

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

إِنَّمَا وَلِيُّكُمُ اللَّهُ وَرَسُولُهُ وَالَّذِينَ آمَنُوا الَّذِينَ يُقِيمُونَ
الصَّلَاةَ وَيُؤْتُونَ الزَّكَاةَ وَهُمْ رَاكِعُونَ.
وَقَالَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ:
مَنْ تَشَبَهَ بِقَوْمٍ فَهُوَ مِنْهُمْ.

PROTECTING THE VALUES THAT MAKE US WHO WE ARE

Dear Muslims,

The goal of our sublime religion, Islam, is to construct a Muslim identity on the basis of the Qur'an and Sunnah. In constructing this identity, the basic measure of Islam is the moral principles that were introduced by the Messenger of Allah (saw). It is the Islamic culture and civilization that has emerged through these principles. It is the rules of etiquette that make our existence meaningful. Our religion commands us to protect these universal values that make us who we are, and to avoid all kinds of words and behaviors that would distance us from our true selves.

Dear Believers!

The loftiest value that constitutes the Muslim identity is faith, which reminds us of the purpose of our creation, teaches us our responsibilities, and allows us to develop a personality. It is the acts of worship that enables us to earn the approval of our Lord (swt), and good morals that are the source of peace and happiness. Muslims have protected their beliefs and culture by upholding these values in all areas from worship to social life, and from dressing to food and drink. They have established civilizations that brought an end to and started eras, and became leaders and examples for all people in knowledge and science, culture, arts and literature. However, when Muslims moved away from their own beliefs and values and came under the influence of foreign cultures, that is when they lost their identity and sense of belonging.

Dear Muslims!

Muslims who preserve their identity are expected to respect and protect the principles of Islam, that is, the signs and symbols of Islam. The Ka'bah, which is the sign of tawhid; the worship of hajj, during which the consciousness of being an ummah is renewed; the worship of qurbani, which is the sign of submission; mosques, which serve as the sign of our unity and solidarity; the adhan, whose testimonies are the foundation of the religion; and the

ritual prayers, which are the zenith of servitude, are among the symbols of Islam that make us who we are. Allah the Almighty (swt) states,

“Whoever honors the symbols of Allah, it is certainly out of the piety of the heart.”¹, and informs us that protecting these symbols and signs is a requirement of our piety.

Dear Believers!

We live in a time when moral values, customs and traditions are deteriorating, and cultural alienation is rapidly increasing. One of these cultural degenerations is the New Year celebrations. However, the festivities organized under the name of New Year's Eve, the symbolic figures in these festivities and the cutting down of pine trees have nothing to do with our history and culture. Our sublime religion, Islam, forbids alcohol, which is the mother of all evil, and gambling, which destroys homes and families and causes murders. Lottery, bets and all games of chance, which are different types of gambling, are also forbidden and sinful acts according to our religion.

Dear Muslims!

Societies are known and remembered for their values. They live and keep standing by their values. Our Prophet (saw) warns his 'umamah about this issue as follows: **“He who imitates any people (in their actions) is considered to be one of them.”**² So, let us hold fast to our values, which make us who we are, sustain us and are our strongest refuge. Let us not reflect on our lives superstitious customs and traditions that are incompatible with our faith, history and culture. Let us bring together our family, where our faith and character are shaped, our children, the light of our eyes, and our youth, the hope of our nation, with our national and spiritual values. Let us all work together to ensure that they do not become captives of foreign cultures. Let us not forget that no nation can rise with the values of another society. A society alienated from their own culture cannot build a civilization. Those who do not have any knowledge of their history cannot build their future on a solid foundation.

I would like to conclude this Friday's khutbah with our Lord's (swt) following verse: **“Your only guardians are Allah, His Messenger, and fellow believers—who establish prayer and pay alms-tax with humility.”**³

¹ Hajj, 22/32.

² Abu Dawud, Libas, 4.

³ Ma'idah, 5/55.