

THE CONCEPT OF STEWARDSHIP -- A GUIDE FOR GOVERNMENT

Address by Senator Robert Morgan
First Presbyterian Church
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I want to tell you how happy I am to have been invited to join your fellowship today. By coincidence, I have been speaking in a lot of churches here lately, and I must say I have enjoyed it. It's not like speaking on the floor of the Senate. In a church, no one in the audience jumps up just as you get going good and yells, "Will the Senator yield?"

At least I hope no one will.

I had the pleasure yesterday of addressing the congregation of by boyhood church, Niell's Creek Baptist, over between Lillington and Angier. I just want to warn you you have got a Baptist here tonight, so the

preaching is liable to get hot and heavy. But I'll try to tone it down just a little, to show the spirit of the ecumenical movement is not dead.

All this has gotten me to thinking whether there is any guidance those of us in Washington can glean from the wisdom of the traditions we grew up in. I have come to some conclusions, and I would like to share them with you tonight.

Let me pose a question, first, and let each man answer it for himself. Do you feel you have as much freedom as your father and grandfather did? And here is another question: Do you feel your children and grandchildren are likely to have as much freedom as you yourself have?

I think those are two very important questions. The first one will let you know where you feel you stand in the historical process. And the second will tell you what you ought to do about it. I am afraid most of us will feel we have less freedom than our grandfathers did. And I hope

most of us feel it would be tragic if our grandchildren have less liberty than we ourselves.

You know, we tend to grin and bear it when it comes to our own losses of freedom. But we shouldn't. That is not our responsibility at all. Rather, it is our responsibility to see to it that freedom is not diminished from generation to generation. And if we keep quiet, then what we really do is let our children's liberties be eroded.

All this involves a concept you will no doubt recognize as men of the church -- the concept of stewardship. Stewardship means simply that you are responsible for something which must outlive you. It means you are also responsible for something which is the property of the community, and not yours alone.

We are the stewards of freedom. Freedom is not just

our personal property. It is ours, and it is the community's. And most important, it is the property of our descendants. If we don't look after it, they won't have it. And that is why it is so important to ask ourselves whether we expect our children to have as much freedom as ourselves. It lets us know how we are doing with our trust.

Now I have been asking myself what the government's duties of stewardship are, and I have found something interesting. They are parallel with the duties we have as stewards of our local institutions -- even as stewards of the church.

We have the duty, and the government shares it, to be the stewards of several things, which I believe are the foundations of freedom.

We have to be the stewards of financial responsibility.

We have to be the stewards of our natural and moral
resources.

We have to be the stewards of education and
knowledge.

And we have to be the stewards of hope and
confidence.

Let me say a few words about each one of these.

You've heard the old saying, "When poverty comes in the door, love flies out the window." Well, let me modify that a little: "When financial irresponsibility comes to town, democracy leaves." Look at New York City. For years, the city spent more than it took in. You know what this would do to a family budget. Exactly the same thing it has done to New York.

The result has been, among other things, that the people's local elected representatives have had to give up much of their power to the state and to a group of financial managers not elected by the people. When

Flint, Michigan, went bankrupt, the town was run by its creditors more than by its city council. So you can see what I mean when I say the failure to exercise financial stewardship leads to the loss of freedom.

In the final analysis, this is a matter of honesty. The bond market experts knew for years what was going on in New York, and the ratings showed it. But the leaders of the community did not face facts. And that is where they failed to be good stewards of freedom.

To speak more generally for a moment, I think one element of our freedom which is presently being eroded is the freedom to enjoy the fruits of our labors.

Inflation has got to be stopped -- or more realistically, slowed to an acceptable rate --- or our children are not going to have even the chance we have had to attain financial security. Already, home ownership, which people almost began to think of as a right in the decades after World War II, is becoming a freedom denied to more and more young families. I say that makes our duty as stewards pretty clear.

I said we are also the stewards of knowledge and education. In our lifetimes, we may have gotten to think education is going to take care of itself, just as we have gotten to think of knowledge as automatically

increasing. But this doesn't have to happen. We have the responsibility to see to it our children learn.

Every one of us who is a parent must also be a teacher.

And we all have to make sure the schools do their job.

The fact of the matter is that education does not automatically tend to increase. I am afraid it tends to decrease, if left to itself. For example, a historian was pointing out the other day that the settlers in the lowlands of Virginia, and the settlers on the mountain ridges were the same stock of people. But those in the valleys, with more economic resources, prospered, held on to their knowledge, and increased it by setting up schools for the instruction of the young. But those

with fewer resources were driven deeper and deeper into the mountains, and in many cases knowledge and even basic literacy were lost to their offspring.

That is why it is so disturbing to me that our young people are beginning to score so low on their tests. I feel if we get back to basics in our schools, and see to it the three R's are not neglected, we will be acting like good stewards.

Folks, we are not all that far from the one-room schoolhouse in this country. The public and private school system we take for granted, and have allowed

to become less effective, is the creation of our
fathers and our grandfathers. It is our duty as
stewards to pass it on.

Now, when I said we are the stewards of our natural and moral resources, you might have wondered why I put the two together. I think they are very similar things. Our air and water and raw materials can disappear on us if we do not use them with the greatest care. Our standards of conduct -- which are no more than the natural resources of the just person -- can also disappear if they are not properly husbanded.

I think we will do well to teach our children that standards are not rules to hold us back. They are possibilities for us, things for us to work with.

Besides, stewardship of our natural and moral resources is based in either case on respect and foresight. You know, I think it is telling that some psychologists think kindness

and plain old righteousness are the attributes of people who can imagine what would happen in the future if they were to behave otherwise. Now there's a good old religious principle for you -- the golden rule. There is a golden rule for our dealings with people and nature. What you do unto others, or unto Mother Nature, now -- that determines how you, and your children will be treated in the future. That's why the good steward will strive to protect our natural resources and our moral resources, or standards of conduct. We want our children to have the freedom of a good environment, and the freedom of being treated kindly.

Finally, I have said we are the stewards of hope and confidence. You might ask what this has to do with freedom and government. Well, I think they are essential to freedom

because despair is a self-fulfilling prophecy. If we as a people come to expect we cannot succeed in the preservation of freedom, then we most certainly will not succeed. It's like Snoopy says in that cartoon strip -- "If you expect nothing, you get nothing."

This means we must have confidence and hope, and must pass them on to our children. We have to believe our society can maintain its freedoms, and that those very institutions we now hold in trust can be effective. We do not have enough faith these days in our governments, and for good reason. Yet I believe our institutions can work, provided people at the local level see to it they do. And I am one Senator who wants the federal government to respect and support that all-important local initiative. So let's not give up. The freedom

of a positive and confident cast of mind is the best inheritance we can give our children.

Let me bring this to a close by asking two more questions, and by taking a shot at the answers.

The playwright Ibsen said once, "I hold that man is in the right who is most closely in league with the future." The question is, who is that man? Why, I think he is none other than the good steward of his freedom and his community.

The second question is, who decides the future? We do. There will be a future, and the quality of it is being determined right now, by what you and I do.

Let's strive to be good steward of freedom in this

country. After all, a man's home is his castle, as the old
saw has it. But a man's freedom is his son's castle.

That's all I have to say on the subject. It was good
to see you, and thanks for listening to me.