



Islamic Religious Council of Singapore

Friday Sermon

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The Virtue of Good Neighbourly Relations:

A Lesson from The Story of Imam Ali Zainal Abidin

الْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ عَلَى إِحْسَانِهِ، وَالشُّكْرُ لَهُ عَلَى تَوْفِيقِهِ وَامْتِنَانِهِ، وَأَشْهَدُ أَنْ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا اللَّهُ وَحْدَهُ لَا شَرِيكَ لَهُ تَعْظِيمًا لِسَانِهِ، وَأَشْهَدُ أَنَّ سَيِّدَنَا وَنَبِيَّنَا مُحَمَّدًا عَبْدُهُ وَرَسُولُهُ الدَّاعِي إِلَى رِضْوَانِهِ، اللَّهُمَّ صَلِّ وَسَلِّمْ وَبَارِكْ عَلَى سَيِّدِنَا مُحَمَّدٍ وَعَلَى آلِهِ وَأَصْحَابِهِ وَإِخْوَانِهِ.

أَمَّا بَعْدُ، فَيَا أَيُّهَا الْمُسْلِمُونَ، أُوصِيكُمْ وَنَفْسِي بِتَقْوَى اللَّهِ عَزَّ وَجَلَّ، فَهِيَ وَصِيَّةُ اللَّهِ لِلأَوَّلِينَ وَالْآخِرِينَ.

Blessed Friday congregation,

Let us diligently do good, in order to increase our taqwa of Allah s.w.t.. Let us protect ourselves at the same time from doing any form of evil that may tarnish our good deeds.

My dear brothers,

In the book Siyar A'lam An-Nubala', there is a story about the noble

character of the great-grandson of the Prophet s.a.w, Ali bin Al-Husain bin Ali bin Abi Talib r.a., who is also known as Imam Ali Zainal Abidin.

He received the title “Zainal Abidin”, which means “the ornament of the worshippers”, because he was known as someone who was devoted to worship.

Even then, throughout his life he had strived to contribute to the community and look out for the welfare of those around him. He often gave donations as well as lent money to those in need.

He also often went around the city of Madinah carrying food packets every night and would put them in front of the homes of the needy. No one at that time knew who gave the food to them. After he passed on, the community realized that the donation they had been receiving all this while came from this descendant of the Prophet s.a.w., Ali Zainal Abidin, as they no longer received them after his passing.

Subhanallah! Look at the noble character of this man who is always concerned of the needs of his neighbours. His efforts are in line with the words of Allah in Surah Al-Baqarah verse 271:

إِنْ بُدُوا الصَّدَقَاتِ فَنِعِمَّا هِيَ وَإِنْ تُخْفُوهَا وَتُؤْتُوهَا
الْفُقَرَاءَ فَهُوَ خَيْرٌ لَكُمْ وَيُكَفِّرُ عَنْكُمْ مِنْ سَيِّئَاتِكُمْ
وَاللَّهُ بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ خَبِيرٌ

Which means: *“If you give charity openly, it is good, but if you keep it secret and give to the needy in private, that is better for you, and it will remove from you some of your bad deeds. And Allah is well aware of all that you do.”*

My dear brothers,

The story that was just shared teaches us the importance of having concern for the welfare of those around us, including our neighbours.

Imam Al-Ghazali too has reminded us that every Muslim has a responsibility to respect his neighbours, for neighbours are like our own relatives. Good neighbourly relations that are based on rapport, amity and concern will create a positive environment, nurture togetherness, and encourage helping one another.

In line with the story that was just related, here are some guidelines that we can adopt in living our lives as neighbours.

Firstly: Strengthen good relations among neighbours.

All of us desire a peaceful and harmonious life. Thus, we have a role to play in order to maintain it. A peaceful social environment does not come by without effort.

Let us observe an advice by Rasulullah s.a.w. in a hadith narrated by Imam Ahmad which stresses that there is no good in someone who constantly offends his neighbours, even if he is among those who constantly perform acts of worship. In another hadith, the

Prophet s.a.w. emphasises that whoever does not bring about peace to his neighbours, it is a sign of his lack of faith. (Hadith recorded by Imam Al-Bukhari and Muslim)

Thus, as believers, we ought to take small steps to preserve and nurture good relations with our neighbours. We must strive to overcome challenges in that process, be they conflicts or misunderstandings that may bring about anger or dissatisfaction.

Nonetheless, whatever problems that may arise, we ought to observe good relations as far as possible, so that our neighbourly relations will get better. Let us increase our level of tolerance and patience and train ourselves to manage our emotions well.

Secondly: We have to be aware of and sensitive to our surroundings.

The story that was shared earlier shows us the true meaning of *ibadah* (or worship). Despite Ali Zainal Abidin's devotion to acts of worship, his contributions to his community shows us that worship should indeed nurture a sense of concern in us towards the people around us. Our acts of worship should make us aware and sensitive to the needs of others. Indeed, Ali Zainal Abidin has lived the sunnah of the Prophet s.a.w., that says: "*He is not among the believers – he who is full while his neighbours are in hunger.*" (Hadith recorded by Imam At-Thabrani).

Thus, my brothers, the spirit of the Shariah that was brought by the

Prophet Muhammad s.a.w contains values which not only take into account our welfare, but also the welfare of our neighbours, community and every individual. At every moment, it protects society from harm and danger.

Today, we are still facing a virus outbreak. My brothers, what are our responsibilities? Will we say that we are not in need of any precautions? And it is enough for us to just tawakkal or rely upon God?

Didn't the prophet-teach his companions to take precautions and to put effort in it. Only then, they should rely upon Allah. The Prophet s.a.w said, *"You should tie it (the camel), and then tawakkal or rely upon God."* (Hadith recorded by Imam At-Tirmizi). Therefore, tying the camel and ensuring that it will not run away is part of the meaning of tawakkal.

As an example, it may be that at this moment we should take several precautions, to ensure the containment of the virus outbreak. Isn't this part of our religious duties and responsibilities? So that the well-being of the individual and the society be continuously protected. It is a way that was brought by the Prophet s.a.w and his companions. And it was followed by his great-grandson, Ali Zainal Abidin, throughout his life.

My dear brothers,

Let us live these challenging days with patience and perseverance.

Let us put in our efforts with persistence in any situation that calls us to. May Allah grant us the resilience in facing these difficult times. May Allah s.w.t. protect us, our family, our neighbours, our community, and our country from any form of harm. Amin Ya Rabbal 'Alamin.

بَارَكَ اللَّهُ 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 اللَّهَ الْعَظِيمَ لِي وَلَكُمْ، وَلِسَائِرِ
الْمُسْلِمِينَ وَالْمُسْلِمَاتِ، وَالْمُؤْمِنِينَ وَالْمُؤْمِنَاتِ، فَاسْتَغْفِرُوهُ فَيَا
فُوزَ الْمُسْتَغْفِرِينَ وَيَا نَجَاةَ التَّائِبِينَ.