

“Try”

Acts 28:16, 23-31

For the installation of Robert Montgomery

March 9, 2008

The Book of Order, the constitution of the PCUSA, is not the most exciting reading around. In fact, having trouble sleeping . . . But it does guide us today in this celebration. Ques to Robt and you come from it.

I want to focus on one ques and one word: try: “In your ministry will you try to show the love and justice of Jesus Christ?” Could leave it out. But no—we try. Sometimes succeed and sometimes fail. We try.

I suspect that both pastor and congregation know wisdom of that word. Both involved in issues of justice. You succeed, you fail. You try.

Another who would have known value of this word is Paul. Today—last glimpse. Thru ministry wanted to get to Rome—center, where action is. Tradition: beheaded. But not here. Instead: “From morning until even he explained the matter to them, testifying to the kingdom of God and trying to convince them about Jesus.” Striking phrase. Didn’t convince. In fact: “Some were convinced by what he said, while others refused to believe. Succeeded/failed. He tried.

Instead of giant of faith, better pix would be of Paul as human being. Doing best he can. He tries.

So ques in BO: Will you try? Ques for Robert. You have been minister, so you know all too well that celebration of today will soon be transformed into days of ministry with highs and lows—visiting sick, preaching, studying scriptures; but also fixing toilet, arbitrating disagreements, causing disagreements, proofreading bulletins, etc.

It is a ques for church and its ministry: Will you try? Good ques for all who follow J. Don’t know if efforts will be successful, but will you try.

HS teacher—worst and best. . . . Never dreamed that his example would find way into sermon. He tried.

Maturity means you try. Sometimes succeed/fail. But you try. Immaturity is not to try. Daddy feeding veg to two-year-old. I don’t like them. Words of every parent: You haven’t even tried.

Conference in Scotland. Final night: banquet. If you don’t know what’s in haggis . . . We had talk with girls—no McDonalds. You must try. So on that night adults said: I bet it’s awful. I’m not going to try. What sort of response—coming to country and not

experience culture; response to hosts who had worked hard; example to our children, hearing others say they wouldn't try. Sometimes not just 2s who are immature.

Zeke Moeller—Cubs in '50s. Ordinary, but good fielding percentage. Oh, if ball is hit my way, and I see that I might have a hard time getting to it, I don't even try. Rather than make an error, I just let it go by. Don't want to look foolish. Don't want to fail. So don't try.

Gail Godwin: There are two kinds of people. One kind you can tell just by looking at them at what point they congealed into their final selves. It might be a very nice self, but you know you can expect no more surprises from it. Whereas the other kind keeps moving, changing. They never say: I know all about this. I totally understand that. They keep moving forward and trying new things in life, and the very act of trying keeps them young. They are the only people who are still alive. You must be on your guard against congealing. (Brueg, I/II Sam, p. 7)

True not just for people but for churches. Are their churches like that—content, happy, but never try anything. Esp never take risks for kingdom. BO Will you try to show love and justice of JC?

It is fashionable for churches these days to have slogans: We're a happy church, the most loving church in town. The friendly church. Someone suggests: "We're doing the best we can." (BBT, When God Is Silent, p. 21) or "We're trying, we're trying." I'd enter a church like that, just to see what's going on.

Art Field in chapel.

Today is the culmination of two tracks of trying coming together—Pulaski in its search, and Robert and Emma in theirs. I celebrate that you have found each other. But this is not end, but just beginning. Here you are. God has brought you together. Now what will you do together? Where are places where J is calling you, to break out of security of little life and move out, reach out, risk out in name of X?

You may not always be a success in Xn life.  
You may not always convince others when you speak of JC.  
You may not always be a perfect example of Xn living.

But at least you can try.