



Majlis Ugama Islam Singapura

Friday Sermon

24 July 2015 / 8 Syawal 1436

**The Role Of Religion In The Modern World**

أَلْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ الَّذِي أَنْزَلَ الْفُرْقَانَ وَ أَيْدِ النَّاسِ بِالْحِكْمَةِ وَ الْبَيَانَ،  
وَأَشْهَدُ أَنْ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا اللَّهُ وَحْدَهُ لَا شَرِيكَ لَهُ شَهِدَ لِنَفْسِهِ  
الْوَحْدَانِيَّةَ وَ الْإِحْسَانَ وَ شَهِدَ بِهِمَا مَلَائِكَتُهُ وَ الثَّقَلَانِ، وَأَشْهَدُ  
أَنَّ سَيِّدَنَا مُحَمَّدًا عَبْدُهُ وَرَسُولُهُ الْمَبْعُوثُ بِالرَّحْمَةِ وَ الرِّضْوَانِ ،  
اللَّهُمَّ صَلِّ عَلَى سَيِّدِنَا مُحَمَّدٍ وَ عَلَى آلِهِ وَصَحْبِهِ وَسَلِّمْ  
تَسْلِيمًا كَثِيرًا. أَمَّا بَعْدُ فَيَا عِبَادَ اللَّهِ اتَّقُوا اللَّهَ حَقَّ تَقَاتِهِ وَلَا  
تَمُوتُنَّ إِلَّا وَأَنْتُمْ مُسْلِمُونَ.

Blessed Friday Jemaah,

Let us strengthen our resolve to increase our taqwa to Allah s.w.t. by obeying His commands and abstaining from what Allah has prohibited upon us. May Allah grant us strong faith (iman) as a source of strength to face the various challenges in life.

Jemaah,

A week has passed since the beginning of Syawal. This also means that it has been a week since Ramadan had passed. I believe the past Ramadan has left an impact upon us and has

helped us to build a strong sense of spirituality as a believing and pious ummah.

Dear brothers, it is clear to us that Islam is a religion that promotes balance and harmony in all aspects of human life. Take fasting for example; not only does it contribute to our physical well-being; it also paves way for us to cultivate our spiritual strength as well. Thus, when Muslims are faced with many challenges of living in today's modern world, both aspects are indispensable to the individual.

My dear brothers, change is a reality of this world and in human life. However, the rapid rate of change currently brought by modernity is unprecedented in human history. Even before we are able to adapt to a new change or master a newly-found science, we are confronted with yet another phenomenal change or development. We cannot deny that modernity has served us in technological progress; and in the flow of knowledge and information in this borderless reality. However, modernity has also brought along waves that could potentially threaten this ummah's values and identity. For example, certain lifestyles that are void of values and morals can be seen as one of the troubling effects of modernity. On a similar note, the notion that the purpose of this life is simply to pursue worldly happiness and the satisfaction of human desires through worldly pleasures –or Hedonism – is also deemed to be among the main features of modern humans today.

My dear brothers,

As Muslims, we are surely guided by our faith, and this faith instils a high sense of self-confidence in facing any of these new changes and challenges. As Muslims we believe that this world is entrusted to us humans by Allah s.w.t. It is thus our duty to manage it well. Thus as Muslims, we should not see modernity as wholly evil and destructive. And as God's appointed caretakers of this world, or Khalifah, we should instead face these changes and challenges, by shaping them to our advantage. We should then reap whatever we can of its benefits and rewards. We should not be desolate by our fate, but instead be resilient to whatever that is imminent.

My dear brothers, this would require our spiritual well-being. Imagine if spirituality can be grown and nurtured, it can also be a source of our strength. At the same time, we will not be easily washed away by the currents of modernity that has engulfed us currently. Let us reflect upon a hadith of Prophet Muhammad s.a.w.:

لَا تَكُونُوا إِمَّعَةً ، تَقُولُونَ : إِنْ أَحْسَنَ النَّاسُ أَحْسَنًا وَإِنْ ظَلَمُوا ظَلَمْنَا ، وَلَكِنْ وَطَّنُوا أَنْفُسَكُمْ ، إِنْ أَحْسَنَ النَّاسُ أَنْ تُحْسِنُوا وَإِنْ أَسَاءُوا فَلَا تَظْلَمُوا .

Which means: *“Do not be “followers” who say: If others do good, we will do good and if they commit a sin, we will commit a sin. Be firm in your stand, if others do good then you should*

*also do good, and if others commit a sin then do not transgress yourselves.” [Hadith reported by At-Tirmizi]*

This, my dear brothers, is the fruit of a spiritual well-being. This is also the kind of spirituality that we wish to build as a fortress to protect ourselves and our family, so that we could achieve success in this world and the Hereafter. Allah s.w.t. says in surah As-Syu'ara' verse 88:

يَوْمَ لَا يَنْفَعُ مَالٌ وَلَا بَنُونَ ﴿٨٨﴾ إِلَّا مَنْ أَتَى اللَّهَ بِقَلْبٍ سَلِيمٍ ﴿٨٩﴾

Which means: *“The Day whereon neither wealth nor sons will avail, But only he (will prosper) that brings to Allah a sound heart;”*

My brothers,

When we speak about the importance of spiritual well-being as a fortress, this should not mean that we imprison ourselves from the realities of life. Islam does not teach its followers to isolate themselves from the world and society, or reject all of the changes on the basis of ‘preserving’ one’s religiosity or spirituality. This particular strand of spirituality is obsolete and stagnant. It teaches Muslims to build their own villages which are isolated from other people, on the grounds that faith and religion could be preserved by doing so.

Such claims are against the teachings of Islam. Islam came to develop and reform. And if we are to open the pages of our

history, we would find our ancestors have succeeded to nurture the kind of spirituality that built great civilisations. These then contributed towards humanity as a whole. And these Islamic civilisations were built on the foundations of faith and taqwa. We would find that while they achieved phenomenal progress and developments, they did not compromise on fundamental Islamic principles. In fact, upon scrutiny, these principles actually contributed to the progress of humanity as a whole.

My dear brothers, Islam is a religion that teaches its followers to engage and be part of public life. It teaches us to build a human civilization that prioritises human development, equipping him with strong spiritual values, and the drive to continuously reform all aspects of human life, no matter the challenges.

May Allah s.w.t. grant us a clear understanding and a strong determination to continue to be the people who bring mercy to this world, armed with spirituality and a pure heart.

بَارَكَ اللهُ لِي وَلَكُمْ فِي الْقُرْآنِ الْعَظِيمِ، وَنَفَعَنِي وَإِيَّاكُمْ بِمَا فِيهِ مِنَ  
الآيَاتِ وَالذِّكْرِ الْحَكِيمِ، وَتَقَبَّلْ مِنِّي وَمِنْكُمْ تِلَاوَتَهُ إِنَّهُ هُوَ السَّمِيعُ  
الْعَلِيمُ، أَقُولُ قَوْلِي هَذَا وَأَسْتَغْفِرُ اللهَ الْعَظِيمَ لِي وَلَكُمْ، وَلِسَائِرِ  
الْمُسْلِمِينَ وَالْمُسْلِمَاتِ، وَالْمُؤْمِنِينَ وَالْمُؤْمِنَاتِ، فَاسْتَغْفِرُوهُ فَيَا  
فَوْزَ الْمُسْتَغْفِرِينَ وَيَا نَجَاةَ التَّائِبِينَ.