Synopsis of the Friday Sermon delivered by Ameer Mustapha Elturk on June 13, 2014

“Dawah to Goodness”

Calling to Goodness or khair among other things is what we have been summoned to do. “And let there be a group from among you who calls to all that is good (khair), enjoin what is right and forbid what is wrong: and it is they, who will attain real success” (Aal ‘Imran, 3:104).

Dawah is generally defined as: to call, inform, appeal or invite. Another word used in conjunction with dawah is tabligh which means to convey or deliver a message. The Prophet (SAW) was advised, “O Messenger convey (balligh) what has been sent to you from your Lord, and if you do not, then you have not delivered His message” (al-Ma‘idah, 5:67).

The duty of dawah involves calling all people, Muslims and non-Muslims alike. One of the objectives of dawah is to help all people rescue themselves from eternal doom. Allah (SWT) clearly commanded the believers, “O you who believe, save yourselves and your families from the fire” (al-Tahrim, 66:6).

Having sympathy, caring for other people around us and possessing a desire to help Muslims and non-Muslims alike is essential and mandatory in Islam. However, placing concern with oneself above others is acceptable only when it relates to the hereafter. The motivation to look after oneself before other people concerning one’s salvation may be appreciated when we examine Allah (SWT)’s command, “O People, be mindful of your Lord and fear a day when no parent can avail or benefit his son (nor be of advantage to him or be able to help him) nor can a child avail or benefit his parent (or be of profit to him,) in any way. Allah’s promise is true. So do not let the present life delude you, nor let the Deceiver deceive you about Allah” (Luqman, 31:33).

In other words, according to the al-Muntakhab tafsir, “Do not let the present life deceive you and entangle you with the fleshy passions and mundane vanity, nor should anything; power, business, wealth, knowledge, long life, status, lust, satan or those with characteristics befitting him ever alienate you from Allah.”

In conclusion, it makes sense to begin learning and applying the teachings of our deen ourselves while lending a helping hand to our families starting with the nearest in kin to the farthest. The nearest in kin includes children, parents, blood siblings, cousins and the circle expands to include our brothers and sisters in humanity since it is an acknowledged fact that all people are created from a single pair, Adam and Hawwa’.

A concerted and organized effort should be aimed at calling non-Muslims to iman or faith, while also calling Muslims to repentance, revitalization of faith and to renew the covenant with Allah (SWT). In other words, a call to action.

The duty of calling Muslims takes precedence over non-Muslims particularly when Muslims, who constitute a large segment of the world, are for the most part heedless of our obligations and duties toward the faith.
we proclaim to belong to, Islam. Sadly, most Muslims practice the faith as a cultural norm as opposed to a spiritual experience.

The following ayah is as applicable today as it was 1400 years ago, “There are some people who worship Allah standing on the verge of faith (half faith and half disbelief). When such a person is blessed with good fortune he is content; but if he encounters a trial he tumbles on his face (falling in despair); thus losing both this world and the Hereafter, which is a clear-cut loss” (al-Hajj, 22:11).

It is the quality of Muslims that is of utmost importance, not quantity. After thirteen years of preaching and teaching, the Prophet (SAW) could hardly garner a handful of believers. They hardly exceeded 125 believers. What sets them apart from us is the fact that they were very much attached to the Qur’an unlike most Muslims today who are detached from the divine wisdom; the noble Qur’an. We are at a very far distance from the Book of Allah (SWT).

The few companions who truly honored the Qur’an were able to accomplish the unthinkable. They were able to transform lives and communities. The traces of their hard labor may be witnessed in almost every corner of the world.

In order to bring back the honor and glory of Islam, we must return to the very same pattern the former generation was on. Imam Malik (RA) in his famous aphorism said, “The affairs of the latter part (generation) of this ummah will not be reformed except by that which the former (generation) was reformed.”

With such a profound statement it is essential to call Muslims back to iman, real faith. There is a profound sense of urgency to transform the verbal attestation into an intense burning faith. This can be achieved primarily through the Qur’an; thus the, “Call to return back to the Qur’an, (Dawat al-rujoo’ ila al-Qur’an).” “And let there be a group from among you who calls to all that is good (dawah ila al-khair) (Aal ‘Imran, 3:104).

Calling to all that is good (dawah ila al-khahir), according to many exegetes of the Qur’an, may be interpreted as calling people to Islam. This interpretation is well established and accepted if one is involved with non-Muslims. Another interpretation, however, is calling Muslims back to the Book of Allah (SWT), the Qur’an, which is depicted as khair in the following ayah, “O mankind! There has come to you a (good) sermon from your Lord, and a cure for all (the diseases) of the hearts, and guidance and mercy unto all who believe (in Him). Say (O Prophet), ‘(all this) by the favor and grace of Allah.’ So in that let them rejoice. It (the Qur’an) is better (khairun) than all the riches that they may amass” (Yunus, 10:57-58).

The Qur’an contains everything one needs in order to live a peaceful and content life. It guides to paradise, the true eternal life. We have come from Allah (SWT) and unto Him is our ultimate return. That is our destination and according to the Prophet (SAW), “It is either paradise forever or the hellfire forever.”

It must be emphasized that the Qur’an is the word of Allah, the Supreme Being, and the Creator of all. We are like one family to Allah (SWT). He loves everyone without any exception and is not biased in any way. He (SWT) is impartial and has no vested interest. He is absolutely independent and not in need of anything. Therefore, one must put his or her trust solely in Allah (SWT) and believe in His words, instructions and guidance.

There are an outstanding 114 surahs and more than 6,000 ayat in the Qur’an. Each and every ayah is a sign and symbol of divine wisdom and knowledge. How can we be so oblivious and ignorant about the Qur’an? The least we can do is read it and be enlightened by it. Even basic knowledge of the Arabic language can help one understand the gems of wisdom in the Qur’an. “We have made the Qur’an easy (to draw lessons from), will anyone take heed?” (al-Qamar, 54:17). The same ayah is repeated four times for emphasis.
The Qur’an is not difficult to understand. Bear in mind that the first recipients of Allah’s last gift were those who were unlettered. Except for a very few places, the Qur’an uses simple words and complex subjects are usually presented in the form of parables to facilitate easy understanding. The Qur’an has everything one needs. It answers all the metaphysical and philosophical questions philosophers have forever pondered upon. The most fundamental questions are; who am I? Where did I come from? What is my purpose in life? Is there an afterlife? What is good and what is evil? Only Allah (SWT), the Creator, can give us accurate and correct answers.

It also contains practical guidance; how to live an upright, dignified life and how to attain righteousness and real virtue. At the social level, one finds political, economic and social guiding principles to ensure a healthy and harmonious society. It teaches us how to solve our economic problems and close the gap between the rich and the poor. It sets the rules on how to govern and manage people ensuring a balanced system that includes checks and balances. The Qur’an brings people’s hearts together eliminating all types of racism and discrimination. The Qur’an came to rescue man from conditions of misery, fear and grief. It was meant to take us out of darkness and shine light upon our lives. It was meant to reform us.

Generally speaking, the Qur’an is for everyone, “Guidance for humanity.” It is, however, practically speaking, “Guidance for the righteous,” those who allegedly believe in it. The Qur’an must be dearer to our hearts than ourselves, anyone, or anything in this world. This can only be accomplished when we truly believe in it.

To believe in the Qur’an is to read it. “Those to whom We have sent the Book study it as it should be studied. They are the ones that believe in it. And anyone who denies its truth are indeed the losers” (al-Baqarah, 2:121). The word yatlinahu which translates to study also means to follow. The root of the word, tala, literally means to follow. Therefore, those who believe in the Qur’an recite it with the intention to follow and apply its teachings.

It is crucial to understand what is to be implemented. After all, the purpose of the Book is to reflect upon its ayat, signs and messages. “This is a blessed Scripture which We sent down to you (O Prophet), for people to think about its messages, and for those with understanding to take heed” (Sod, 38:29). In a mildly admonishing way Allah (SWT) said, “Will they not, then, try to understand this Qur’an? If it had been from anyone other than Allah, they would have found many discrepancies in it” (al-Nisa’, 4:82). We must reflect upon those great gems of wisdom. In a harshly admonishing tone, Allah (SWT) said, “Will they not, then, ponder over the Qur’an? Or are there locks upon their hearts?” (Muhammad, 47:24). Why not unlock our hearts and let the Qur’an descend upon our hearts the same way it descended upon the hearts of the Prophet (SAW) and his companions?

Muslims who invest a large chunk of their lives studying medicine, engineering and law among many other complex subjects that require the utmost aptitude and learning skills may invest in learning enough Arabic to do justice to the Qur’an. The beneficiary is the person who takes up such a challenge, not Allah (SWT). “If you do good, it is for your own good” (al-Isra’, 17:7). Secular knowledge is important and necessary. The knowledge of the Deen, however, is more important and urgent. The former will help us succeed in this world and the latter will save us from eternal doom. The Qur’an, according to the Prophet (SAW), may become an argument either for or against the believer on the Day of Judgment.

The money, wealth, and possessions one accumulate here will not be a source of redemption for us on the Day of Judgment. The children we raise here will not be able to help us on the Day of Judgment. Only we alone can help ourselves. Therefore, let us return back to the glory of the Qur’an and let it shine our way to Allah (SWT). It is through the Qur’an we will be reformed. Ali (RAA) heard the messenger of Allah as saying, “Soon there will be a fitnah, (a turmoil, trials).” He inquired, “What is the way out O’ messenger of Allah?” The Prophet (SAW) replied, “The Book of Allah.” Yes, indeed, it is the Book of Allah that can save us from
all the trials and tribulations, misery and grief, and civil wars and bloodshed.

We need to invest in the Qur’an. We need to learn to apply and impart its knowledge to others. Be among the best in the sight of Allah (SWT). The Prophet (SAW) said, “Best among you are those who learn the Qur’an and teach it to others.” Let us dive deep into the ocean of the Qur’an and extract the beautiful gems of wisdom and adorn ourselves with them while sharing those messages with others. It is a lifetime endeavor. Nevertheless, it is well worth the investment. We can do it. We just have to commit to it.

The Prophet (SAW), while addressing us in the most noble of ways, said, “O people of the Qur’an! Do not hide the Qur’an under your pillow (i.e. don’t sleep on it), rather, recite it as you should recite it, by night and by day, preach its message, beautify it with your beautiful voices, and contemplate on its contents, so that you may prosper.”