



Synopsis of Friday Sermon

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IONA
REPENTANCE
REVITALIZATION OF FAITH
RENEWAL OF COVENANT

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

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

Synopsis of the Eid al-Fitr

Sermon delivered by Ameer Mustapha Elturk on Aug 8, 2013

We have gathered here this morning on this blessed day of Eid al-Fitr to exalt, glorify, praise, and thank Allah for His infinite blessings. We thank Allah for giving us the will, the strength and the endurance to observe fasting during the holy month of Ramadan. We rejoice and celebrate the joy of Eid in the celebration of the One God—Allah (SWT). This expression of joy is to show our gratitude to Allah for his bounties, favors and mercy upon us. “Say: *‘It is the bounty of Allah and His mercy that should be the cause of their rejoicing. That is better than anything they accumulate’* (Yunus, 10:58).

“It was in the month of Ramadan that the Quran was revealed as guidance for mankind, clear messages giving guidance and distinguishing between right and wrong. So any one of you who is present that month should fast, and anyone who is ill or on a journey should make up for the lost days by fasting on other days later. God wants ease for you, not hardship. He wants you to complete the prescribed period and to glorify Him for having guided you, so that you may be thankful” (al-Baqarah, 2:185).

We learn in light of the above *ayah* that Allah instituted fasting (*al-siyam*) in the month of Ramadan and made it an obligatory mode of worship. The Qur’an, which contains divine guidance for mankind was also revealed in the month of Ramadan. We have to be thankful to Allah for these blessings. People who could not fast for reasons of illness or travelling should make up those fasting days as soon as possible and in any case before the next Ramadan, unless they have been exempted from fasting because of chronic illness or weakness or mental infirmity of old age, in which case they have to pay a ransom (*fidya*) for the missed days without the obligation to make up for the missed days. These prescribed days of fasting are like a debt (*dayn*) that we owe to Allah and have to pay back to Him.

We are among the most blessed people in the world for the simple reason that we have been guided to Islam, the only way of life (*deen*) with which Allah is pleased. “*Today I have perfected your deen for you and completed My blessing upon you and I am pleased with Islam as a deen for you*” (al-Ma’idah, 5:3). We have to ensure that we live Islam; that we honor and exalt Allah, and that we thank Him.

The best way we can show and continue to show our gratitude to Allah is to continue the *‘ibadah* of supererogatory (*nawafil*) prayers and fasting, even after Ramadan. It is learnt from the Sirah of the Prophet (SAW) that he stood in voluntary night prayers so long that his legs used to get swelled. When his wife Ayesha (RA) asked him as to why he was doing this to himself, he said, “Should I not be a thankful slave of Allah?” To show our gratitude to Allah, we too should continue this practice of offering voluntary prayers in the night; especially the *tahajjud* prayers and observe voluntary fasts. There is a hadith Qudsi that says, “Every deed of a son of Adam is for himself, except fasting - it is for Me, and I reward for it.”

Another thing we learned from Ramadan is spending in the way of Allah. With Allah's *tawfiq*, each one of us in our own small way was able to contribute in His path. This included charities given to Islamic institutions, Islamic centers, Islamic schools, Islamic organizations, and other Islamic projects, and also to the indigent and needy people. There is a clear Qur'anic mandate that says, "*Help one another in goodness and in piety. Do not help one another in sin and transgression*" (*al-Ma'idah, 5:2*).

Thus, the three main highlights of Ramadan are fasting, nightly prayers, and spending (*siyam, qiyam, and infaq*). We have to live with these practices to show our gratefulness to Allah. This is to our advantage because being grateful to our Lord (*Rabb*) increases His blessings upon us. "*Remember also the time when your Lord declared, If you are grateful, I will surely bestow more favors on you*" (*Ibrahim, 14:7*).

Fasting has been legislated so that we may attain the *taqwa* of Allah. The very objective of fasting, as mentioned in the Qur'an is to attain *taqwa*. To have *taqwa* means to be conscious and mindful of Allah. "*O you who believe, fasting is prescribed for you, as it was prescribed for those before you — so that hopefully you will have taqwa*" (*al-Baqarah, 2:183*). Ramadan drew us closer to Allah. Even after Ramadan, we need to remain close to Him. We need Him. He does not need us.

Ramadan also brought in its wake the value of discipline. Fasting from dawn to sundown, we had to follow a rigorous timetable of taking predawn meal (*suhoor*), fast-breaking meal (*iftar*), nightly prayers (*tarawih / tahajjud / qiyam*), besides the five daily prayers, recitation of the Qur'an, and attending to other daily routine mundane duties. All these had to be carried out in their allotted times. Such discipline emerging out of the spiritual boot camp of Ramadan has to be maintained after Ramadan as well.

Ramadan also taught and trained us to exercise patience (*sabr*). Fasting is a lesson in self-restraint and patience. The Prophet (SAW) named Ramadan as *shahr ul- sabr* or the month of patience, because one has to remain patient by restraining oneself even from the lawful such as eating, drinking, and spousal relations, among other things. We learn through a hadith that addressing the young people, the Prophet (SAW) said, "O young men! Whoever among you can marry, should marry, because it helps him lower his gaze and guard his modesty (i.e. his private parts from committing illegal sexual intercourse etc.), and whoever is not able to marry, should fast, because it will be a shield for him." This is because fasting would diminish his sexual power.

It is Sunnah to fast six days of Shawwal (the lunar month following Ramadan). According to a hadith, "Whoever fasts Ramadan, and follows it with six days of Shawwal will be rewarded as if one had fasted the entire year." Other recommended days to fast as per the practice of the Prophet (SAW) are Mondays and Thursdays. Here at IONA, there is a weekly program called 'Fast and Learn,' in which people from the community, especially the youth, get together every Thursday and share their meals by breaking their fasts together. They also study the Qur'an in congregation. This is highly conducive to help members of the community to maintain the spirit of Ramadan. Other days of fasting may include the first ten days of Zul-Hijjah, the tenth day of Muharram (*Ashura*) followed by another day preceding or following it, and the three white days (*ayyam al-beedh*) corresponding to the 13th, 14th, and 15th of every lunar month.

We also cultivated good manners in the month of Ramadan. We guarded our eyes, ears, and mouths by avoiding seeing evil, hearing evil, and speaking evil. According to a hadith, "Whoever does not give up false speech and false actions and ignorance, Allah has no need of his giving up his food and drink."

Ramadan also united us and brought us closer as a community. "*Hold fast to God's rope all together; do not split into factions*" (*Aal 'Imran, 3:103*). Sheikh ul Islam Ibn Taymiyyah is reported to have said, "The welfare of people will not be complete – neither in this world, nor in the Hereafter – except with *ijtima`* (collectiveness), *ta`awun* (mutual co-operation), and *tanasur* (mutual help); mutual co-operation in order to secure benefits, and mutual help in order to ward off harm. It is for this reason that man is said to be social and civil by nature." Thus, Ramadan is a time to increase our sense of unity and brotherhood and our commitment

to Allah and His *deen*—Al-Islam. The whole idea behind Ramadan is that when we exit from Ramadan, we are geared to truly work hard to make Allah supreme. But, how do we make Allah supreme? It is not just by uttering Allahu Akbar (*takbeer*), but by actually engaging oneself in real activism. Are we ready after a whole month of rigorous training to take up our real task—to serve humanity and to do *amr bil ma'ruf wa nahi 'anil munkar* (enjoining virtues and forbidding evil).

We learn through a Prophetic hadith that “The most beloved of deeds according to Allah are the continuous ones, even if they are little.” It is very important to have clear intent during acts of worship and establish consistency, rather than going overboard and then leaving the acts of worship all together. We have to try our level best to remain consistent in our acts of worship and not let all the benefits we derived from Ramadan get wasted. There may be some who know Allah only during Ramadan, and then become oblivious of Him. We have to strive to be like a *Rabbani* (God-conscious believer) throughout the entire year.

What is the proof that our *siyam*, *qiyam*, *infaq*, and other good deeds that we did during the month of Ramadan have been accepted by Allah? This can only be known through self-monitoring. If whatever we learned during Ramadan is in practice even after Ramadan, then this means that our acts of worship (*ibadat*) in Ramadan were accepted. God forbid, if one remains indulged in sinful activities even after undergoing a month's thorough training during Ramadan, then it is most likely that such a person has forsaken Allah. It is crucial that we continue to be guided as we were guided during Ramadan, because it is the lasting good works that are most rewarding. “Allah increases His guidance to those who follow guidance; and lasting good works are better in the sight of your Lord and are most rewarding” (*Maryam*, 1976).

We have just exited the month of countless blessings. “If you tried to count Allah's blessings you could never calculate them” (*Ibrahim*, 14:34). These blessings can continue if we continue to do what we were trained to do in Ramadan—striving for excellence in our devotion to Allah. According to a hadith, “He who fasts has two joys: a joy when he breaks his fast and a joy when he meets his Lord.” According to another hadith, “Paradise has eight gates. One of them Al-Rayyan; only the fasting people (*ahl ul-siyam* - people who used to perform fasting during their lives) can come through it.” Rayyan also means ‘source of irrigation’. The name of the gate itself means that it stands to quench the thirst of those Muslims who fast. Muslims, especially towards the last ten days of Ramadan, begged Allah (SWT) to forgive them. One of the Prophetic supplications they made was, “O Allah! You are the Forgiver and You like forgiving; so forgive me” (*Allah humma innaka 'afuwwun tuhibbul 'afwa fa'fu 'anni*). May Allah (SWT) forgive us all and accept our worship and deeds. May He also help the Muslims everywhere and increase us in Iman and *Taqwa*, ameen.

Edited by Dr. Munawar Haque
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