



Synopsis of Friday Sermon

Ameer Mustapha Elturk



IONA
REPENTANCE
REVITALIZATION OF FAITH
RENEWAL OF COVENANT

بِسْمِ اللّٰهِ الرَّحْمٰنِ الرَّحِیْمِ

In the name of Allah, the Compassionate, the Merciful.

Synopsis of the Friday Sermon delivered by Ameer Mustapha Elturk on July 15, 2022:

Civic Engagement is Our Duty

Muslims obtain their guidance from two primary sources; the Qur'an and the Sunnah (sayings and actions) of the Prophet Muhammad (SAW). Both sources assert that civic engagement is an obligation. In praising the last and final ummah, Allah (SWT) declares, *"You are the best community (ummah) brought forth for (the good) of mankind"* (Aal 'Imran, 3:110).

It is clear that we have been chosen to be of benefit to humanity i.e. to serve the community at large; Muslims and non-Muslims alike. The Prophet (SAW) did inform, "The best of people are those who are most beneficial to people." In another narration, he (SAW) said, "The most dear to Allah are those who are beneficial to people."

Imagine if the Prophet (SAW) rejected the support of his uncle Abu Talib because he was a polytheist¹. Abu Talib was responsible for not only protecting the Prophet (SAW) from physical harm but also for allowing him to freely preach Islam without the threat of intimidation coming from the leaders of Quraish led by Abu Jahl who vehemently opposed his message.

When the Prophet's worldly protection Abu Talib passed away, his life was threatened and preaching the new faith came to a standstill. He fled to al-Ta'if to seek a new base for propagation (dawah). To his utter disappointment, he was rejected and driven out of the town. His only refuge was his home, Makkah, but he could only return under the protection of a notable from Quraish through ijarah. Ijarah is a tribal custom where the person offering ijarah, ensures one's safety and protection from any harm. Although, he was not allowed to preach Islam, Mut'im bin 'Adi agreed to protect the Prophet (SAW) and he accepted. Mut'im Bin 'Adi was a polytheist.

The Prophet (SAW) sought the good will of people who didn't accept his faith. He set the standard for seeking support from non-Muslims when necessary.

The League or Pact of the Virtuous, hilf al-Fudul, as it is called, is a great example of cooperating with non-Muslims on matters of justice. The Prophet (SAW), in his youth, was present in the house of Abdullah Ibn Jud'an where tribe leaders met and agreed basically on two main clauses. One; respect the principle of Justice and two; collectively intervene in conflicts to establish Justice. The pact was written and placed in the Ka'bah believing that God will protect the pact. Years later, the Prophet (SAW) in his admiration of the pact recalls, (on the authority of Aisha), "I witnessed in the house of Jud'an the pact of al-Fudul and if I were to be invited today (after the establishment of Islam) I would respond."

The Qur'an and the Sunnah makes it clear that civic engagement with non-Muslims upholding universal values that include freedom, equality and justice and cooperating with them on matters of goodness is a religious obligation. Allah (SWT) commands, *"Cooperate with each other in (matters of) goodness and righteousness, and do not cooperate with one another in sin and hostility. And Fear Allah, indeed Allah is severe in punishment"* (al-Ma'idah, 5:2).

And we too must respond to any form of alliance with non-Muslims as long as the objectives and the means to achieving the goals do not contravene the basic teachings of Islam.

With the ongoing ambush on Muslims and Islam in the West and America in particular, Muslims must rise to defend themselves and the faith they claim. We, as Muslims from across the globe residing in America, must come together for the sake of our religion and the future of our children. Challenges are inevitable. However, they can be overcome if we have the desire to civically engage. The Prophet (SAW) sought the support of non-Muslims. We have no choice but to work with and build alliances with individuals and organizations who are sympathetic to our cause and are willing to stand by our side. We must have a clear agenda that addresses the challenges we face today.

The civic engagement must be fundamentally based on justice. This must be the foundation of the framework. Allah (SWT) commands, *“O you who believe! Stand out firmly for Justice as witnesses to Allah, even if it is against yourselves, your parents and close relatives ...”* (al-Nisa’, 4:135)

By the same token Allah (SWT) ordains, *“O you who believe! Stand up for Allah as witnesses to Justice. And do not let the enmity and hatred of others make you swerve from doing Justice. Be just, that is closer to piety and fear Allah, for verily, Allah is well acquainted with what you do.”* (al-Mai’dah, 5:8)

We have been granted an opportunity to stand up for justice/Allah as witnesses to Allah/justice. Being the source of justice, Allah (SWT), the Just (al-‘Adl), wants us to exercise our duty of ordaining good and forbidding evil. Should we fail to fight for and uphold justice, we will fail to be witnesses to Allah. Similarly, should we fail to stand up for Allah and the values/principles He (SWT), God almighty (SWT) imparted and doing His will, we will fail to be witnesses to justice.

We must personally be firm on justice while striving to see that others too are upholding justice.

Although there is much good in our societies, we can’t ignore the injustice of systematic and institutionalized racism, Islamophobia, racial profiling, police brutality, not to speak of environmental issues, killing and maiming of civilians with drones, occupation and usurpation of land. If we consider ourselves as part and parcel of the society, we then need to act. We simply cannot continue to remain silent. We must get out of our comfort zones and engage in the struggle for justice.

The Prophet (SAW) instructs, *“Whoever among you sees an evil, let him change it with his hand; and if he is not able, then with his tongue; and if he is not able, then with his heart, and that is the weakest of faith”* (Muslim).²

The word hand in this context denotes authority. Any injustice taking place in America may be challenged in the courts. Fortunately for us, there are civil/human rights organizations such as the Council on American Islamic Relations (CAIR), Muslim Legal Fund of America (MLFA), Arab-American Anti-Discrimination Committee (ADC), American Human Rights Council (AHRC), and American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) among other organizations who challenge injustice and ensure that the rights of people are granted through the judicial system.

As things get better for the Muslim community in terms of action, there are three areas for improvement. They are: volunteerism, voting and simply being good Muslims.

Volunteerism: We must spare some time to serve and invest in the community. Become a volunteer. Government social services is but a small percentage of the social services rendered by non-profit organizations. Programs which include feeding the hungry, sheltering the homeless, blood drives, caring for the elderly, and free health clinics are but a few areas of much needed work. Without volunteers such endeavors would come to a standstill.

America strives on volunteerism and we must be part of that effort. The Prophet (SAW) informs, *“A person who strives to take care of the needs of the widow and the poor man is like a knight, one who fights in*

the way of Allah (a mujahid), or like one who stands during the night to pray and fasts during the day” (al-Bukhari).

We need to cultivate a culture of volunteerism. We must keep in mind that our primary motivation for helping others should be for the love and sake of Allah, *“We feed you only for the sake of Allah alone. We seek neither recompense nor thanks from you.”* (al-Insan, 76:9)

Volunteers must be aware that whatever good they do, their labor will not go unnoticed. *“And Say (O Prophet), ‘Take action! God will see your actions- as will His Messenger and the believers- and you will be returned to the One who knows what is seen and unseen, and He will tell you what you did’.*” (al-tawbah, 9:15)

The Prophet (SAW) narrates the story of, “A prostitute (who) saw a dog lolling around a well on a hot day and hanging his tongue from thirst. She drew some water for it in her shoe, so Allah forgave her.” (Muslim)

Voting: Another area of interest to us is exercising the right to vote. The narrative of whether Muslim American citizens are permitted to vote in the national or local elections has been debated and the overwhelming majority of scholars domestically and abroad have permitted the participation in the political electoral process. To be effective in this field, we must have a clear political agenda that serves the needs and rights of Muslims and the community at large.

There are nearly 8 million Muslims in America. African Americans make up anywhere from 23 to 30% of that number. The rest are from the Middle East, South East Asia, and East Asia among other nations. Therefore, 70% of Muslims, like all other US immigrants who left their homelands, immigrated to America for a better life. For most of us the economic opportunities here are much better than where we came from. We made that choice and we are enjoying the prosperity and success of living a good life.

Muslims in America are among the most affluent and most educated anywhere outside Muslim countries. Yet, we have no say in the affairs of our local governments what to speak of the national government. Unless we become involved in the electoral political process our conditions as Muslims are going to worsen.

As Americans it is our duty to face up to such challenges with wisdom. Participating in elections may not yield immediate results. However, with a clear long term strategy and agenda, participating in elections may very well help Muslims overcome their anxiety and possibly defeat Islamophobia in the long run. Participating in local politics is just as, if not more important than participating in national politics. Challenges such as zoning when building Islamic centers and schools may be eased up when Muslims are familiar and engaged with State and Local governments and politicians. Muslims must consider running for the school board, city council, and a host of other positions.

Muslim voters exercising their right to vote especially when there is a sizable concentration of Muslims will make a huge difference. For those who are not registered to vote, we ask that you register and for all who are registered we ask that you do vote wisely.

And finally, simply:

Be a Good Muslim: Being a good Muslim will certainly enhance our image that has been tarnished by Islamophobes, hatemongers and bigots. It is, however, sad and unfortunate that some Muslims are acting repugnantly and contradictory to the teachings of the Qur’an and Sunnah.

Muslim Doctors and business owners among others are jumping on the bandwagon of greed committing fraud and cheating among other illegal activities. Such activities are helping Islamophobes and the mainstream media justify their criticisms against Muslims and the faith they claim. Such actions are not helping our cause.

Muslim immigrants have pledged to uphold the law of the land and be good citizens. We must live our faith as ordained by Allah Almighty. Civic engagement that stands up for justice while upholding piety and righteousness will surely please our Lord and help us make a positive impression upon people who admire honesty and integrity.

May Allah (SWT) guide us to the straight path, ameen.

¹ This is the opinion of the sunni school of thought. However, the shia school of thought believes that Abu Talib is considered from Ahl al-Bait, the family of the Prophet, and is a Muslim. No offense to our shia brothers and sisters is intended in my

² In an appeal to the Muslim community in the US, President Biden ran his campaign in 2020 on this slogan. One wonders, what has he done to the Uyghur Muslims detained in concentration camps in China, the onslaught and killing of innocent Muslims in India and Kashmir, the genocide, crimes against humanity and ethnic cleansing of Rohingya in Burma, or the plight of the Palestinians and the apartheid state of Israel.