



April 1, 2018

The Courage of Saying Yes

READ: Acts 5:38, 39 (Common English Bible)

“Here’s my recommendation in this case: Distance yourselves from these men. Let them go! If their plan or activity is of human origin, it will end in ruin. If it originates with God, you won’t be able to stop them. Instead, you would actually find yourselves fighting God!” The council was convinced by his reasoning.”

REFLECT:

Those who know me well know that I have a rather strong aversion to the word, “no.” It is a word that lacks courage, a word that shows a preference for playing the game of life – or work – in the safe places. The uncreative mind finds comfort in the familiar. It is a mind that resists being stretched in new directions. Additionally, such a mind absolves itself of responsibility should a new idea turn out badly. This thinking also gives the impression of superior knowledge as to the outcome of a fresh approach. Those who choose to answer any new idea with “no” clearly have a predilection for the status quo, and, quite possibly, are impeding the discovery of something of superior value. Yet, the future belongs, as it always has, to those who courageously answer, “yes” to trying something new.

In the fifth chapter of Acts, the disciples of Jesus have been arrested for preaching the resurrection of Jesus and are saved from almost certain death by the intervention of a rabbi named Gamaliel. The religious establishment, here represented by the Sadducees, is determined to put an end to the Jesus nuisance. They are a “no” people – answering, “no” to teaching and preaching the risen Christ. Before rendering their decision on what is to be done with Jesus’ disciples, Gamaliel presents some sound advice before his colleagues: If what the disciples preach is in error, it will fail on its own. But if, in fact, what they say is true, nothing will silence their message. More, the religious establishment may even be found resisting God!

Gamaliel is urging his colleagues to have the courage to say, “yes” – to welcome this innovation to their cherished faith tradition and take a “wait and see” position. Resorting to “no” and force against the teachings of these disciples may, in fact, end badly for them. Recognizing that great truth occasionally shows-up in new methods and practices and understandings that are not familiar entails great courage. The same courage that was exercised so many years ago when Galileo suggested that the earth was round, not flat. Gamaliel demonstrates such courage. Ironically, the growth of the disciples’ teachings throughout Acts confirms Gamaliel’s assertion as the gospel advances.

Naturally, there is a difference between courage and carelessness. Courage does not dismiss thoughtful care and consideration. It is highly unlikely that Gamaliel would have endorsed obviously dangerous doctrines and practices in what the disciples were advancing. Nor should we say “yes” if there is potential harm to individuals or organizations. There are times to say, “no.” But, more often, people live under a suffocating dread that they might be wrong or make a mistake. Yet, the best hitters in baseball miss half the balls thrown to them. Gamaliel speaks to us today. There’s little doubt that a better way may be found in most of the things we do. What is required is that we find the courage to say, “yes.”

RESPOND:

1. How has this scripture or meditation spoken to you?

2. What insight can you apply to your life this week?

3. What one specific act do you intend to take, an attitude to change, a person to see, or prayers to pray?

PRAY:

Grant me the courage and wisdom to know when to say, "yes" and when to say, "no" that I may be useful to your purposes in the world. Amen.