

'MAY BE'

I am grateful to the Rev. Danny Reed for his many inspiring sermons and to the hardworking Summer Series Committee for my invitation to share some of my ideas with you.

Props (as the young folk say) to your gracious canter, Paul Garibini, for agreeing to sing. Thanks to all of you all for being present and listening.

“And the time came when the risk to remain tight in a bud was more painful than the risk it took to blossom.” -- *Anais Nin* —

THE HOMILY

Once upon a time there was a poor farmer in China who had two prized possessions: a healthy, intelligent teen aged son AND a healthy, young, very smart horse.

His neighbors would stop by from time to time and share information and to remind him of his good fortune.

The farmer, a man of few words and great wisdom, would simply say: “Maybe yes... may be no.”

One morning the farmer and his son go out to the corral to feed and water the horse only to discover that his prized Stallion had jumped the fence and was nowhere to be found.

The neighbors hear that the horse has run off and come by to say: Oh! My! What bad luck.

And the farmer replies: "Maybe yes...maybe no."

Less than a week later the horse returns bringing with him 11 young, healthy, wild horses!

The neighbors come and they say: Oh! My! What good luck.

And the farmer replies: "Maybe yes...maybe no."

As would be expected, the farmer's son sets out to break one of the 11 new horses to make her suitable for work or sale. He was ambitious and of course intelligent but proved not to be a rodeo star. He gets thrown and breaks his leg in a number of places.

The local doctor sets the broken bones badly and the son is left with a serious limp that affects his mobility.

The neighbors come and they say: Oh! My! What bad luck.

And the farmer replies: "May be yes...may be no."

Months pass and the Emperor's soldiers come to conscript all the able-bodied young men of the region to serve in a war that few

believed could be won. The enemy outnumbered the Emperor's army by two to one AND was much better equipped and more experienced at fighting. It was feared that many of the region's young men would be killed. The farmer's crippled son was deemed ineligible for service, 4F and was allowed to remain safely at home.

The neighbors come and they say: Oh! My! What good luck.

And the farmer replies: "Maybe yes...maybe no."

The 6th century Chinese Philosopher who founded Taoism wrote "Those who have knowledge, don't predict! Those who try to predict, don't have knowledge!"

We simply cannot predict what may be the consequences of any act or combination of actions we decide to take or not to take.

The outcome may be good luck or bad luck. WE don't know. And that's the point; we don't know.

WE don't know what will happen next in our lives. We don't know what possibilities we will explore and choose next. To me that's fortunate - not knowing the future. For to know the future with certainty, would make us

slaves to destiny instead of masters of our choices.

What does the story about the farmer teach us? What can we learn from our story? Perhaps we need to mention the why of it. Let's agree that each of our lives is an individually designed, gift

wrapped package that contains varying, limitless opportunities and possibilities.

Our Life long assignment is to explore those options and make a choice, which, in turn, will lead us to another set of possibilities from which we make another selection resulting in yet another set of possibilities and so on until the lid to our package of infinite possibilities is closed ...in gentler terms until we transition from this earth! Every moment presents a string of possibilities from which we each make a selection that leads to another and so on and so on and so on.

Our farmer understood that a single event cannot be viewed at the time of its occurrence as a positive thing or good luck or as a negative thing or bad luck. Imagine losing a prized horse only to have him return with 11 more horses. Good luck? Bad luck?

Only time would tell! It depends on the time period and your frame of reference during which you look back at the event. They say hindsight is 20/20! What that says to us...looking back, after the fact, now that the cards were played you could have, should have, might have done it differently. That's what hindsight is...hindsight. You can see the change and think that had you done something else, the results would have been exactly what you wanted. May be yes...maybe no!

What we do know for certain is that change is constant.
Whichever possibility you select; your situation will change.

There is a beautiful song about it:

'Everything must change
Nothing stays the same
Everyone will change
No one stays the same

The young become the old
And mysteries do unfold
'Cause that's the way of time
Nothing and no one goes unchanged'

(SING) There are not many things in life
You can be sure of

Except rain comes from the clouds
Sun lights up the sky

And hummingbirds do fly

Change.... Possibilities...Possibilities for change Everyone
(including the personhood of corporations enjoys possibilities.)

During two of my early adolescent years I had the good fortune
(maybe yes... maybe no) to attend every home game of the
Chicago Cubs. Eugene Baker and Ernie Banks (who by the way
was later known as Mr. Cubs) were my heroes. I learned a lot
there. Not only did I get a graphic depiction of team work:
Chance to Baker to Banks; my math computation skills were

enhanced by calculating the players' individual and team stats using the most modern technology my parents could provide – notebook paper and a sharpened #2 pencil with an eraser.

Perhaps the most valuable take away from that experience was Learning to suck up big disappointments. HUGE

Yet even the bad luck, always losing Chicago Cubs have possibilities. Each season they initiate their first game with the possibility of winning and beginning a trail which will lead them to the World Series...or NOT.

Should they succeed and play in the World Series, there is the possibility that they will win the Series...or NOT. We agree on many truths one of which is 'all things are possible. And all things ARE possible. Are they Probable??? The Cubs...

Probable?...now that's a subject for another talk.

Fear can be a deterrent to fully exploring your life choices. We are constrained from pursuing some of our possibilities because of fear. Fear of failure. Failure is always a possibility. If we do anything, we can and may fail. Perhaps we learn more from our failures than we do from our successes. Failure is never a loss. You were just exploring your possibilities and the results did not meet your desired goal. You lost nothing. So why be afraid? Why be afraid to fail? Why be afraid to try?

We are often afraid of what our neighbors will say about the possibility we choose to explore. We overthink the possibility of taking a risk for fear of what our neighbors will say.

Our farmer's neighbors said a lot and frequently. They were quite outspoken when it came to expressing their opinions on the condition of his life. There is a book entitled What you think about me is none of my business! That title is compelling and feels true.

What other people think or say about you can and will impact your willingness to explore your possibilities, if you let them.

Our farmer never really answered them (what a great politician he would be these days). the farmer simply refused to make a statement. He listened, and moved on to the next set of possibilities presented and made another choice.

Timing is another important element in this equation. Timing is important and some even say timing is everything. Believing that we have possibilities is another.

When the Cubbies run out on the field and their loyal fans buy tickets to the game, they believe and have believed for decades that this is the year that they will win the pennant. It is possible.

We can guess, forecast, predict, dream, hope what may happen: all of that. We don't know who, what or when or how or why.

It's like trying to capture a greased pig. The minute you think you've got it, it's squealed and gone. So how to best approach the May bes.... the future... the never ending set of possibilities, that slippery, greasy pig. Our principal assignment here on earth... is to wrestle that pig and take control and be responsible for it.

I recently had the good fortune (or I considered it good luck at the time) to serve as a volunteer group guide for an AARP program "Life Reimagined". So I thought I'd share some of the inspiring stories of people, who upon retiring, looked at the range of possibilities available and made some startling and exciting choices. But you can find them yourself on the AARP website, www.aarp.org, if you're interested.

When faced with numerous possibilities, the bigger story, that embraced all these other stories, was the one I chose to share. It's the story of AARP itself.

In the middle 1940's, Dr. Ethel Percy Andrus, a retired high school principal, (who by the way was the first female high school principal in Los Angeles county) learned of a former colleague, a retired teacher suffering with ill health. She went to visit and found the teacher living in humble shelter of a converted chicken coup. The illness had caused major medical bills and the school's retirement benefits did not include health insurance. The teacher

needed help and was not alone.

At that time, private health insurance was virtually unavailable to older Americans. Dr. Andrus saw the possibility and fearlessly and in person approached dozens of insurance companies – 41, I am told, - until she found one willing to take the risk of insuring the health of older teachers.

Combining insurance with other benefits and retirement information, she founded a national organization, National Retired Teachers Assoc. in 1947. Thousands of non-teachers wanted to enjoy similar benefits. After ten years, Dr. Andrus realized the time had come to create a new organization open to all Americans. Today, NRTA is a division within AARP which continues to promote Dr. Andrus' philosophy of productive aging. Since its inception in '58, AARP has considered many possibilities, made choices and seized the moment. It continues to explore the possibilities of aging and encourages us to do the same.

Dr. Andrus saw many life possibilities for herself and others. She took risks and chose well.

What about us?

Let's summarize: what are some keys that open us to the possibilities of our own lives?

There are five KEY keys:

KEY: 1 All things are possible.

KEY: 2 Life is an individualized gift package containing an infinite assortment of possibilities.

KEY: 3 Your individualized gift package of possibilities belongs to you and you alone.

KEY: 4 Do not be afraid. Be Thoughtful. Careful. Be Cautious but NOT AFRAID.

KEY: 5 This is always the right time, the right moment. THIS IS THE moment to exercise your chosen possibility. The moment is now.

I have shared five keys to a pattern of life possibilities.

I leave you with this question. Can you use them in your life?

Maybe yes... maybe no

Thank you.