

Subject: Sermon Ideas – Beggars & Choosers

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Dearly Beloveds of my Soul and Global Heartbeats of Creation!
This is so wonderful to live by, and great sermon material to boot!

Beggars and Choosers
by Alan Cohen

Last fall my plane landed at the Miami Airport just before the airport was closed in the face of the oncoming Hurricane Irene. I went to my hotel, hunkered down, and watched in awe as gale force winds bent palm trees and huge volumes of rain pelted the large windows. That evening the hotel lost electric power for eight hours, and I took the opportunity to light a candle, meditate, and savor the power of nature surging around me. I must say that evening was one of my most pleasant hotel visits.

When the storm abated, hotel guests scrambled to rearrange their flight schedules. As I stood at the public phone in the lobby, I heard a fellow in the booth next to me talking to an airline reservations agent. "I realize that beggars can't be choosers," he pleaded, "but is there any chance you can get me on this flight?" His words reverberated in my mind: Beggars can't be choosers. It is true. If you think you are a beggar, undeserving of the good things in life, required to earn your right to be happy or suffer to get what you want, you certainly are not in a position of choice. But if you recognize that you are a co-creator with God, literally an expression of a God Who brings beauty and joy to life and to you, through you, begging becomes meaningless, utterly contradictory to who we are and the way we were born to live.

Here we stand at the threshold of the new millennium, with many choices before us. If we believe we must grovel, plead, or struggle to manifest our dreams, these choices can seem overwhelming, even frightening. But if we realize that every choice before us represents the universe inviting us to remember who we really are and what we really want, and then find the courage to claim it, the process of choosing becomes exciting - even exhilarating.

To choose is to empower. Every time you say "yes" to one path and "no" to another, life rushes to support you in your decision. Often it does not matter so much what we choose, but that we do choose. Many declarations from the Bible echo this wisdom: "God spews the lukewarm from His mouth" (not the most romantic image, but effective); "let your 'yes' be a 'yes,' and your 'no' be a 'no'; all else is of the devil" (meaning that when we live with half-heartedness or ambiguity, we lose our ability to act effectively); in The Gospel According to Thomas we are told, "If you bring forth what is within you, it will heal you; if you do not bring forth what is within you, it will kill you." Modern pundits have described the process thus: "Throw your heart over the fence, and your body will

follow." "Boldness has genius, power, and magic in it." And, "if you sit in the middle of the road, you will get run over by traffic from both sides."

Years ago I spent a day in New York City with a group of new age friends. After our outing, we were driving toward the George Washington Bridge, trying to decide if we wanted to go home or see a movie. "What do you guys want to do?" asked the driver. "I need to know which road to take."

"I am okay either way", one fellow announced. Another echoed, "I am not attached". My response was, "I will go with the flow"; another reported, "I am easy". At that point the driver applied the brakes and pulled the car onto the shoulder of the road. He turned toward the back seat and with an air of authority announced, "Okay, all of you new age flakos, this is one of those times when everyone is going to have to tell the truth and let the group know what you really want - or else we are going nowhere."

The rest of us looked at each other sheepishly. Then one fellow spoke, "I'd rather go home." "Yes, me too", said another. "I'm not really in the mood for a movie", I admitted. "Yeah, let's just keep going", the last fellow suggested.

"Thank you," the driver replied smugly, "Now we can go home."

We all get to go home when we make strong choices. Thoreau advised, "Go confidently in the direction of your dreams. Live the life you have imagined." And visionary William James offered a powerful formula for following through on any important life choice: 1. Be bold. 2. Begin now. 3. No exceptions. If the new millennium is going to be anything, it will be what we make it. We will make it magnificent, not by begging, but by choosing. As Peter Drucker wisely noted, "The best way to predict the future is to create it."