

Equality Among Us

-- Tamara Abdelsamad

Look to your left. Watch her as she kneels beside her bed and looks up to the sky. Her eyes glisten as she begins to speak. Her heart so filled with warmth and love; she prays. Look to your right, a man stands tall and proud. He raises his hands to Allah, the merciful and profound. Look between them and you will find a woman smiling. She sits in her chair, while the children gather around her. She begins to tell them of Abraham and his wonderful deeds. These are three individuals of different faiths yet aligned they form together through their belief.

In our society, we are often faced with hardship and difficulty. When in these situations, faith becomes our shoulder. Years before us, the leaders of the Abrahamic faiths, Moses, Jesus, and Muhammed, used their devotion and belief to overcome these obstacles. For us, their stories have become our models, their strength has become our guidance and their will has become our motivation.

Muhammad (peace be upon him) was born shortly after his father had passed. This foreshadowed many hard times in his upcoming years. Raised by his Uncle for most of his life, he worked with him as a sheep herder. At the age of 26, he was married to Khadija. Often, Muhammad (peace be upon him), would travel to a cave called "G'ar Hira'a." He would use this as an area of contemplation and deep thought. When the Prophet (Peace be upon him) reached the age of 40, he received his first revelation from Allah through Gabriel in this same cave. As he sat beneath the stone walls, he listened to the angel recite:

Proclaim! (or read!) in the name of thy Lord and Cherisher, Who created- Created man, out of a (mere) clot of congealed blood: Proclaim! And thy Lord is Most Bountiful,- He Who

taught (the use of) the pen,- Taught man that which he knew not. (Holy Quran Translation; Surah 96:1-5)

Trembling with fear from the site of the mighty angel, the prophet immediately left and told his wife of what he had seen. This was the beginning of his devotion to Allah and delivering the message to the people of society. The prophet endured the loss of his first and dearest wife, Khadija (God bless her soul), soon after.

The Prophet (peace be upon him) committed his life to the calling of worship for Allah. At that time, he had lived in a society of Arabs in Mecca who worshipped hand made idols. As the prophet worked to spread Islam throughout the community, he was faced with much resentment and disbelief. The Arabs of Mecca claimed that he had created his own ideas and attempted to attract followers. These conflicts soon led to many wars and conflicts between the believers and non believers of Islam.

Piece by piece, Allah (subhanahu wa ta'ala) brought down recitations of the Quran to Muhammad through his angel, Gabriel. The Quran spoke of past stories, future occurrences, life after death, and of the changes made by man kind in previous religions. As time continues, Islam grew larger and larger. Unfortunately, there was still much resistance among the Arab community.

“There were three main groups of early converts to Islam: younger brothers and sons of great merchants; people who had fallen out of the first rank in their tribe or failed to attain it; and the weak, mostly unprotected foreigners.”

(“*Muhammed*” <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Muhammad>)

In the Quran we are told of a time when people began to throw rocks at the Prophet, yelling at him to discontinue his lies. As the blood began to rush down his face, Gabriel

emerged. He told the prophet that with one word he could seek revenge on those hurting him. The Prophet (peace be upon him), known for his good heart, and amiable characteristics refused to allow this. He relied on his faith and patience and believed that the people would come to their senses. In the Arab society, the prophet planted the seeds of Islam. He relied on the nutrients of knowledge and mind as well as the help of faith to bring the people into the beauty of Islam.

When contemplating the ways that these three greater leaders were able to transform society and overcome these obstacles, it is important to form comparisons among the three. In society today, power is gained through economy, wealth, and popularity. However, with Muhammad, Moses, and Jesus, this was not the case. When looking back at the three leaders of the Abrahamic faith, it is apparent to see one common factor. All of these leaders served for the common people. With religion, it is not wealth or business minds that achieve success. It is the heart and its ability to remain pure.

With all decisions, faith has taught us there is reason. When choosing the prophets of these great religions, God had created purpose. Muhammad had come from a poor family of sheep herders. He was not educated and had been illiterate. His power was of his character. His honesty and good heart kept him remembered among the Arab society long before he began his call for the worshiping of Allah. He had grown up in the same, and possibly worse environment than many of those in his time. This was one of the reasons many were able to understand his position and believe in his message from Allah. If the prophet had been a wealthy man, the amount of believers and section of believers would be drastically different. As many of the civilians were able to relate to him, they could see him a role model for themselves to strive to become.

Muhammad (peace be upon him), worked to develop equality between the people. Islam had promoted brotherhood and sisterhood between the worshipers of Allah. This entailed aiding both economically, medically, and physically, in times of need. In his words, the Prophet asked us to be good to our neighbors and pay charities for the money we earn. This was to balance power between societies and prevent overpowering of one side of the other.

Although many would say the Prophet's teaching served among the communities of Islam, this is in fact incorrect. The prophet showed care and kindness to all people including those who disregarded his teachings and faith. He taught the people of his time to be benevolent and amiable with all people. This promoted much tolerance among the two distinct groups of civilizations.

The three great prophets had one great they have given voice to those who otherwise would remain voiceless. The great symbolism of the story of all three prophets was that God in each case chose the lesser of each of these societies as those whom he loved the most. All three prophets galvanized the upper classes and bourgeoisie by preaching to and being a proponent of the poor each of these leaders if only in a symbolic nature revolutionized thought and the way we see social classes. All of the great prophets were social warriors taking up the cause of the poor and downtrodden in society. The first followers of the founders of all three of the worlds great monotheistic religions were all great proponents of the lower classes and in a time in which THE GOD DELUSION is a New York Times bestseller maybe it behooves us to take a look at the great contribution that all three of these leaders have made towards the rectifying of social and economic disparity.

The prophets' theories in their own time were radical to say the least, there is no question why each of them were either dispelled or killed for their teachings. It is often misrepresented

that these great prophets were killed because they preached a different spiritual message, however it was much more likely because of their social beliefs that these leaders were controversial in the first place. Let us take the example of Jesus; there is no greater champion of the downtrodden than he. It was Jesus who preached that the “meek shall inherit the earth” it was he who walked into the Temple of David and overturned the pans of the money changer and ultimately it was these beliefs and these actions that brought about his demise. Jesus was not controversial for his spiritual teaching, quite the contrary, if one looks at that period of time there were several others during Jesus’ lifetime that claimed to be the Messiah and few of them would incur so vicious a wrath, instead it was because Jesus intended to overturn the social hierarchy to put those who were the last, first at the door of the kingdom of heaven and there could not be any more controversial thought than this.

It is often overlooked when we look at the story of Moses in the religious context just how controversial his actions were and how important they were from an economic and social perspective. Moses was the champion of the lowest of the classes the slave class within Egypt. His “chosen people” those who he said were first in the eyes of the lord were those who were seen as last in the eyes of the Egyptians. By freeing the Jews from their servitude Moses was not just making a theological statement but an incredibly poignant religious and economic statement as well. He was saying to those with the power in society that it was not them who were first among equals. It was not those that others worshipped that the Lord wished to bless but the meek to those with nothing God would give the greatest of prizes eternal life in paradise. It goes without saying that Moses’ freeing of the Jews flipped the entire Egyptian economy on its head; no longer would the sons of Abraham be victim to polytheistic Egyptian dominance. In the spirit of these great leaders we should embark on a project that helps to give voice to those who

currently have none. In our society and in this great country there is little doubt that year after year the disparity between rich and poor is growing exponentially. It is then the cause of those of us who profess to believe in one of the great faiths to champion the causes that our religious founders held dear. Therefore, I believe it is our responsibility to prop up those who feel as if society is constantly pushing them down. I propose a project to bring about the leveling of economic and social disparities by helping those in the lower economic classes to improve their stake through education. It was Jesus who once said that “You give a man a fish and you feed him for a day, you teach a man to fish and you feed him for a lifetime.” Even then Jesus knew that the great leveler in society was education. We should create a project for inner city youth to teach them “how to fish.” Those my age can do our part with tutoring sessions that take those whom would be considered high achievers in the respective schools and have them mentor and teach younger inner city youths. Only by helping to create equality within our society can we really be following in the footsteps of our great religious founders.

In my life, I have had many difficult times. Faith and religion have always been one of the most amazing blessings of my life. It has taught me to have patience and be thankful for everything God has given to us. It has allowed me to always strive to become a better person and to continuously hold on when I feel I should give up. So I ask you once more to look to your right. If you can see through my dreams you will see the young girl standing. If you look to your left, you will see the proud man smiling, and if you look in between them, you will see the older woman, holding their hands as all three of them are uniting.

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