

What A Difference A Day Makes

Matthew 28:1-7

Intro: Just think . . . the day before, all was dark and gloomy. The gates of hell had prevailed. The world was wrapped in the icy fingers of hopelessness. Christ was dead and buried. So many dreams . . . dashed! So much hope crushed in the mangled body of Christ. But that was yesterday. But reading from the Message it reads this way, “After the Sabbath, *as the first light of a new week dawned . . .*” Yesterday, Satan and his legions scoffed at the world’s despair . . . but that was yesterday . . . and this was a new dawn and what a difference a day makes.

You’ve been there. Life became unmanageable. It evolved into the endless grind of routine and responsibility. Life lost its purpose. You no longer live . . . you just sort of survive. And the youthful optimism and hope has been transformed into the dark realm of reality. You’ve surrendered. You’ve made peace with mediocrity.

I’ve got news for you. It honestly doesn’t have to be that way. That might have been your yesterday but this is today and what a difference a day makes!

In his book, “Today Matters: 12 Daily Practices to Guarantee Tomorrow’s Success,” John Maxwell makes an incredibly insightful comment. He says, “Successful people make important decisions early in their lives, then they manage those decisions the rest of their lives.”

What were the decisions you made when you were younger? What were your hopes and dreams? I’ve got a surprise for you . . . you haven’t lost them. You just haven’t managed them well. They’re still there! You just forgot them along the way. But that was yesterday . . . and what a difference a day makes!

You’ve got a choice this morning. You can continue to live your life on this surrendered road or you can choose to chart a new route! You can survive or you can thrive. The choice is solely yours!

Some of you feel trapped. Some of you feel that the compass of your life is fixed and that things can’t and will never be any different. Have you ever thought about finally making up your mind as to whether you’re going to take God at His Word? I’ve quoted it many times.

2 Corinthians 5:17

“Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come!”

He doesn't even say, you can become a new creation. You can't change the past . . . that was yesterday. But you can take God at His Word, “you are a new creation” that's today, and what a difference a day makes! You can believe Him or not. For those who want religion, you're stuck in the world's mold and you're stuck in yesterday. But for those who want the transforming power of Christ, you are different. Start believing in yourself and, more importantly, start believing in Him!

When I was younger, I thought I'd make a difference. When I was younger, I thought that there was nothing that I couldn't do if I set my mind to it. As I've grown older, I've learned a difference, I can't change anything . . . but Christ can change everything . . . and “I can do all things through Christ who gives me strength!”

What are some decisions that you can make that will make a difference in your own life and in the lives of others?

1. I Will Make A Difference for Myself

Philippians 4:2

“Let each of you look out, not only for his own interests, but also for the interests of others.”

There is nothing wrong with internalizing the reality of change. As a matter of fact, you'll not be able to make a difference in others until He has made a difference in you. You'll realize His liberating power! You'll know that this spiritual law is not just exclusively for you and that He commissions you to become a transforming agent.

What are some things that need to change for you personally? Be careful about your focus. Often we go to the superficial immediately. But I would ask you to consider carefully.

*** Man traveling in a boat out to his cabin. It was seven miles and took a long time to get there. As the boat went along the man noticed an object floating in the water. It was a lantern. The man scooped it up and rubbed it off. A genie popped out. “I’ll give you one wish.” The man thought about it and said, “I wish that there was a nice bridge all the way out to my cabin. The genie thought about it and said, “Are you sure? That’s a pretty big order . . . seven miles of bridge.” The man thought for a second and said, “Then here’s my wish. I’d like to be able to understand the mind of woman.” The genie replied, “Do you want two lanes or four lanes on that bridge?”

Many times we can be distracted from the truly important. What NEEDS to change? You’ve got many areas that need improvement but what are the most important? If you could hear from God, what would He think are the most important changes that need to be made? That was you, yesterday, and this is today . . . and what a difference a day makes.

I need to be different if I want to make a difference.

2. I Will Make A Difference for Others

My best advice on this is “start small”. Resolve yourself to make a difference in one person’s life.

2 Kings 5:1-6

¹Now Naaman was commander of the army of the king of Aram. He was a great man in the sight of his master and highly regarded, because through him the LORD had given victory to Aram. He was a valiant soldier, but he had leprosy.[£]

²Now bands from Aram had gone out and had taken captive a young girl from Israel, and she served Naaman’s wife. ³She said to her mistress, “If only my master would see the prophet who is in Samaria! He would cure him of his leprosy.”

⁴Naaman went to his master and told him what the girl from Israel had said. ⁵“By all means, go,” the king of Aram replied. “I will send a letter to the king of Israel.” So Naaman left, taking with him ten talents[£] of silver, six thousand shekels[£] of gold and ten sets of clothing. ⁶The letter that he took to the king of Israel read: “With this letter I am sending my servant Naaman to you so that you may cure him of his leprosy.”

Many times we discount what we can do because we think that we have no resources to bring about change. Consider the girl in this historical setting:

- a. She was a slave (lowest social standing)
- b. She was an outsider, (Jew living in Syria)
- c. She was young, (gullible and naïve)
- d. She was female (in a male-dominated culture)

You are a plus or a minus in the lives of others. Negativity and cynicism can be leprous. You might feel powerless and that nobody will listen to you. But that was yesterday . . . and what a difference a day makes.

3. I Will Make A Difference With Others

How long is it going to take before some of you realize that God never intended you to do life on your own. “It’s not good for man to be alone.”

Romans 12:7

⁷For none of us lives to himself alone and none of us dies to himself alone.

Some people just don’t have the time or the energy to be around others. The truth is, they really don’t like other people. They’re like Frederick the Great who was quoted, “The more I get to know people, the more I love my dog.”

We need people. We need one another.

In the 1950s, marketing whiz Stanley Arnold was working at Young & Rubicam, where he was asked to come up with a marketing campaign for Remington Rand. The company was among the most conservative in America. Its chairman at the time was retired General Douglas MacArthur. Intimidated at first by a company that was so much a part of America, Arnold also found in that phrase the first inspiration for a campaign. After thinking about it, he went to the New York offices of Merrill Lynch, Pierce, Fenner and Beane, and placed the ultimate odd-lot order:

"I want to purchase," he told the broker, "one share of every single stock listed on the New York Stock Exchange." After a vice president tried to talk him out of it, the order was finally placed. It came to more than \$42,000 for one share in each of

the 1098 companies listed on the Big Board at the time. Arnold now took his diversified portfolio into a meeting of Remington Rand's board of directors, where he argued passionately for a sweepstakes campaign with the top prize called A Share in America. The conservative old gentlemen shifted around in their seats and discussed the idea for a while. "But Mr. Arnold," said one, "we are not in the securities business." Said another, "We are in the shaver business."

"I agree that you are not in the securities business," said Arnold, "but I think you also ought to realize that you are not in the shaver business either. You are in the people business."

First Christian Church is not in the religion business. We're not in our own business. We're in God's business and that is "people business."

(Small groups)

You'll never make a difference in other people's lives until you've invested something of yourself in those lives. You might not have had time for people. Make time. That was yesterday. And what a difference a day makes.

4. I Will Partner With The Difference Maker

Ephesians 3:20, 21

²⁰Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us, ²¹to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever! Amen.

The Message reads: ²⁰God can do anything, you know—far more than you could ever imagine or guess or request in your wildest dreams! He does it not by pushing us around but by working within us, his Spirit deeply and gently within us.

Remember when you were a child and your parents told you that life goes by faster as you get older? It's true isn't it? Life seems to speed past as we get older. As I look back at my life I remember "big" days. They stand out in my memory. I remember high school graduation. (I graduated Good Golly Miss Molly) I remember proposing to Janie. I remember the birth of my kids. I remember the first time I preached here. The pants of my blue suit split out.

Big days stand out . . . but every day counts.

Kenny Chesney has a song called "Don't Blink"

I turned on the evening news
Saw a old man being interviewed
Turning a hundred and two today
Asked him what's the secret to life
He looked up from his old pipe
Laughed and said "All I can say is."

Don't blink

Just like that you're six years old and you take a nap and you
Wake up and you're twenty-five and your high school sweetheart becomes your
wife

Don't blink

You just might miss your babies growing like mine did
Turning into moms and dads next thing you know your "better half"
Of fifty years is there in bed
And you're praying God takes you instead
Trust me friend a hundred years goes faster than you think
So don't blink.

It doesn't have to be this way. Your life can count for something. Regardless of what the past has been like . . . that's yesterday. This is today . . . and with His help, what a difference a day makes.