

What Does the Lord Require?
Human Relations Sunday, February 20, 2022

Introduction to Speaker

⁶“With what shall I come before the LORD, and bow myself before God on high? Shall I come before him with burnt offerings, with calves a year old? ⁷Will the LORD be pleased with thousands of rams, with ten thousands of rivers of oil? Shall I give my firstborn for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?” ⁸ He has told you, O mortal, what is good; and what does the LORD require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God? They will know we are Christians by our love, by our love.

A few months ago, right before the service, I saw a man with a child in the hallway I nodded and smiled and went on my way to get ready. Not realizing that I was walking past an Afghan pharmacist, a former translator for American forces, who just months before, in those last harrowing days of the American occupation, had been found and beaten by the Taliban. And after years of seeking asylum here, was at the airport with his wife, Nahima and their son. And it was Matt, for whom he had translated, moved heaven and earth to get them out, Matt, who is Jeff Corcoran’s best friend, and so Fawad and Nahima had become Jeff and Ridhima’s friend, and were here that morning for the Christian baptism of their wondrous daughter, Reya.

That Nahima and Fawad are Muslim mattered not. For Islam teaches that Jesus is a prophet of Islam. That while the Prophet Mohammed, peace be upon him is the seal of the prophets. Islam Instructs its followers to revere Jesus as the Messiah, to honor his mother, Mary,

and to understand that we, Christians, Jews, Muslims, are all people of the Book. And so we are brothers and sisters.

From the Qur'an

Surely those who believe, and those who are Jews, and the Christians, and the Sabians—whoever believes in God and the Last Day and does good, they shall have their reward from their Lord. And there will be no fear for them, nor shall they grieve" (Surah 2:62 and 5:69)

". . . and nearest among them in love to the believers will you find those who say, 'We are Christians,' because amongst these are those devoted to learning and those who have renounced the world, and they are not arrogant" (Surah 5:82).

"O you who believe! Be helpers of God—as Jesus the son of Mary said to the Disciples, 'Who will be my helpers in (the work of) God?' Said the disciples, 'We are God's helpers!' " (Surah 61:14).

Christians are nearest, says the Qur'an in love. For they are devoted to learning of God reject the world's evil are humble are helpers. It resonates with our passage from Micah today. The prophet is speaking to the people who had become caught up in the outer aspects of religion. The sacrifices of coin and animals that would make God happy. And they had forgotten what God most wants.

It was some days after the baptism when I learned of Fawad and Nahima's story and felt anguish that I had only nodded and passed by. It reminded me of Jesus' parable of the priest who passed by the man lying beside the road because he was too busy with other things to see and show compassion. We all do this, for our minds and lives and even hearts are full, we walk by, we turn our head, or we don't even notice situations and persons. Particularly when we feel there

is nothing we can do. We do this with persons, we do this with countries. Of course, none of us are God. We cannot notice or take in everything and everyone. But that moment, and these passages from the Qur'an and Micah remind us of what we may be missing.

The prophet Micah says:

But He has told you, O mortal, what is good; says Micah, and what does the LORD require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?

Do you hear the echoes of how Christians, and Jews are to be?

So, for today, Human Relations Day, how shall we live into the expectations of the Qu'ran and our scriptures, and of Jesus, peace be upon him. How shall we not pass by, be a people of justice, and kindness, and humility and helpfulness. Today, on Human Relations Sunday, we are here to not pass by, but to stop and listen, listen carefully, to one whose first language is not ours, to this husband, father, pharmacist, a person of heroism and compassion, a man of deep faith. And courage given by God. Let us listen, in kindness and humility and discern in our hearts and together how shall we do justice, how shall we be helpers.

We will I begin our listening with a prayer put to words of the great Finnish national anthem. A song that is poignant today as Europe is on the brink of war. And as we consider the peoples of Afghanistan, our brothers, and sisters, so far from our sight: This is my song, O God of all the nations.