



Majlis Ugama Islam Singapura

Friday Sermon

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Appreciating Diversity In Community Living

الْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ الْمَلِكِ الْحَقِّ الْمُبِينِ الَّذِي أَبَانَ لِعِبَادِهِ مِنْ آيَاتِهِ مَا  
بِهِ عِبْرَةٌ لِلْمُعْتَبِرِينَ وَأَشْهَدُ أَنْ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا اللَّهُ وَحْدَهُ لَا شَرِيكَ  
لَهُ إِلَهَ الْأَوَّلِينَ وَالْآخِرِينَ وَأَشْهَدُ أَنَّ سَيِّدَنَا مُحَمَّدًا عَبْدُهُ  
وَرَسُولُهُ الْمَبْعُوثُ رَحْمَةً لِّلْعَالَمِينَ. اللَّهُمَّ صَلِّ عَلَى سَيِّدِنَا  
مُحَمَّدٍ وَعَلَى آلِهِ وَصَحْبِهِ وَسَلِّمْ تَسْلِيمًا كَثِيرًا . أَمَّا بَعْدُ فَيَا  
عِبَادَ اللَّهِ اتَّقُوا اللَّهَ حَقَّ تَقَاتِهِ وَلَا تَمُوتُنَّ إِلَّا وَأَنْتُمْ مُسْلِمُونَ.

Blessed Friday Jemaah,

Let us work together towards achieving true takwa by obeying all of Allah's commands and abstaining from what Allah has prohibited upon us; driven by our love for our Creator and His messenger. Let us live our lives with full conscience that Allah s.w.t. is always with us, and that we are never alone

Jemaah,

Diversity in communal living is a way of life that we cannot deny.

Allah s.w.t. says in surah Al-Hujurat, verse 13:

يَأَيُّهَا النَّاسُ إِنَّا خَلَقْنَاكُمْ مِنْ ذَكَرٍ وَأُنْثَىٰ وَجَعَلْنَاكُمْ  
شُعُوبًا وَقَبَائِلَ لِتَعَارَفُوا ۗ إِنَّ أَكْرَمَكُمْ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ  
أَتْقَىٰكُمْ ۗ إِنَّ اللَّهَ عَلِيمٌ خَبِيرٌ ﴿١٣﴾

Which means: *“O mankind! We created you from a single (pair) of a male and a female, and made you into nations and tribes, that ye may know each other (not that ye may despise (each other)). Verily the most honoured of you in the sight of Allah is (he who is) the most righteous of you. And Allah has full knowledge and is well acquainted (with all things).”*

Jemaah, if we reflect upon the verse that has just been read, we will realise that it is meant for all of humankind, not just for Muslims. This is because the verse talks about a fact of life – that we created to be of different groups and nationalities. Allah s.w.t. has also commanded upon us to be kind to one another; to be friendly with each other and to be part of the community we are in – whether we are in a Muslim community or otherwise.

Friday Jemaah,

If we reflect on the life of our beloved Prophet Muhammad s.a.w., we will find numerous examples of how Rasulullah himself had engaged and interacted with the diverse community he was in, whether it was in Makkah or after his hijrah to Madinah.

Just look at the norm and culture in Makkah in the early days of Islam; it was a city with people of different races and religions. There were the Quraish, the Zoroastrians, the Christians, and so on. They all worked together to establish Makkah as an international trading and business hub.

And when the Prophet's efforts to spread the message of Islam in Makkah were met with threats and hostility by the Musyrikin of Quraish, Rasulullah s.a.w. sought the help of King Negus, who was the king of Abyssinia (now known as Ethiopia). The king extended protection to the Muslims who moved to his country and treated them with fairness and justice, despite the fact that he was Christian at that point of time.

This story and more are recorded in the Islamic story to serve as guidance for us, the ummah of Rasullah s.a.w., in appreciating the diversity in our society.

Beloved Jemaah,

There are several guidelines that the Prophet shared with us, as to how we should approach diversity. One of the most important guidelines is to treat every individual as a person deserving of respect.

Imam Muslim narrated that there was once a funeral procession passed by Rasulullah s.a.w., and he immediately stood up as a form of respect towards the deceased. The Companions (Sahabah) who were with him remarked: “*It was the funeral of a Jew*”. Rasulullah responded:

أَلَيْسَتْ نَفْسًا؟

Which means: “*Was he not a human being?*”

Jemaah, see how beautiful the akhlak (manners) of our beloved Nabi s.a.w. was in dealing with differences and diversity. Always be mindful of our akhlak when we interact with members of the community who are different from us. Good akhlak and beautiful manners can leave a lasting impact; more than mere words could ever do.

Remember the story of how Rasulullah s.a.w. visited a young Jewish boy when he fell ill; and the impact of his actions on the

boy. When Nabi s.a.w. heard the news that the boy was gravely ill, he quickly visited the boy despite being occupied with multiple responsibilities. The boy was so touched by the beauty of the Prophet's akhlak, and immediately embraced Islam.

Subhanallah! Such was the impact of good manners and kind actions. Based of that, Imam Al-Ghazali wrote in his book *(Bidayatul Hidayah)*: *“Do not interfere in the relationship between a person and his Creator. A person may not be a Muslim today, but there is always the possibility that Allah may bestow him with hidayah in the future, whereas your own heart might be deprived of iman one day.”*

Friday Jemaah,

It is when a community appreciates the existing diversity that it will then be able to achieve the excellence and success that it is aiming for. Just look at the extensive Islamic history, such as the history of the golden years of Andalusia (Spain when it was under Muslim rule). The golden years of Andalusia were also the golden years of Islam, and the golden years for human civilization. This excellence was made possible because both Muslims and non-Muslims worked together; contributing to the community at large and working for the development of the country.

The sharing of knowledge, scientific discoveries and modern inventions were shared for the benefit of all. The advantage of this was extended and enjoyed beyond those who were in Andalusia – even the other Muslim countries and European countries benefited from this sharing. It was thus this partnership that helped to end the Dark Ages in Europe and led to the “*Enlightenment Period*”. Hence we learn that all of these achievements are made possible when a community appreciates the diversity that exists, and applies the Sunnah and examples of Rasulullah s.a.w. in managing the diversity.

Hence, let us enliven the Sunnah of Rasulullah s.a.w. He taught us to appreciate the diversity that exists, and to accord respect to human dignity and honour. Hence, as his followers, let us not neglect these valuable lessons that the Prophet has left for us to follow. Let us work together to prove to others that we are indeed the best of Allah’s creations. Hopefully in doing so will help us in attaining hidayah and rahmah from Allah the Exalted, in facing this temporary life and the permanent one in the hereafter. Amin.

بَارَكَ اللهُ لِي وَلَكُمْ فِي الْقُرْآنِ الْعَظِيمِ، وَنَفَعَنِي وَإِيَّاكُمْ بِمَا فِيهِ مِنَ  
الْآيَاتِ وَالذِّكْرِ الْحَكِيمِ، وَتَقَبَّلَ 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.