

The Difference a Day Makes
Rev. Jim Cullen - May 9, 2010

Our lives are shaped by what happens to us on certain days. The events of a single day can impact the rest of our lives. Think about days that made a difference to you: Your birth date puts you into some part of history. There is the day you met a person who changed your life. There are graduations, days of achievement, promotions, meeting new people, seeing new sites, experiencing a new spiritual direction.

There are other days that because of sickness, death, disappointment, a lost job – days that are life changing. My guess is that for any one of us there are 10 to 20 days that have been for us life changing. Some of them may even be seen as lost opportunities.

It has been said that it is not so much as to what happens to us that matters but what we do with what happens. The days of our lives come and go and we are ultimately shaped by what we do with the experience.

In our scripture lessons this morning we have a couple of stories about individuals who had a life changing day. There is the story of Lydia, a non-Jewish woman who has begun to worship the God of Israel. Paul and his companions stay in her house. This is not just a story about a woman's spiritual experience; it is a story about the beginning of one of the strongest Christian communities that Paul ever founded. This is a day that made a difference for Lydia, Paul and eventually the Christian church.

The second lesson is entitled "Jesus heals on the Sabbath". It is a story about Jesus healing a man who had been ill for 38 years. As part of the story we hear Jesus asking the man, "Do you want to be made well?" At first that sounds like a dumb question. Of course the man would want to be made well. And I think the man really did.

This does raise an interesting observation. There are times in life when we really don't want to be made well. We don't want to overcome our problems. We are used to them. They define us. To be well could mean we need to go to work; we need to assume some responsibility; need to get on with life. There are times when we enjoy our misery, enjoy talking about what is wrong and just how awful things are. Healing can mean getting up and get going. A day can make a difference – a day when our focus is tomorrow not yesterday.

The question for us this morning is, can today make a difference"? We call this, in addition to Mothers Day, Christian Family Sunday. Three words tied to one day. The word "Christian" reminds us that love for God and each other, respect for God and each other, understanding God and each other – shapes our faith and our lives. There is reference in the Book of Acts about how, in the early church, *it was in Antioch that the disciples were first called "Christian"* (11:26) The name was given to them because of what they did and what they said – of how they lived. The word Christian can be applied to people, not so much self-proclaimed, but given by others. It is recognition of what is happening in a person's life, as seen by others. On this Sunday it can be an affirmation we offer to others.

The second word, "family" is very complex. Each century, each generation has had to struggle with what makes up a family. Today we still have some assumptions that a family is a mother, father, 2 children, a cat or dog, grandparents living near-by, a single family dwelling on a city street or country road. This is more from the TV shows of the 1950 and 60's than the real world of today.

Anyone who is a teacher knows that the make up of a class, a snapshot of the community, can have a whole variety of groups of people who see themselves as families. There are two parent families, single parent families, same sex families, multi-generational families and a host of other relationships that draw people together.

Today family is increasingly about relationships. Whatever the make up of the family, if the relationships are positive, welcoming, supportive and safe, then that family will thrive. We can never be reminded too often that "role model" is always the key to the growth and development of young people. Support for all forms of the human family is part of what today is all about.

Family is also a term for the gathering of God's people. All ages and stages of life are included. A congregation can be a family. All Christian churches can be a family - family means we have more in common than what divides us. God is our Mother and our Father. We are God's children, hence we are family.

Sunday – this day of the week is first and foremost an acknowledgement of the resurrection of Jesus. Because of Jesus resurrection the early church selected Sunday, the first day of the week as the primary day for worship

In so many ways Sunday has become like all the others – work, shopping, social and sports events. I think that most of us, myself included, appreciate the convenience of doing some Sunday shopping. Yet, we must be honest, the convenience for us means others are working on Sunday. This focus on retail is being pushed one more step. There is an expectation that even Christmas Day will become a "shopping day", at least in Toronto.

We no longer have the social customs that set a day aside for us. Today it is up to us to create some balance in life. The concept of Sunday as a day of rest has some pretty strong reasons behind it. We are better people when Sunday re-creates us, when it adds pleasure to life, when our lives are enriched through food and fellowship. We worship because we find peace and hope and joy and the resources to take on a new week. We know that others seek and hopefully find a spiritual base for life in other ways. Safe to say; if our Sunday makes us a better person, renewed people, then we are living in the right direction.

Days can make a difference. Perhaps today can be one of them – Christian – Family – Sunday.

Amen