been sent as a messenger of Allah to the entire mankind.” Allah (SWT) revealed to him the Qur’an in which guidance and light mentioned in the earlier Scriptures have culminated into “The Guidance” (al-Huda) and “The Light” (al-Noor)—two other names of the Qur’an. The Qur’an is Allah (SWT)’s final revelation and last gift to humanity. It supersedes the earlier Scriptures. It is the final edition of the earlier Scriptures and has been revealed for the purpose of establishing the just rule of Allah (SWT) on earth. “We sent to you [Muhammad] the Scripture with the truth, confirming the Scriptures that came before it, and with final authority over them: so judge between them according to what God has sent down” (al-Ma’idah 5:48).

Allah (SWT)’s messengers were entrusted with the great mission of establishing justice among the people so that they may abide by it in order to get the desired peace—peace through justice. This justice has manifested itself in a social, economic, and political order or way of life called Islam brought about by the last and final messenger Muhammad (SAW). After bearing witness to tawhid in ayah 18 of Surat Aal ‘Imran, the meaning of which is: “God bears witness that there is no god but Him, as do the angels and those who have knowledge. He upholds justice. There is no god but Him, the Almighty, the All Wise,” the following ayah declares: “Verily the deen (system of life) with Allah is Islam...” This is the climax of tawhid—a way of life in which people rule by that what Allah (SWT) sent and not by what they invent.

Allah (SWT)’s justice flows from Himself to the prophets and then from them to the believers. It was the role of the prophets and messengers to establish justice on behalf of Allah (SWT). After the demise of the Prophet (SAW) and the finality of his prophethood, justice is entrusted upon the believers. “O you who believe! Stand out firmly for justice, as witnesses to Allah, even as against yourselves, or your parents, or your kin, and whether it be (against) rich or poor: for Allah can best protect both. Follow not the lusts (of your hearts), lest you swerve, and if you distort (justice) or decline to do justice, verily Allah is well-acquainted with all that you do” (al-Nisa’, 4:135). This ayah explains to us that after Muhammad (SAW), it is the believers that rule but the rule should be based on justice and fairness. This is the collective rule of the believers that Allah has set. Justice has to be upheld at all costs.

The fact that Islam is not only about rites and rituals but a comprehensive way of life is also dawning upon the non-Muslims of conscience. In his ground-breaking book, Was Jesus a Muslim, Dr. Robert Shedinger, a scholar of Bible who also teaches Islam in Luther College, Decorah, Iowa offers a proposal for a more accurate and respectful understanding of faith that he argues will improve possibilities for mutual understanding among Christians, Muslims, and others. On the other hand, we also have the neocons and the Tea Party people who for their own political ends, leave no stone unturned to malign Islam and Muslims. Their unfounded rhetoric of Muslim radicalization and the Muslims’ tooth and nail efforts to impose Shariah (Islamic Law) in America is gaining ground among the gullible American public. According to a Pew Research Report, 55% percent of Americans “don’t know much about Islam.”

It is incumbent upon us to promote and share the ultimate divine gift of the Qur’an—the eternal divine guidance that we have, with the whole of humanity. If we become oblivious of the remembrance of Allah (SWT), we will only be inviting a wretched life for ourselves. “And whoever turns away from My remembrance, then he will have a miserable life...” (Ta Ha, 20:124).

These are turbulent times with mounting challenges. We have to remain steadfast and we need to have resolute faith in the system of life given to us by God. Believers are not exempt from test. “Do people think they will be left alone after saying ‘We believe’ without being put to the test? (al-'Ankabut, 29:2)

Allah (SWT) consoles and comforts the believers when He says, “O you who believe, be patient and call for patience, and bond together and be mindful of God that you may succeed (Aal ‘Imran, 3:200). The further good news is that if we are steadfast and if we follow the guidance, we shall be in a state of complete peace and tranquility regardless of what the outward consequences may be. “When guidance comes to you from Me, those who follow My guidance will feel no fear and will know no sorrow” (al-Baqarah, 2:38).

We pray to Allah (SWT) to bless us with patience, perseverance, strength, and God-consciousness (taqwa).

End

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