Synopsis of Friday Sermon  
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Ramadan – The Month of Kindness

Synopsis of the Friday Sermon delivered by Ameer Mustapha Elturk on August 26, 2011

The Prophet (SAW) called the blessed month of Ramadan shahr al-muasat (the month of kindness), which implies being compassionate and kind towards fellow human beings, especially the less fortunate ones. The Qur’an makes it very clear that one cannot attain piety and righteousness without spending from what one loves most.

“You will not attain true goodness until you give of what you love. Whatever you give away, Allah knows it” (Aal ‘Imran, 3:92). A truly righteous person (muttaqi) spends out from what Allah (SWT) gave him. “That is the Book, without any doubt. It contains guidance for those who have taqwa: those who have iman in the unseen and establish salah and spend from what We have provided for them” (al-Baqarah, 2:2-3). The relationship between taqwa (God mindfulness) and birr (goodness/righteousness) is further explained in the ayah, “Goodness is not (only) that you turn your faces to the East or to the West. Rather, those with true devoutness are those who have iman in Allah and the Last Day, the Angels, the Book and the Prophets, and who, despite their love for it, give away their wealth to their relatives and to orphans and the very poor, and to travelers and beggars and to set slaves free, and who establish salah and pay zakah; those who honor their contracts when they make them, and are steadfast in poverty and illness and in battle. Those are the people who are true. They are the people of taqwa” (al-Baqarah, 2:177).

According to a Hadith, “charity does not decrease wealth.” On the contrary, the rewards for spending in the way of Allah (SWT) according to the Qur’an are multiplied many times over. “The parable of those who spend their wealth in the way of Allah is that of a grain which produces seven ears; in every ear there are a hundred grains. Allah gives such multiplied increase to whomever He wills. Allah is All-Encompassing, All-Knowing” (al-Baqarah, 2:261). This is further explained in another ayah, wherein the sincerity of intention of seeking the pleasure of Allah (SWT) is also highlighted. “The parable of those who spend their wealth, desiring the pleasure of Allah and firmness for themselves, is that of a garden on a hillside. When heavy rain falls on it, it doubles its produce; and if heavy rain does not fall, there is dew. Allah sees what you do” (al-Baqarah, 2:265). The one who spends for Allah’s sake is ensured peace, serenity, and forgiveness from Allah (SWT). “Those who give away their wealth by night and day, secretly and openly, will have their reward with their Lord. They will feel no fear and will know no sorrow” (al-Baqarah, 2:274). “Race each other to forgiveness from your Lord and a Garden as wide as the heavens and the earth, prepared for the people who have taqwa: those who give in times of both ease and hardship, those who control their rage and pardon other people — Allah loves the good-doers” (Aal ‘Imran, 3:133-134).

The Prophet (SAW) who himself was the most generous of persons, always advised and encouraged believers to spend in the way of Allah (SWT). Naturally, what is given by one as charity must be from one’s halal earnings and not from one’s haram earnings, because Allah does not accept but that which is good. There are numerous Hadith to that effect. For example, there is a Hadith which says, “If one gives in charity what equals one date-fruit from the honestly earned money and Allah accepts only the honestly earned money Allah takes it in His right (hand). And then, enlarges its reward for that person (who has given it), as anyone of you brings up his colt, so much so that it becomes as big as a mountain.” The Qur’an warns the believers to exercise generosity before it is too late. O you who believe! Spend out of what We have provided you before there comes a day on which there will be no bargaining, neither friendship, nor intercession. And the disbelievers are the wrongdoers” (al-Baqarah, 2:254). There is a Hadith which urges one to protect one’s wealth with zakah and to treat one’s sick with charity.

Money sitting idle in the bank will not increase one’s wealth through accrual of interest; rather it will decrease it. It is
in giving charity that wealth increases in real terms. This is made clear through the Qur’anic ayah, “Whatever you lend out in usury to gain value through other people’s wealth will not increase in God’s eyes, but whatever you give in charity, in your desire for God’s approval, will earn multiple rewards” (al-Rum, 30:39). The Qur’an is unequivocal in condemning the stingy person. “Woe to every faultfinding backbiter who has amassed wealth and hoarded it! He thinks his wealth will make him live forever. No indeed! He will be flung into the crushing fire...” (al-Humazah, 104:1-4).

People are generally unaware of the concept of wealth in Islam. Man’s role as Allah’s vicegerent on earth and the use of its resources by him as Allah’s amanah (trust) to him gives a much deeper meaning to the concept of ownership in Islam. It implies that in the Islamic society, ownership whether private or public is not absolute. Resources are only an amanah whose actual owner is Allah (SWT). Whatever one owns is actually what one holds in trust and must be used to achieve just ends. “The treasures of the heavens and earth belong to Allah. But the hypocrites do not understand this” (al-Munafiqun, 63:7).

The Qur’an further tells us that “Wealth and sons are the adornment of the life of this world. But, in your Lord’s sight, right actions which are lasting bring a better reward and are a better basis for hope” (al-Kahf, 18:46) and “Your wealth and children are a trial and with Allah there is an immense reward” (al-Taghabun, 64:15). It also tells us about man’s general attitude to wealth. “And you have an insatiable love of wealth” (al-Fajr, 89:20).

The earnings we make through hard labor is nothing but the bounty of Allah (SWT). We may claim our rightful needs from Allah’s blessings and bounties, but we have to spend the rest in the path of Allah (SWT). “…They ask you what they should give: say, ‘Give what you can spare...’”(al-Baqarah, 2:219). The poor and the needy have a legitimate right over our surplus wealth. This is well understood by true believers. “Those in whose wealth there is a known share to those who beg and the deprived” (al-Ma’rij, 70:24-25).

The Prophet (SAW) when asked which month was the best after Ramadan said that it was Sh’aban as we prepare in it for Ramadan. When asked which charity was most supreme, he said that it was the charity given in the month of Ramadan. We learn through a well-known Hadith that the Prophet (SAW) said, “Once the son of Adam dies, all his/her actions come to an end except for three deeds that would provide continuous reward: perpetual charity, a pious son/daughter who will supplicate for him (asking Allah to forgive him/her); and beneficial knowledge that he/she leaves behind.

Zakah is the third pillar of Islam and is as important as salah. However, unlike salah which is a daily mode of worship, zakah is an annual mode of worship in which an established portion (2.5%) of one’s savings is paid either in parts over the year or in one lump sum. While salah purifies our spiritual being, zakah purifies our wealth, which in essence is the primary means of sustaining our physical being. In a general sense zakah refers to obligatory charity. It has to be paid by every sane mature Muslim who has a nisab (an amount of liquid assets owned which makes one qualified for paying zakah), which is equivalent to the price of about 87.4 grams or 3 ounces of pure gold. This saving is calculated after meeting one’s own and one’s family’s necessary expenses of food, clothing, housing, transport etc. The Qur’an spells out the categories of recipients of zakah: “Zakah is for: the poor, the destitute, those who collect it, reconciling people’s hearts, freeing slaves, those in debt, spending in the Way of Allah, and travelers. It is a legal obligation from Allah. Allah is All-Knowing, All-Wise” (al-Taubah, 9:60). Linguistically zakah conveys the meaning of growth and purification.

Any contribution made to the Islamic Organization of North America (IONA) in this great month of Ramadan is in fact a good channel to spend in the way of Allah (SWT), because IONA was established with two aims in mind: To serve Allah (SWT) by upholding and defending His deen, and to serve the community. Alhamdulillah, we have outgrown ourselves and need to expand urgently to enable us to cater to the religious and spiritual needs of an ever growing community. We depend on Allah (SWT) to help us out. May He bless us with the tawfiq to contribute as generously as possible in the noble cause of IONA’s expansion project.

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