

Choices, Choices, Choices! – April 3, 2016
By Wayne J. Schneider – Cum Sancto Spiritu

Choices, Choices, Choices Acts 3:1-19

St. Peter speaks to us today just as he was talking with those who came to hear him on that day with St. John. This event follows their healing of a lame man. We know that Holy Scripture is written for you and me, and the subject of it is always about our relationship with God. At its core, it does not matter how the listeners responded to the sermon they heard 2,000 years ago. The important thing is how we respond right now. Believe that this same miraculous power can be ours today too.

So, may I ask you how many miracles did you see on your way to worship this morning? Or, yesterday? Are you expecting any tomorrow? I am supposing that the majority of us are mostly unaware of our both ourselves and our surroundings. And I think this is St. Peter's point. From our first to our last breath we are living a life of death, disconnected from God. In the vernacular of St. Peter, we are "killing the author of life, over and over again," when we are unconnected to God and one another.

We were reminded last Sunday, that we are "Resurrection" people. At our center is the Resurrection. This means more than something; it is everything. It means that we live lives that are alive not dead. We no longer fear death. We trust ourselves to, as someone has said, "*The Always Surprising Author of Life*," who accomplishes multiple miracles 24/7, year after year.

Among other things, this means that we can happily give up the illusion of control. We can let go and live in THIS moment! That's right. This one, right here, right now. We can wake up and sense our breathing, how green the grass is, how beautiful are the flowers, even how gravity works! We can run exuberantly, joyfully, passionately into a life of love with God.

Instead of worshiping at the throne of St. Cynicism, instead of taking the sounds, smells and colors of laughter, babies, children, and even digestion as our due, we

fracture our unaware, cold, sometimes concrete hearts and cry, "*Thank you, God!*" In place of dragging our feet, we break into a goodly dance! Instead of carping, we open our mouths and sing!

Life, at its center, is about choices. We can choose to live our lives in a dreary existence, and there are no 'happy police' who will arrest you because of it! But I must tell you that this choice is one bleak, lonely, stressed-out life. And, many who make this choice, are both cranky and unhealthy.

The apostle Peter tells us that we must expect more of life than this. What needs to be done to accomplish this abundant life is repentance; a turning around of 180 degrees. A matter of seeing from a different perspective. From a non-spiritual perspective, this action does not make sense, perhaps even appears to be lunacy, Real joy however, is found when we gladly, freely release control.

Neuro-science has discovered that there are physiological and psychological benefits to changing how we think. In our attempts to control everything by self- rules, self-righteousness, retirement, or you fill in the gap, is an almost guaranteed way to find misery, dejection and anguish. To make matters worse, when we work harder the fewer miracles we see. St. Peter's teaching informs us that rejecting the blessings of God, thinking we can in our power do much better than God, thank you very much, is choosing a death syndrome.

As a pastor, it has been my honor to be with people at the end of their lives. Not every life can be physically healed, as my father's body could not. I also know that our conditions need not define who we are. Those who see miracles where we see the mundane, whether they are children, women, or men, are those who fully live until they take their last breath.

Worn-out or broken bodies do not defeat them. Their minds and spirits continue their soaring journeys. Their lives carry on filled with amazement and happiness. They bring comfort and peace to those who visit them rather than visa versa.

There are other people I have met whose lips are tense horizontal lines that are stretched so tightly you could play string music on them. They lack expectation, and joy has disappeared from their lives like the "lead zeppelin." I doubt that they would recognize a miracle if it bit them on their hind quarters. They might be a picture of healthy perfection but their life reeks of death.

St. Peter preaches to each of us who choose death over life, whether we make this choice regularly or only once in a while. But, as I have said, the gift of choice is often our misery.

But St. Paul tells us in his second letter to the church at Corinth: ". . . we have this treasure in clay pots so that the awesome power belongs to God and doesn't come from us." (2 Corinthians 4:7) Yet, our God is never 'pushy.' God longs for, God calls, God waits patiently for us to give up, to give over control. To walk, no, to run for God's healing love, his overflowing joy, and his rejuvenating peace which is, perhaps, the most miraculous of all.

We have this choice, we do. Will you join me in choosing life? Today? Alleluia .
Amen.