In the name of Allah, the Compassionate, the Merciful.

Synopsis of the Friday Sermon delivered by Ameer Mustapha Elturk on October 27, 2017:

Synopsis - Blessed are the Strangers

The Messenger of Allah (SAW) in a very important and relevant authentic hadith narrated by Abu Huraira (RAA) related, “Islam began as something strange, and will revert to being strange as it began; so blessed are the strangers.” Truly, Islam started as a strange phenomenon. Fourteen hundred years later, we are indeed fulfilling a prophecy, “…[it] will revert to being strange as it began.”

One may ask what is meant by this hadith. There will be a period between the first part of the Islamic movement and the latter part where Islam, as a deen, will no longer be the same Islam the Prophet (SAW) and the noble companions struggled and sacrificed their lives for. The good news is that it is coming back. And when it comes back, it will come back as something strange. The Prophet (SAW) then gave his good news, “so blessed are the Strangers.”

In the beginning of his mission, the Prophet (SAW) and his companions were the strangers “Ghuraba.” After thirteen years of hard work, nearly 125 believers joined his mission and lived in the midst of disbelief (kufr) and polytheism (shirk). Today is no different. Oppression, exploitation, elitism, materialism, consumerism, corporatism, secularism and racism among other ills are prevalent everywhere. As a society we’ve expelled God out of our collective affairs and a handful of elites direct the masses for personal gain.

Our condition today is no different than the time of the Prophet (SAW). Although there were few believers with the Prophet (SAW), the sad reality is that with 1.5 billion Muslims in the world only a handful of believers are carrying the torch of Islam forward. How is it possible that with 1.5 billion Muslims we have virtually no say in international affairs, globalization, climate change, racism, etc.? Instead, we find ourselves exploited and brought back to total darkness. What happened? Something profound.

From day one, Allah (SWT) intended nothing but good for humanity. He sent teachers, prophets, and messengers to guide His servants, to show them the path to prosperity here in this world and to guide them to salvation in the hereafter. Muhammad (SAW) was the last of such great messengers to walk on this earth carrying the same divine message his predecessors carried, “There is no god but the One God, la ilaha illa Allah.” Where is God today? Where is this One God the prophets preached about for centuries?

Through the agents of satan, their clever tricks have caused the masses to undermine the concept of the hereafter, Paradise and Hell. This discourse is laughable in the circles of elites and the educated. Even lay people through the powerful entertainment industry and the media are abandoning their faith in pursuit of worldly pleasures. “Heaven and Hell?” They exclaim. “These are fables of the ancient!” This phenomenon is nothing new. The disbelievers and idolaters of Quraish at the time of the Prophet (SAW), denounced the concept of the hereafter notwithstanding their belief in God. They would argue with Muhammad (SAW), “They say, ‘What! Shall we be brought back to life, even after we have turned into decayed bones,’ and they add, ‘Such a return is impossible!’” (al-Nazi’at, 79:10-12) They denied Judgment Day and the Qur’an is rich with similar claims. Today, the response would be similar, “What? We are going to be brought back from this pit, when our bones have crumbled? Have you no brain?”

The old claim regarding this concept remains valid today. They say, “There is nothing beyond this worldly life, we die and live, and nothing destroys us except time.” God confirms, “They have no knowledge of that. They only conjecture.” (al-Jathiyyah, 45:24) This teaching is being implanted in the minds of children and adults; in schools, colleges and the public square. Of course, the growing presence of atheism contributes to such notions.
The Prophet (SAW) had to deal with these issues alone. He was the first Stranger (gharib). His wife joined him and then his friends, among others, and those few became strangers as well. They worked hard but eventually prevailed and established a complete way of life. A code of law, edicts, principles and guidelines. They established a system.

It is the system that is broken today, not the individuals. The very same system that existed then exists now and the Prophet (SAW) successfully uprooted that system and replaced it with a new one, al-Islam. “Verily, the Deen with Allah is al-Islam.” (Aal-Imran, 3:19)

On the day of Arafat, performing his only hajj, the Prophet (SAW) received what is believed to be the last revelation from God. It was akin to God’s stamp of approval for his accomplishments. “This day I have perfected this deen for you; I have completed my favor upon you; and I am well pleased with, al-Islam as your deen.” (al-Ma’ idah, 5:3)

Keep in mind, all prophets of God shared the same deen (or religion). They all preached, “There is no god but God” (la illah illa Al-lah). What makes the message of the Prophet Muhammad (SAW) unique and different is that he received God’s Law (sharia), the final code of life after the Torah and the Gospel. Allah (SWT) informs, “We have assigned a law (sharia) and a path to each of you.” (al-Ma’ idah, 5:48) Muhammad (SAW) was the last to receive such a gift. Allah (SWT) was pleased with those strangers who would eventually transform the world. They brought honor and glory back to Allah (SWT) in this world.

“This day I have perfected this deen for you; I have completed my favor upon you…” Islam is the biggest favor God has bestowed upon humanity. All praise be to Allah (SWT) for this blessing of al-Islam. “Praise be to God for guiding us to this (Islam in this world and paradise, in sha Allah, in the hereafter); and had it not been for God’s guidance, we would have never found the way.” (al-‘Araf, 7:43) Imagine, “Were you to count the blessing(s) of Allah, you will not be able to count them.” (al-Nahl, 16:18)

“This day I have perfected this deen for you; I have completed my favor upon you; and I am well pleased with al-Islam as your deen.” I am happy and pleased with this system (not merely religion) for you, with Islam as your way of life, deen. A way of life that encompasses everything, the individual and the collective spheres of life. It is a complete social-political-economic order. Muhammad (SAW) established a system not a religion. The Prophet (SAW) must have been content on that day. Allah (SWT) expressed His approval to the Prophet and the noble companions, the strangers, who worked so very hard.

When the Prophet (SAW) shared this ayah with the ummah, Umar (RAA) started to weep. The Prophet inquired, “Why are you crying?” You should be rejoicing and happy. Umar replied, “What made me cry is, our deen is being perfected for us, however, nothing is perfect and it is bound to deteriorate.” The Prophet confirmed, “Indeed, you have spoken the truth.”

Umar (RAA) could foresee what would inevitably happen to Islam, the beautiful deen that has become perfect and practiced for some time. The Prophet (SAW) confirmed this and related many hadiths that foretold the dark fate of the ummah after him and the golden era of the rightly guided Caliphs. It was clear the system they established would not be sustained forever – and this is exactly what happened. It deteriorated. But did it? Recall, Islam is perfect. Islam did not deteriorate, rather Muslims corrupted Islam.

“Verily, the deen with Allah is al-Islam”, with emphasis on the “al”. Today, we have many forms of Islam. We have the Islam of Saudi Arabia, the Islam of Pakistan and so on. Where is al-Islam, where is the Islam, the deen, the system that was perfected at the hands of the strangers? Only traces of it can be found. The event of Umar (RAA) in truth, supports the aforementioned hadith, “Islam began as something strange, and will revert to being strange as it began; so blessed are the strangers.”

The Prophet (SAW) on many occasions prophesied about our predicament. He predicted that, “There will come a time when the nations will gather against you, just as people gather around a feast.’ A man said, ‘Will it be because we are few at that time, O Allah’s Messenger?’ He responded, ‘On the other hand, on that day, you will be numerous, (reflect! 1.6 billion Muslims today), but you will be as useless as the scum (scum!) of the sea, and Allah will remove the fear your enemies used to have of you from their chests, and He will throw Wahn in your hearts,’ it was asked, ‘What is Wahn?’ He responded, ‘Love of life, and hatred of death.’”

Sadly, this is the state of the ummah today. Everyone is consumed with, ‘Me, me, me.’ People want to enjoy this world and don’t want to leave it. Materialism and secularism par excellence. The most distressing element of this hadith is the likening of Muslims to scum. Read between the lines – what’s being said is, “You are no good for Islam. In spite of your prayers and fasting, your actions are useless.”

The influence of secularism is devastating and we must begin to take heed and act on an individual and collective level to combat the crisis we’re in. It is our primary responsibility to restore the Honor and Glory of Allah (SWT) here on earth and to bring Him back into the public square. This is our job as Muslims. This is Islam, it’s work, it’s a social justice movement. This is what we have to do. So blessed are the strangers.

The Prophet (SAW) once took hold of Ibn Umar (RAA)’s shoulders and told him, “Be in this world as a stranger or as a traveler.” Indeed, we are travelers. We will all return back to Allah (SWT) to our real abode, the hereafter, “Allah invites to the Abode of Peace.” (Yunus, 10:25) So indeed, we have much work to do. Unfortunately, secularism has made such a profound impact on us that
we have become unmindful of our real abode; instead loving dunya and hating death.

Of course, the Qur’an informs us of our weaknesses. Certainly, “humans were created weak.” (al-Nisa’, 4:28) There are certain inherent desires part of our DNA, “Alluring unto man is the enjoyment of worldly desires through women, and children, and heaped-up treasures of gold and silver, and horses of high mark, and cattle, and lands. These may be the joys of this life, but God has the best place to return to.” (Aal Imran, 3:14) Furthermore, Allah (SWT) informed us of how much we love money and wealth, “And you love money, with immense love.” (al-Fajr, 89:20)

Additionally, humans are envious of others. The attitude we have toward others who have wealth is similar to the attitude of those who lived at the time of Qarun during the reign of Pharaoh. “And so he went forth before his people in all his pomp; and those whose aim was the life of this world said, ‘If only we had been given something like what Qarun has been given: he really is a very fortunate man.’” (al-Qasas, 28:79) Reflecting on the statement of those who envied Qarun, was he a fortunate man? Indeed not. A fortunate man is the one who is saved from hell on the Day of Judgment. A successful person is one who sows the seeds in this dunya and harvests the fruits in the hereafter.

“Every soul shall taste death and you will be paid in full only on the Day of Resurrection. Whoever is kept away from the Fire and admitted to the Garden will have triumphed. The present world is only an illusory pleasure.” (Aal Imran, 3:185) Indeed, whoever has averted hell and enters paradise is successful. That is the true reality. “The life of this world is merely an amusement and a diversion; the true life is in the Hereafter, if only they knew.” (al-‘Ankabout, 29:64) This world is temporary and, “All that is on earth will perish, and all that remains is the Face of your Lord, possessor of majesty and honor.” (al-Rahman, 55:26,27)

Islam came to teach, discipline, and reform. It is meant to elevate us beyond our passions and animal instincts. Islam wants to see a community that stands up for justice and fights against injustice. “Islam began as something strange, and will revert to being strange as it began; so blessed are the strangers.”

What does it mean to be a stranger in this context? To be a stranger is to have the feeling that you don’t belong to this world and to understand that Islam is a social justice movement. Once this is understood, he or she will be ready to fight exploitation, oppression, and all forms of injustice. Strangers do the following: First, we must be true Muslims. We must obey Allah (SWT) and observe His rules in our lives and in the spheres of our authority to the best of our abilities, sincerely and out of genuine love for our Creator. The requisite to that is jihad, to struggle against one’s own inciting soul to obey God.

Secondly, we must understand and spread the ideology of Islam among the masses and elites. We must understand what Islam is. In a nutshell, Islam is a system based on an ideology. This ideology is called Tawheed or Unity of God. Islam is a divinely inspired system or a social order that is a complete code of life for the benefit of humankind. Unlike Communism, Socialism, Capitalism and Secularism, (all manmade social orders), Islam is a comprehensive social, political and economic order based on Divine guidance.

We have to work to bring God back into the public square. This is done by spreading the ideology through an organized effort. The requisite to that is to join a jama’ah or party. “Let from among you rise a group that would call toward goodness (Islam).” (Aal Imran, 3:104)

Finally, to collectively struggle to establish this system in our society and the world, we must be ready to sacrifice everything we have to make this ideology supreme, as a living politico-socio-economic order.

This is our duty. We need to save ourselves and we need to save the world. So be the stranger. The Prophet (SAW) said, “Blessed are the Strangers.” You may have heard the term blessed are the peacemakers. In reality, the strangers are the peacemakers. The struggle to establish the kingdom of heaven on earth, is to establish peace on earth. And peace can only be established through justice. If you have no justice. You have no peace. So you are the peacemakers. You are the strangers. Roll up your sleeves and get to work.

End.