

Eidul Adhha Sermon delivered at the Islamic Institute of Toronto by Shaikh Ahmad Kutty
on November 06, 2011

I praise Allah, the Beneficent, the Merciful; I thank Him for His blessings and favors. I thank Him for the gift of faith; I thank Him for the gift of life and health; I thank Him for the gift of family and I thank Him for the peace, security and prosperity that we enjoy in this country of ours which we call our home.

I bear witness there is no god but God, the Creator, and Lord of all beings. I bear witness that Muhammad is His servant and seal of Prophets. May Allah bless him and his family and companions and all those who follow their ways earnestly and sincerely--aameen.

Brothers and sisters:

I wish you all a most joyous Eid. Today we are joining the millions of Muslims all over the world in this great celebration. While we celebrate Eidul adhha, millions of our brothers and sisters in hajj have converged on the sacred sites to perform the rites of hajj.

Whether, in hajj or outside, we all commemorate the faith and sacrifice of Abraham (peace be upon him). We look up to this great prophet for inspiration to make our lives better.

Dear brothers and sisters:

Eid is a time of joy; it is a time of prayer and thanksgiving; it is a time to open our hearts towards one another in a true spirit of peace, good will and universal brotherhood.

The spirit of Eidul adhha is the same as the universal message of hajj: It is the message of unity of mankind under the Lordship of one God. It points the way to achieve

universal peace—peace based on a concept of universal human brotherhood through submission to the Lord of the worlds, which is the essence of Islam.

Hajj, the fifth pillar of Islam, seeks to break down the artificial barriers that separate one race from another, one ethnicity from another, one color from another. It affirms the Qur’anic message of oneness of humanity:

“O Mankind, Be conscious of your Lord who created you all from a single soul.”

(Qur’an: 4: 1)

“O mankind, We created you all from a single pair of a male and female and rendered you nations and tribes in order for you to recognize one another; verily, the noblest of you in the sight of God, are they who are most conscious of Him.”

(Qur’an: 49: 13).

Brothers and sisters,

While we celebrate Eidul Adhha, we commemorate the sacrifice of prophet Ibrahim. Islam is a continuation of the Abrahamic way: Prophet Muhammad was the fulfillment of the prayer of Abraham: Abraham prayed to his Lord:

“Our Lord! And raise up in their midst a messenger from among them who shall recite unto them Thy revelations, and shall instruct them in the Scripture and in wisdom and shall make them grow. Lo! Thou, only Thou, art the Mighty, Wise.

(Qur’an: 2: 129).

Abraham was not just a prophet like any other prophet; he was not a hero like any other hero; rather he was a true role model and leader for all of humanity:

“When His Lord tested Abraham with His commandments and He passed them all, He addressed him, “I am appointing you as a leader for humankind.” (Qur’an: 2: 124).

It is Abraham who called us Muslims; the word islam signifies peace through self-surrender. Today, we are challenged to act as ambassadors of peace in the manner of

Abraham-- in a world that is torn asunder by violence, blood shed, wars and various racial, ethnic, and national tensions.

Today humanity is at a crossroad: The old ways of thinking and acting have been proven futile and destructive. Therefore, it becomes imperative that we go back to the roots of our faith and common heritage to find common ideals and aspirations. We find no common point that unites us all than in embracing the legacy of Abraham, in which we Muslims, Christians and Jews share. Thus, Abraham's way has greater relevance today than perhaps any other time in history:

Let me focus on three points in Abraham's story that we can readily relate to in our own time and age.

Firstly, Abraham's faith in God:

There are different kinds of faith: One is a blind faith that is opposed to sound reason and common sense. Certainly this is not the faith that the Quran summons us to embrace. Certainly, this was not the faith of Abraham as the Quran teaches. Abraham's faith was a faith born of deep reflection and sound reasoning. He reflected on the phenomena, the universe in its state of flux. His continued reflection led him to believe in a transcendent God. He realized the Creator of the Universe is not incarnated in the universe; rather He is the Absolute, the Unique and Incomparable.

It is this conviction that led him to dedicate his life utterly to serve the truth and high ideals:

As Muslims, we commemorate this tradition of Abraham in our daily prayers as we repeat the prayer of Abraham:

“Verily, my worship, my sacrifice and my life and death are wholly dedicated to Allah, Lord of the worlds.”

Islam is the way of surrender and peace in the manner of Abraham.

Today we are called to practice the ways of surrender and peace in the same spirit.

It demands from us a new openness to accept others as part of ourselves.

Abraham was known for this openness. It was Abraham who invited strangers to his home and entertained them to a grand feast; but they turned out to be angels.

The lesson of the story is that we need to have the courage to accept the other even as Abraham had the courage to do so.

Unless we are ready for this openness to accept the other, we will not be able to make any difference in the world around us.

The world today is suffering from vicious cycles of hatred and violence: Islamophobia, which is on the increase in many parts of the world, is the result of demonization of the other. We cannot pretend that we Muslims are immune to this disease either, as we also tend to demonize the other. Freedom from this vicious cycle is possible only when we develop the spirit of openness: It requires sacrifice; it requires a commitment to justice and compassion: Let the words of our beloved Prophet serve as guiding principles for us:

“Allah orders you to forgive those who hurt you; to join relations with those who sever relations with you, and give those who refuse to give you.”

While making sacrifices in the manner of Abraham, let us never lose sight of the true spirit of sacrifice: Allah says:

“It is neither the flesh of the animals you sacrifice nor their blood that reaches God; it is rather the piety of your hearts.” (Qur’an: 22: 37).

Therefore, we need to sacrifice what is dear to us for the sake of truth, justice and compassion; we need to be willing to sacrifice our personal comforts for the common good of all.

Closely tied to sacrifice is trust in Allah. Abraham demonstrated unconditional trust in Allah when he obeyed the order of Allah and left his wife Hagar and baby Isma’eel in the barren desert. It is unthinkable for ordinary mortals. God’s promise came true as the barren rocks in the desert opened to offer fresh water to quench the thirst of the infant and his mother. Abraham’s prayer was heard as the desert became the greatest site of pilgrimage the world has ever known. Such is the trust we need to display if we are true to the faith of Abraham.

The way ahead of us will be full of challenges. Abraham was willing to cast out the Devil who tested his faith at every point on his way to fulfilling God’s will. Today even as we commit ourselves to follow the path of Abraham we must never underestimate the challenges ahead of us. But through unflinching faith in God, spirit of sacrifice and trust in God we shall overcome all challenges.

May Allah grace us all with His mercy; may He grant us the strength and courage to submit to the truth and surrender to it.

Before concluding, let us remember our dear brothers and sisters who are sick and suffering from various afflictions. May the compassionate Lord ease their pain and suffering, and shower them with His mercy and send down healing upon them;

Let us also remember those who have passed away; may the Beneficent Lord, forgive their sins, and admit them into jannatul al-firdaws and may He unite us and them in the company of our beloved prophet Muhammad and the righteous ones;

Let us also remember the vulnerable and the less fortunate ones all over the world—the many millions who have been deprived of even the basic amenities of life which we all take for granted in this wonderful country of ours;

Let us remember those who are suffering from various forms of occupation; those who are being demonized and disposed of as non-existent entities, as if they were only fit to be exterminated;

Let us remember those millions who are suffering from various forms of tyranny and oppression in various parts of the world, in Palestine, Afghanistan, Iraq, Syria, Chechnya, Kashmir, and all other parts of the world;

Let us pray that the All-Merciful Lord help them all to regain their God-given dignity, justice and freedom;

Let us pray that the Beneficent Lord guide us all unto the ways of peace, righteousness, justice and compassion; may He guide our children, youth and families; may He guide our leaders and rulers to the ways of peace, justice and compassion.

“Our Lord, You are the Source of Peace, Peace is a gift of Yours; so greet us all with peace, and guide us all unto the ways of peace.”