

Circle of Peace – Interfaith Address
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Islam and Peace

I am pleased to be here today when everyone has come together to make a commitment towards establishing interfaith peace. The importance of promoting and practicing peace between different faiths in the world's current divisive political climate is of great importance. No religion is more misunderstood than Islam when it comes to establishing peace. 10 years ago a group of terrorists distorted the teachings of Islam to commit murder against the citizens of our great nation. Murderers that completely ignored what the Holy Qur'an teaches us on how to create peace. Today, I would like to share what Islam really teaches about peace, by sharing some verses of the Holy Qur'an that establish the Islamic principles that bring about peace.

One aspect of peace, and the one most relevant to our gathering here today, is interfaith peace. One of the ways Islam establishes this is through the acceptance of founders of the world's great religions. The Holy Quran tells us:

[35:25] Verily, We have sent thee with the truth, as a bearer of glad tidings and as a Warner; and there is no people to whom a Warner has not been sent.

{40:79} And We did send Messengers before thee; of them are some whom We have mentioned to thee, and of them there are some whom We have not mentioned to thee;

This tells us that the Prophets or Messengers of other religions are, in fact, true Messengers of God and as Muslims we are required to believe in them. Some of these Messengers who were familiar to the immediate Middle Eastern audience of the Quranic revelation are mentioned in the Qur'an, such as Abraham, Moses, Jesus, etc .. , but others from other regions of the world are not mentioned yet can be logically deduced to be Messengers, such as Buddha, Krishna, Zoroaster, etc., and should be accepted as such. The teaching of these Messengers was from God and leads to our spiritual advancement and purification. This is evidenced by the following Qur'anic verse:

[3: 114-116] Among the People of the Book there is a party who stand by their covenant; they recite the word of Allah in the hours of night and prostrate themselves before Him. They believe in Allah and the Last Day, and enjoin what is good and forbid evil, and hasten, vying with one another, in good works. And these are among the righteous. And whatever good they do, they shall not be denied its due reward; and Allah well knows the God-fearing.

Additionally, we are taught to respect those of other faiths, even when their theology on core issues disagrees with our own. The following verse establishes a principle of mutual respect between religions despite disagreement.

[6: 109] And revile not those whom they call upon beside Allah, lest they, out of spite, revile Allah in their ignorance.

In other words, don't speak out against their faith, if you don't want them to speak out against yours. Likewise compulsion in the matters of religion is strictly prohibited, so forcing others to accept our teaching is strictly forbidden and religious freedom must be protected. The Qur'an says:

[2:257] *There is no compulsion in religion, surely, right has become distinguished from wrong.*

Even when we face a situation of hostility from those of other faiths the Qur'an still teaches us to work with them in goodness:

[5:3] *And let not the enmity of a people, that they hindered you from the Sacred Mosque, incite you to transgress. Instead, help one another in righteousness and piety; but help not one another in sin and transgression.*

And so, while we are certainly not here today in enmity of one another, we are certainly here to help one another in righteousness and piety in the spirit of the verse.

Apart from inter-religious peace the Holy Qur'an also teaches us how to bring peace in society at large through the principles of the following verse:

[16:91] *Verily, Allah enjoins justice, and the doing of good to others; and giving like kindred; and forbids indecency, and manifest evil, and wrongful transgression. He admonished you that you may take heed.*

Justice is the cornerstone of an orderly and peaceful society and must be implemented in order for peace to prevail. Likewise in order for a pluralistic society representing all diverse faiths and backgrounds to have peace, the doing of good to others and abstention from transgression must be prevail in that society.

I will close today with a verse that I believe would help bring about peace in all spheres whether local or international:

[5:9] *O ye who believe! be steadfast in the cause of Allah, bearing witness in equity; and let not a people's enmity incite you to act otherwise than with justice. Be always just, that is nearer to righteousness.*

May God enable us to come together and work together in peace.