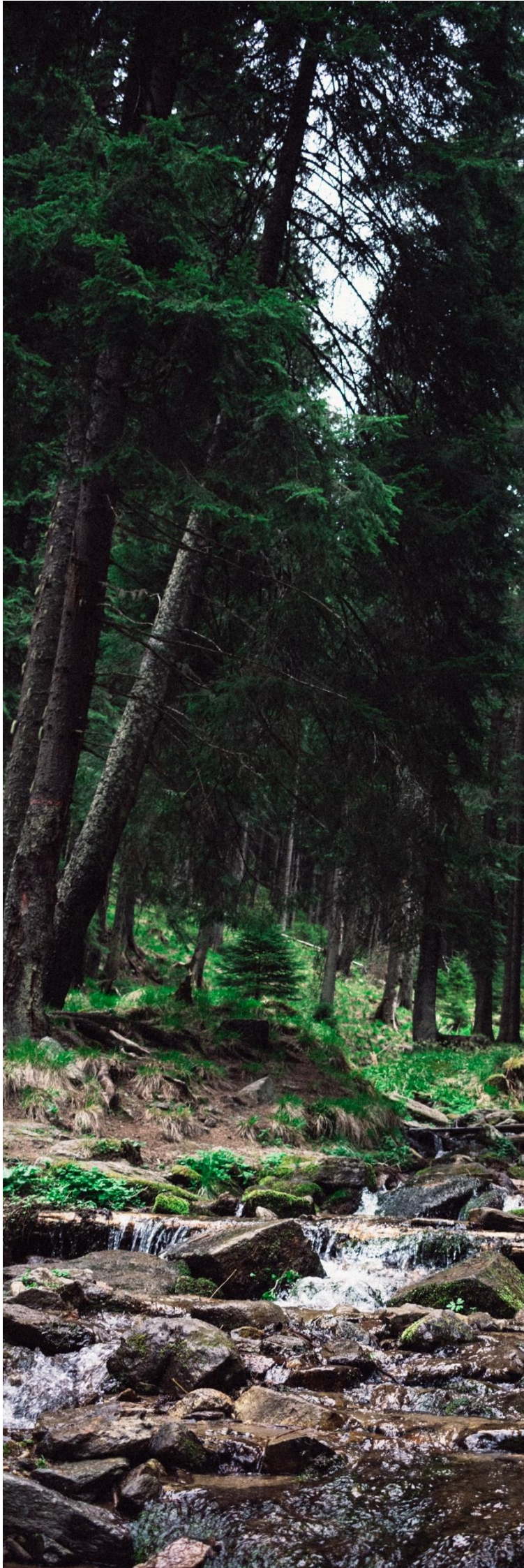




# Climate Action & Environmental Justice

**Friday Sermon**



## Planet Earth - Allah's Creation

Allah has created the planet with a specific balanced system for us to live in and prosper.

فَظَرَّتْ اَللّٰهُ اَلَّتٰى فَطَرَ النَّاسَ عَلَيْهَا ۚ لَا تَبْدِيْلَ لِخَلْقِ اَللّٰهِ ۚ ذٰلِكَ الدِّيْنُ الْقَيِّمُ وَلٰكِنْ اَكْثَرَ النَّاسِ لَا يَعْلَمُوْنَ

*“Adhere to the fitrah (original design) of Allah upon which He has created [all] people. There is no altering God’s creation and this is the right path, though most people do not realise it” (Surah Ar Rum 30:30)*

This ayah highlights the importance of preserving this system and warns humanity against the unbeknownst damage that they are causing to the natural balance that exists in the universe. The system that Allah Almighty has created for us is essential- it provides us with the air we breathe, the water we drink, the food we eat and countless other blessings. However, it is imperative that we do not take these blessings for granted and acknowledge the ways in which our collective lifestyles are causing damage to the planet by disturbing the natural balance of the world.

As a consequence of our actions, the overall temperature of our planet is steadily rising, thus resulting in man-made climate change. The changing climate has caused extreme and unpredictable weather to become a common occurrence across the world. The lack of stability in the climate means that severe droughts and flooding are becoming more frequent and the behaviour of these weather patterns is becoming increasingly more extreme as well. The earth has warmed by an average of 1°C in the last century. Whilst this may seem inconsequential, it has huge ramifications for people and wildlife around the globe. Contrary to what some may believe, rising temperatures will not simply result in warmer and nicer weather. The changing climate will actually make our weather less stable, more extreme and unpredictable. As temperatures rise, some areas will get wetter and others drier.

Lots of animals (and humans!) will find they’re not able to adapt to their changing climate and this will have an impact on how the earth provides for us to be able to live healthily.

The people who are least able to adapt to climate change and as a consequence endure the most suffering are the poorest in our society. Being environmentally friendly is an act of Ibada, it is rewarded amply. The greener we become in our lifestyles, the more pious we become. Reducing our waste, valuing the resources around you, fair trade, caring for animals - all these are considered as eco-friendly acts. They are also acts of worship. Both the Quran and Prophet Muhammad ﷺ teach us not to waste.



However, today's khutbah is not about encouraging you to change your lifestyle to become eco, we already know that Islam loves the environment. Allah Almighty wants you to love nature. Allah Almighty wants you to care for the world you live in. Allah Almighty wants you to be green. This is manifested in so many ways in the Quran.

Today's khutbah, is about environmental justice, standing up for the rights of planet earth, the rights of nature and eco system services that provide for us. Just like we rise up when we see injustice around the world like in Palestine, with the Uighurs or the Rohingyas etc, equally Mother Earth also needs you to stand up for her and fight her corner.

### **Advocating for Climate Justice**

In November, the UK will host its largest gathering of world leaders ever for the COP26. The COP26 event is a global United Nations summit about climate change and how countries are planning to tackle it. Head of states will report back on what they have achieved and what new targets they have set. Whilst we may be doing small Individual acts to help the environment, the main difference is made when governments act.

You may think that as Muslims, we do not have any power or influence over governments and perhaps that is a reasonable school of thought especially in today's circumstances, however regardless of that thought, we must not give up and do whatever we can to make a difference.

The Prophet Muhammad ﷺ said:

حَدَّثَنَا أَبُو الْوَلِيدِ، قَالَ: حَدَّثَنَا حَمَّادُ بْنُ سَلَمَةَ، عَنْ هِشَامِ بْنِ زَيْدٍ، عَنْ أَنَسِ بْنِ مَالِكٍ، عَنْ أَنَسِ بْنِ مَالِكٍ، عَنِ النَّبِيِّ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ قَالَ: إِنْ قَامَتِ السَّاعَةُ وَفِي يَدِ أَحَدِكُمْ فَسِيلَةٌ، فَإِنْ اسْتَطَاعَ أَنْ لَا تَقُومَ حَتَّى يَغْرِسَهَا فَلْيَغْرِسَهَا.

*“If the Hour (the day of Resurrection) is about to be established and one of you was holding a seedling, let him take advantage of even one second before the Hour is established to plant it.” (Al-Adab Al-Mufrad)*

As Muslims, we never give up on life. Even if we're told there's no hope, we continue to provide people with the best of care to help their health improve. We should behave no differently towards our planet, our Creator has given us this *Amanah* (trust) and we must continue to show care, compassion and fight for her justice. This beautiful opening quote from our Prophet ﷺ above contains a clear

instruction that regardless of what we may think is about to happen, we must continue to play our role and fulfil our duties. This narration can be used in various contexts but is very pertinent to today's climate change challenges. Activism and campaigning for climate justice should be seen as an act of *Ibaadah* (worship).

Allah Almighty says:

ظَهَرَ الْفَسَادُ فِي الْبَرِّ وَالْبَحْرِ بِمَا كَسَبَتْ أَيْدِي النَّاسِ لِيُذِيقَهُمْ بَعْضَ الَّذِي عَمِلُوا لَعَلَّهُمْ يَرْجِعُونَ

*“Corruption has appeared throughout the land and sea by [reason of] what the hands of people have earned so He may let them taste part of [the consequence of] what they have done that perhaps they will return [to righteousness].” Surah Rum (30:41)*

In this verse, Allah Almighty is asking us to ‘reflect’ and is telling us that if we reflect on the consequences we are facing, we have the ability to change things and return to better times. ‘Reflection’ is described as a process that helps turn experience into knowledge and involves thought and exploration of a concept or event. It is a form of problem solving that is used to resolve issues, and involves the careful consideration of a current practice, based on available knowledge and beliefs. The Quran is in effect a coaching manual and it coaches us on how to take action on one of the most important issues humanity is currently facing: climate change.

One of the biggest Sunnahs of our Prophet Muhammad ﷺ is that of ‘struggle’. Our Prophet is the best of creation, most beloved to Allah Almighty, yet he faced intense hardship and difficulties. Success was not always easy or instant during the lifetime of the Prophet. This is a lesson for us all: to achieve something important we must work hard and fight for what we believe in. Ultimately, Allah Almighty is the One who can change a situation. Our Prophet ﷺ would constantly stand up for the rights of the oppressed and would call for justice; he in fact called on all of us to take action:

عَنْ أَبِي سَعِيدٍ الْخُدْرِيِّ رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ قَالَ سَمِعْتُ رَسُولَ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ يَقُولُ: "مَنْ رَأَى مِنْكُمْ مُنْكَرًا فَلْيُغَيِّرْهُ بِيَدِهِ، فَإِنْ لَمْ يَسْتَطِعْ فَبِلِسَانِهِ، فَإِنْ لَمْ يَسْتَطِعْ فَبِقَلْبِهِ، وَذَلِكَ أَضْعَفُ الْإِيمَانِ".

*“When any of you sees an injustice/evil let him change it with his hand. If he is not able to do so, then let him change it with his tongue. And if he is not able to do so then let him hate it with his heart though that is the least of his faith” (Sahih Muslim).*

The Prophet Muhammad ﷺ inherited substantial societal problems such as infanticide, slavery, misogyny, materialism and so much more. However, instead of shying away from his responsibilities, he accepted and worked through them without hesitation. Climate change, although a very recent occurrence, is not just an environmental problem: it is also one of the greatest threats the world has ever faced. Sea levels are rising, oceans are becoming warmer, longer and more intense droughts threaten crops, wildlife and freshwater. Our planet's already diminishing diversity is at further risk due to the changing climate.

Climate change affects different people and places inconsistently. Therefore, this leads to inequalities within and across nations, as well as between current and future generations, and this is climate injustice. Poorer countries although least responsible for the effects of climate change are suffering the most from its devastating effects in particular with food insecurity, water scarcity and loss of biodiversity.

In the hadith just mentioned, we are clearly being told that it is incumbent upon Muslims to stand up against all forms of injustice and that includes standing up for establishing climate justice. It is not enough for us to be sad about the devastation being caused across the planet. To please our Lord and Creator, we must convert our feelings of sorrow, anger and guilt into something more meaningful which brings about systemic change.

Prophet Muhammad :said ﷺ

*"Seek Me amongst the downtrodden, verily you are given your substance as well as Divine aid, owing to your treatment of your downtrodden" (Tafseer Qurtubi).*

The impacts of climate change are primarily affecting many of the world's poorest people, those who Allah Almighty and the Prophet ﷺ love. Prophet Muhammad ﷺ would have dedicated himself to their service, so as a Muslim community we should also have that love so we can keep this prophetic ethos alive.

وَلْتَكُنْ مِنْكُمْ أُمَّةٌ يَدْعُونَ إِلَى الْخَيْرِ وَيَأْمُرُونَ بِالْمَعْرُوفِ وَيَنْهَوْنَ عَنِ الْمُنْكَرِ وَأُولَئِكَ هُمُ الْمُفْلِحُونَ

*"Be a community that calls for what is good, urges what is right and forbids what is wrong. Those who do, are the successful ones" - (Quran 3:104)*

As Muslims, we should be exemplars, leading the wider community in addressing various injustices. Failure to do so could be calamitous for the world. Amongst those potential consequences is losing the assistance of Allah Almighty in our affairs and in our sustenance:

إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يُغَيِّرُ مَا بِقَوْمٍ حَتَّى يُغَيِّرُوا مَا بِأَنْفُسِهِمْ

*"...Allah Almighty does not change the condition of people unless they change what is in themselves". (Quran 13:11)*

### **What Can You Do?**

Advocating for change is not an easy task, it requires courage to engage in campaigning for action, particularly with the issues surrounding climate change. Unfortunately, materialism, capitalism, fake news, apathy and many other factors are major obstacles on this journey. Environmental protection is not high on the agenda within our community, nor is it taken as seriously as it should be in politics. It is far from easy to stand up to the status quo or to go against the policies of the government and authorities.

We can however take inspiration from the story of Prophet Musa (as) as described in *Surah Ash- Shu'ara (26:10-15)* who learnt to overcome fears and to confront the challenges that needed to be faced. Allah Almighty commanded Prophet Musa (as) to go to Fir'awn, knowing full well the political power and the heartless strength that lay with Fir'awn. Prophet Musa (as) confessed his concerns to Allah Almighty and made supplication before continuing. Whilst there is no intention here to compare the authorities with that of the ruthless Fir'awn, it is however important to highlight the key principle of having belief and confidence in Allah Almighty in all matters.

So you're probably thinking, what is it that you can do? Democracy is the foundation of this country. At the very least, write to your MP ask them to urge world leaders to do the following:

- As many countries as possible sign up to a net zero commitment
- An end to all use of public money to subsidise fossil fuels.
- New and additional sources of finance for climate-related loss and damage to allow countries to adapt to the impacts of climate change.
- Meet Paris Agreement targets agreed in the Paris Agreement 2015

Talk about these issues on social media, write to your local newspaper.

Even though the scale of climate change can seem overwhelming, there are lots of reasons for hope. Individuals and community groups around the world are taking a stance – from school children going on strike, to building our own clean, affordable community energy systems, passing climate emergency council motions and generally creating greener, fairer communities. For the sake of Allah (swt) and His Messenger, we can all come together and force our leaders to create the big systemic changes that we need.

### **Knowing That Allah is with You**

In Islam, the root of faith is to believe in Allah Almighty as the only deity worthy of worship and that Muhammad is the Messenger of Allah Almighty. Acknowledging the supremacy of Allah Almighty in both human and environmental affairs is essential for the accomplishment of our activism. Perhaps the secret power of this truth is hidden in the Fatiha prayer we recite at least a dozen times a day ‘*You alone we worship, and in You alone we seek help*’ for were we truly live this truth, there would be no doubt, no fear, no discouragement. Committing our actions for the sake of Allah Almighty, knowing everything is in His Hands, we can freely act against injustice without worry or despair as to the likely results, making our affair purely for our Compassionate and Merciful Lord.

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا كُونُوا قَوَّامِينَ بِالْقِسْطِ شُهَدَاءَ لِلّٰهِ وَلَوْ عَلَىٰ أَنْفُسِكُمْ أَوِ الْوَالِدِينَ وَالْأَقْرَبِينَ ؕ إِن يَكُنْ غَنِيًّا أَوْ فَقِيرًا فَاللّٰهُ أُولَىٰ بِهِمَا ۖ فَلَا تَتَّبِعُوا الْهَوَىٰ أَنْ تَعْدِلُوا ۚ وَإِنْ تَلَوُّا أَوْ نَعَزُّوهُ فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ كَانَ بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ خَبِيرًا

*"You who believe, uphold justice and bear witness to God, even if it is against yourselves, your parents, or your close relatives. Whether the person is rich or poor, God can best take care of both. Refrain from following your own desire, so that you can act justly- if you distort or neglect justice, God is fully aware of what you do.*

*(Quran 4:135)*

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