Synopsis of Friday Sermon
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Ramadan is one of the best months of the year. As its name suggests, it is the month that burns away sins. It is not only the month of fasting but also the month of the Qur’an. It is the month of compassion, piety, patience, forgiveness, and thankfulness to Allah (SWT). It is also the month of spending in charitable causes, simply to attain the pleasure of Allah (SWT). Our beloved prophet Muhammad (SAW) was charitable throughout his life, but one finds him still more charitable during the month of Ramadan. The rewards of acts of charity during Ramadan are multiplied manifolds—more than any other time.

The Qur’an alludes to the fact that man by his very nature loves wealth and other material possessions intensely. “And you love wealth with a passion” (al-fajr, 89:20). “The love of desirable things is made alluring for people—women, children, gold and silver treasures piled up high, horses with fine markings, livestock, and farmland—these may be the joys of this life, but God has the best place to return to” (Aal ‘Imran, 3:14). Despite the inherent attachment with material things, the attitude of Muslims toward wealth is not the same as other people. This is because we have the true divine guidance while others don’t.

People generally do not understand the Islamic concept of wealth, which boils down to the fact that we own nothing. The owner of everything is only Allah (SWT). Whatever we have is a sacred trust (amanah) from Him. People are told to spend from whatever Allah (SWT) has given them. “And give them some of the wealth God has given you” (al-Nur, 24:33). Muslims understand that what they possess is not their earnings (kasb), but a favor, blessing and bounty (fadl) of Allah (SWT). Ayah 10 of Surat al-Jumu’ah further makes this notion of fadl very clear. “Then when the prayer has ended, disperse in the land and seek out God’s bounty (fadl). Remember God often so that you may prosper” (al-Jumu’ah, 62:10).

Those who are mindful of God (al-muttaqin) spend from what Allah (SWT) has given them. “This is the Book in which there is no doubt, containing guidance for those who are mindful of God, who believe in the unseen, keep up the prayer, and give out of what We have provided for them” (al-Baqarah, 2:2-3). While people tend to think that being the owners of their wealth, they can dispose it off the way they like, Muslims understand that their wealth has been provided by Allah (SWT) only to satisfy and fulfill their needs. Any surplus has to be spent in the way of Allah (SWT). “They ask you what they should give: say, ‘Give what you can spare.’ In this way, God makes His messages clear to you, so that you may reflect” (al-Baqarah, 2:219). This is spending at the spiritual level. This has been explained elsewhere in another ayah, “They ask you what they should give. Say,” Whatever you give should be for parents, close relatives, orphans, the needy, and travelers. God is well aware of whatever good you do” (al-Baqarah, 2:215). Muslims also understand that the poor and the needy have a known right in their wealth. “And in whose wealth there is a known right for the beggars and deprived ones.” (al-Ma’arif, 70:24,25).

The attributes of piety (taqwa), righteousness (al-birr), and spending in the way of Allah (SWT) are all linked with each other. One’s taqwa during the month of Ramadan is at its highest level. We learn from the
Qur’an that the main objective of fasting is to attain taqwa. “O you who believe, fasting is prescribed for you, as it was prescribed for those before you, so that you may have taqwa (be righteous)” (al-Baqarah, 2:183). The Qur’an also tells us that real virtue (birr) and piety (taqwa) is linked to spending in the way of Allah (SWT) among host of other good deeds. “Real virtue (birr) does not (only) consist in turning your faces to the East or to the West. Rather, those with true devoutness are those who have iman in Allah and the Last Day, the Angels, the Book and the Prophets, and who, despite their love for it, give away their wealth to their relatives and to orphans and the very poor, and to travelers and beggars and to set slaves free, and who establish salat and pay zakat; those who honor their contracts when they make them, and are steadfast in poverty and illness and in battle. Those are the people who are true. They are the people who have taqwa” (al-Baqarah, 2:177).

Spending in the way of Allah (SWT) is such a meritorious act that Allah (SWT) is thankful to those of His servants who spend in His way. “Those who recite God’s scripture, keep up the prayer, give secretly and openly from what We have provided for them, may hope for a trade that will never decline” (Fatir, 35:29). To encourage others to give, one may spend openly also, as long as this is done with the sincerest of intentions, and without a trace of pretentious display or showing off (riya). Riya is so dangerous that the Prophet (SAW) gave it a special name. He said, “Indeed the thing I fear for you the most is the minor shirk (associating partners with Allah). The companions of the Prophet (SAW) asked him, “What is minor shirk, Ya Rasulullah?” He said, “al-Riya” (showing off). Muslims give because they know that Allah (SWT) is grateful, and that He compensates by giving back many times over. “If you make a generous loan to God He will multiply it for you and forgive you. God is ever thankful and forbearing” (al-Taghabun, 64:17). “Whatever charity you give benefits your own soul, provided you do it for the sake of God: whatever you give will be repaid to you in full, and you will not be wronged” (al-Baqarah, 2:272).

Allah (SWT) gives whatever He wills; to whomever He wills. “Say, My Lord gives in abundance to whoever He will and restricts to whoever He will, though most people do not understand” (Saba, 34:36). His blessings are not restricted by any limits. “Those who spend their wealth in God’s cause are like grains of corn that produce seven ears, each bearing a hundred grains. God gives multiple increase to whoever He wishes: He is limitless and all knowing” (al-Baqarah, 2:261). The recipients of such grace of Allah (SWT) are those who do not follow their spending with reminders or hurtful words hurled on those whom they give. “Those who spend their wealth in God’s cause, and do not follow their spending with reminders of their benevolence or hurtful words, will have their rewards with their Lord: no fear for them, nor will they grieve”(al-Baqarah, 2:262).

However illogical it may sound, giving in charity does not decrease one’s wealth. On the contrary, it increases it, and becomes a source of inner peace and contentment. The companions of the Prophet (SAW) used to be afraid that the day they stopped giving, Allah would stop providing for them. According to a hadith, “Charity does not decrease wealth. No one forgives except that Allah increases his honor, and no one humbles himself for Allah except that Allah raises his status.” The Qur’an reminds us that our wealth and our children are a test for us. “Be aware that your possessions and your children are only a test, and that there is a tremendous reward with God” (al-Anfal, 8:28). At the same time we should never be harsh upon or repel those who ask us for something. “So do not be harsh with the orphan, and as for the beggar, do not scold him” (al-Dhuha, 93:9-10). May Allah (SWT) make us among those who are able to give generously for every good cause.

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