

It's estimated that the average adult makes about 35,000 decisions each day. The decisions can be good or bad, significant or insignificant. The most common strategies used to make decisions are impulsive, compliance, delegating, avoidance, balancing and prioritizing. Some decisions are very temporary like what color shirt do I wear. Others are life changing like choosing a college, changing jobs or moving. The life changing decisions are like coming to a fork in the road where you have to make a choice on which way to go.

Our nation is at a major fork in the road. The decisions made this year about Covid 19, Race Relations and the 2020 Elections will have a ongoing impact on the future of our nation. I don't think anyone knows which path our nation will take. But I do know that the media, politicians and interest groups are going to try to influence our decisions. We need to look at their bias, motivation and agendas before deciding which direction we are willing to go.

Judaism and Christianity were at a fork in the road a short time after Pentecost. We see that in the series of events following the healing the crippled man outside the temple in Jerusalem. This would be a major break point that would separate Christianity from Judaism. The Christian faith grew out of the Jewish faith and is the fulfillment of God's Promises to and through the people of Israel. Jesus Christ is the Promised Savior, the author of the New Covenant of forgiveness.

The Grace of God in Jesus Christ stood in sharp contrast to the legalism that dominated the teachings of Jewish religious leaders. Let's take a closer look at the series of events that took place during and following the healing of the crippled man.

The Christian faith is a message of hope and healing. After the crippled man asked Peter and John for some money, Peter said to him, *"I don't have any silver or gold for you. But I'll give you what I have. In the name of Jesus Christ the Nazarene, get up and walk!"* (Acts 3:6) They wanted to help the man. Our nation needs hope and healing today. Peter made it clear by his example that the new life of faith shows in what we do.

The religious authorities had Peter and John arrested for preaching the Gospel of Jesus Christ. The next day when the authorities asked them about the source of their power to heal Peter answered, *"Let me clearly state to all of you and to all the people of Israel that he was healed by the powerful name of Jesus Christ the Nazarene."* (Acts 4:10) The Disciples couldn't heal the man with their own power. We can't either. Neither social nor political agendas are going to heal our land. Only Jesus can do that.

Then Peter presented the Gospel message in a clear and compelling way when he said, *"There is salvation in no one else! God has given no other name under heaven by which we must be saved."* (Acts 4:12) That is the uncompromising truth that we are called to proclaim today.

Christians in the U. S. are looking at a life changing fork in the road. It is tempting to get caught up in the moment and make decisions too quickly. We are living in a very secular time with many different voices calling out to us. We need to be careful that we are not led down the wrong path. Jesus tells us, *“You can enter God’s Kingdom only through the narrow gate. The highway to hell is broad, and its gate is wide for the many who choose that way. But the gateway to life is very narrow and the road is difficult, and only a few ever find it.”* (Matthew 7:13-14). We are in a spiritual struggle and need to make sure that we follow Christ on the right path and not jump aboard a popular social or political agenda.

Christians certainly have a role to play in our society. Jesus said that we are salt to season the world with His love and we are the light to shine on the right path. The Prophet Micah defines what that life of faith should be when he wrote, *“O people, the Lord has told you what is good, and this is what he requires of you: to do what is right (or seek justice), to love mercy, and to walk humbly with your God.”* (Micah 6:8) We should be agents for the right change for the good of all people while walking in faith with God.

Why? Because Christians come from all races, languages and cultures! When John was given his vision of heaven, he wrote this description of the people gathered around the throne. *“I saw a vast crowd, too great to count, from every nation and tribe and people and language, standing in front of the throne and before the Lamb.”* (Revelation 7:9) Every human life matters because everyone is important to God. Jesus died on the cross and rose from the dead as the Savior of all.

Facing these uncertain times of change, what should we do? The first thing is to pray. Pray for ourselves and for our nations. There is only one way our nation will be healed. God gives us this promise in 2 Chronicles 7:14. *“If my people who are called by my name will humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, I will hear from heaven and will forgive their sins and restore their land.”* It is time for us and for our fellow Americans to repent and return to God. I don’t think any of us will like the consequences if we don’t.

The next thing we need to do is to listen so that we know the needs and concerns of the people around us. Jesus’ brother James tells us to be quick to listen and slow to speak. But we also need to make sure that we are listening to the right voice. Jesus said, *“My sheep listen to my voice; I know them, and they follow me.”* (John 10:27) We won’t know what God wants us to do if we don’t listen to His Word and Spirit.

The third thing we need to do is work for peace, to be agents of reconciliation. That is what God wants us to. Paul tells us, *“God has given us this task of reconciling people to him. For God was in Christ, reconciling the world to himself, no longer counting people’s sins against them. And he gave us this wonderful message of reconciliation.”* (2 Corinthians 5:18-19)

We have the peace of God that we can give to one another. Because God loves and forgives us, we can love and forgive others. Nothing is going to be resolved with violence. Everything can be resolved with repentance and forgiveness that leads to good and lasting changes.

Peace is at a fork in the road too. Two weeks from today, after 25 years of serving as the Pastor of Peace, I will be retiring. Three weeks from today Pastor Andy Pronsati will be installed as the next Pastor of Peace. God has blessed our life and ministry together. I want to thank all of you for being partners with me in the Gospel of Jesus Christ. The ministry of Peace has just begun. With God's help, Peace can make a major difference for the good in the communities around us. So let me finish today with these words from St. Paul.

*“Every time I think of you, I give thanks to my God. Whenever I pray, I make my requests for all of you with joy, for you have been my partners in spreading the Good News about Christ from the time you first heard it until now. And I am certain that God, who began the good work within you, will continue his work until it is finally finished on the day when Christ Jesus returns.”*

(Philippians 1:3-6)