Synopsis of the Friday Sermon
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In the name of Allah, the Compassionate, the Merciful.

Synopsis of the Friday Sermon delivered by Ameer Mustapha Elturk on May 2, 2014

“The Duty of Dawah”

The last two ayat from surat al-Hajj spell out our religious obligations as follows, “O you who believe, bow and prostrate and worship (make ‘ibadah to) your Lord, and do good, so you may be successful. And strive hard for (the cause of) Allah as is His due...” (al-Hajj, 22:77-78).

Believing in Allah (SWT) is the very foundation of our faith followed by the modes of worship salah, zakah, sawm, and hajj depicted by the terms, bow and prostrate. These are essential duties of our faith.

After the modes of worship comes the command, “and worship (make ‘ibadah to) your Lord.” At this level, one should become mindful of Allah (SWT) and accept Him as the sole supreme God, Ruler and Master of the universe. One must freely surrender completely to His will in order to become His true slave (‘abd). This attitude of servitude is articulated by the following statement, “Say, ‘Verily my salah, sacrifice, life and death are for the Lord of the Worlds’” (al-‘Ana’m, 6:162). This vow is a pledge of commitment to worshiping Allah (SWT) and serving His cause.

The third duty is, “and do good” unto others. Muslims should not be restricted to helping the poor and needy only; they must engage in calling humanity at large to the message of Islam and try to save people from the eternal doom in the hereafter. This is the duty of dawah or propagation, i.e. propagating the message of Islam. It involves calling people to the worship and obedience of the One God rather than other deities, be they one’s lusts, wealth, or the numerous man-made ‘isms’ such as secularism, socialism, communism, materialism, to mention a few. The final duty has to do with striving in the path of Allah (SWT), “And strive hard for (the cause of) Allah as is His due.”

The Duty of Dawah

Muslims who claim to be the followers of the last Prophet and Messenger Muhammad (SAW) have been honored with the responsibility of looking after humanity at large for all time to come. Now that the institution of prophethood has come to an end, we have become the final link between Allah (SWT) and humanity. “You are now the best community (ummah) that has ever been brought forth for (the guidance and reform of) mankind. You enjoin what is right and forbid what is wrong and believe in Allah” (Aal ‘Imran, 3:110).

As Muslims, we were selected to convey the universal message of tawheed, promoting the divine principles of an ideal system, while striving hard to establish God's kingdom on earth, “...and do good, so you may be successful. And strive hard for (the cause of) Allah as is His due, He selected you and has not imposed any hardship on you” (al-Hajj, 22:77-78).

Now that dawah is an established duty, one may ask, is it an individual (fard ‘ain) or a collective duty (fard kifayah)? Fard kifayah refers to religious mandates that only require a group of individuals to execute. For
example, the study of religious sciences, funeral prayers (salat al-janazah), etc., are required to be carried out by a few members of the Muslim community. Whereas an individual duty, fard 'ain, involves religious mandates that require all mature and sound of mind Muslims to fulfill them such as salah, fasting, etc.

The obligation of dawah may be argued to be a collective duty, “And let there be a group among you that calls toward goodness, enjoins what is right and forbids what is wrong. And these are the successful ones” (Aal ‘Imran, 3:104). There is, however, compelling evidence from the Qur’an and sunnah that argues otherwise.

One example is, “Who could be better in speech than one who calls (people) unto Allah, acts righteously, and says, ‘Verily, I am of the Muslims (those who have surrendered themselves to Allah)?’” (Fussilat, 41:33). This ayah clearly invites and encourages everyone to give dawah. Such people are considered to be among the best in Allah's sight.

Stronger evidence is the ayah from surat al-Nahl, “Call unto the path of your Lord with the Wisdom, good preaching, and argue with them in the most courteous way” (al-Nahl, 16:125). Although, the Prophet (SAW) is being addressed directly, the role of dawah, propagating to all members of society, (elite and intellectuals, general masses, and missionaries as the ayah suggests), extends to every member of the Muslim ummah as is evident in the following argument.

The third and most compelling argument is the ayah from surat Yusuf, “Say (O Prophet), ‘This is my path; I and those who follow me call unto Allah insightfully’” (Yusuf, 12:108). The ayah, in unambiguous terms, clearly identifies all followers of Muhammad (SAW) to assume the duty of dawah. It does not target a specific group of Muslims to assume such a role.

The Messenger of Allah (SAW) during his farewell pilgrimage (hajjat al-Wada`) predicted that he may no longer be with his followers the next year. He (SAW) addressed a very large congregation with more than 100,000 Muslims present. They listened attentively as was instructed by the Prophet (SAW). He would remind the believers that there will be no prophet to come after him and no new nation will emerge after his ummah.

The Prophet (SAW) raises his finger and points at the congregation and informs, “You are responsible for me tomorrow and I am responsible for you. So what would you say?” In other words, the people will take the stand on the Day of Judgment and be asked if the Prophet (SAW) fulfilled his duty of conveying the message. Similarly, the Prophet (SAW) will have to testify before Allah (SWT) either in favor of those who believed in him or against those who rejected his message.

The Prophet (SAW) asks again, “Did I not convey (the message)?” The congregation replies in unison, “Indeed, we bear witness that you have conveyed the message, delivered the trust (amanah), advised the ummah and removed the veil of darkness.”

The soothing testimony of the believers gave the Prophet (SAW) a sigh of relief. The gigantic burden he was carrying on his shoulders was about to be shifted unto the shoulders of the believers. With such confirmation and pleasant words the Prophet (SAW) then moved his forefinger toward the sky and then toward the people while saying, “O Allah, bear witness,” three times. He (SAW) then handed over the responsibility by saying, “Let those who are present convey (the message) to those who are non-present. It may be that some of those to whom it will be conveyed will understand it better than those who have actually heard it.” The Prophet (SAW) made it compulsory upon all believers to convey the message to all people for all time to come.

Not only have the believers witnessed that the Prophet (SAW) conveyed the universal message, “there is no god except Allah,” they helped establish it. It was during the same event, the farewell pilgrimage, when Allah (SWT) revealed to the Prophet (SAW) what some scholars believe to be the last ayah, “This day, I per-
fected your faith, completed My favor upon you, and I approve Islam as your deen (way of life)” (al-Ma’idah, 5:3). The mission of Muhammad (SAW) was completed in the Arabian Peninsula.

Of the more than 100,000 companions who witnessed the moving sermons of the Prophet (SAW) during his last pilgrimage journey, hardly 10,000 remained in Makkah or al-Madinah. The rest left their homes in search for people to convey the message and deliver the trust. They went to every land possible for the purpose of dawah. They took his command to heart and understood that it was their responsibility to continue the mission of the last and final Prophet (SAW). They moved in all directions of the vast earth in search of humans to convey and help establish, la ilaha illalah, there is no god but God.

Another evidence can be found in a hadith narrated by Abdullah Ibn Amr (RAA) that states, “Convey on my behalf even if it is one ayah (sentence), and narrate from the Children of Israel, as there is no sin in this. And whoever lies on me (intentionally fabricates a hadith and attributes it to me), let him assume his assured seat in the Fire.” The statement, “Convey on my behalf even if it is one ayah” clearly makes dawah compulsory upon every responsible (mukallaf) Muslim.

It is clear we have been entrusted with the duty of dawah and we are the custodians of this amanah. The Prophet (SAW) was well aware of the fact that he will be questioned on the Day of Judgment. We must also be cognizant of the fact that we too will be questioned.

One does not have to be a scholar or specialize in religious studies to carry out his or her duty of dawah. There are several ways to promote Islam and its teachings that can be achieved individually and/or collectively. One thing we must understand is that, it is my duty.

The process of procreation has not stopped as more children are born into this world. Humanity is multiplying and they need guidance. It is we who are responsible for them and it is we who are entrusted with delivering and spreading the message of Islam to the people.

One thing must be emphasized; we are NOT in the business of converting people. “Let there be no compulsion in religion” (al-Baqarah, 2:256). We are to share with non-Muslims the universal message of all God’s prophets and messengers, the message of Tawheed, monotheism and its meaning and implications. We are to explain to them our faith in the most simple and effective ways, and invite them to Islam.

The Prophet (SAW) insisted that his uncle Abu Talib while on his deathbed say the shahadah and die as a Muslim. His efforts were to no avail. Abu Talib, despite being a polytheist, was very dear to the Prophet (SAW). Aside from bring his relative; Abu Talib supported the Prophet (SAW)’s mission since day one. Allah (SWT) instructs the Prophet (SAW), “You don’t guide whom you like, rather, Allah guides whom He will” (al-Qasas, 28:56). The warning was repeated, “It is not for you (O Prophet) to make people follow the right path, since it is Allah (alone) who guides whom He wills” (al-Baqarah, 2:272).

In reality, it is one’s personal choice to believe or not believe. The powerful statement, “Say (O Prophet) this Truth is from your Lord, now whoever wants to believe it, he may do so, and whoever wants to reject it, he may do so also” (al-Kahf, 18:29), may be considered as the principal clause of the Islamic Constitution under Freedom of Religion.

People must be granted total freedom of choice to choose their own destiny. Humanity needs an agent and we are to show them the way. It is true that prophethood has ended; however, the institution of messengerhood has not. It may have ended in the person of Muhammad (SAW), however, the message lives on and will continue to live on until the end of time. It is we, Muslims, who became the link between Allah (SWT) and humanity.