

Grace be to you and peace from God our Father and our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen.

About a month or so ago during Sunday school. We were talking with our high school youth about things that they might want to change at their school. I can't remember how the conversation started, but I remember some of the youth expressing that some of the things that they wanted to change wouldn't happen because they couldn't do it all. When we continued our conversation we figured out that maybe the effort wouldn't be worth it because the youth wouldn't see immediate results of what they were trying to change. In our conversation we talked about how sometimes when we try to change things there aren't immediate results. Change takes time, but we could be the individual or group that starts the momentum to have issues examined. One person can make a difference. It may not be the immediate satisfaction that we crave, but we can make a difference.

In our readings for today the apostle Paul and John the Baptist also demonstrate to us that one person can make a difference.

Paul made a huge difference in spreading the gospel. After his conversion he traveled around the Aegean Rim sharing the story of Jesus' life, death, and resurrection.

John the Baptist paved the way for Jesus' coming. He was humble and told his followers that there was someone coming after him that ranked ahead of him. John kept his eye on the fact that Jesus was God's son and was sent for a purpose.

Like John the Baptist and Paul, we make a difference – as individuals and as a congregation. We make a difference in this congregation, our community, and the world.

Before I expand on how we make a difference I'd like to mention a caveat. One person can make a positive difference, but one person can also make a negative experience. It only takes one person to start a rumor or get others hyped up about an issue making them feel that they have to choose sides.

As Paul reminded the Corinthians, who were always a mess, and in conflict, that God is faithful and by him we were called into fellowship of Jesus Christ, he too reminds us of the same thing.

Christ is the key. If God is our center – if every decision we make is centered around prayer and listening to what God is asking us to do I can imagine a world with less conflict. The common thread that we all have is to do what God asks of us.

When we focus on what God calls us to do we then become the pebble thrown into a pond creating small rings, which create larger rings making a difference.

We can and do make a difference. Sometimes it's hard to see. There are times that I know I want to see change or see something happen overnight. I want to see seeds that

were planted grow right away. Unfortunately it doesn't always work that way. Our timing and God's timing for making a difference can be two different things.

How do we make a difference? We make a difference in the life of this congregation by serving and participating in different ways. Each one of us, even if it is just coming to worship to love God makes a difference in this congregation. We all have our gifts that God has given to us.

We make a difference to the people in our lives. We influence those in our lives by our actions. If we make decisions with God as our center, family, friends, co-workers, and many others observe that and we make a difference. We make a difference when we ask the bully at school to stop teasing another student or When we help children with their homework or visit someone in the hospital or a nursing home.

We make a difference to people who don't know us. We make a difference by praying for peace and for leadership of nations to seek justice and equality for all people. We make a difference when we provide meals at Project Echo or donate time and gifts to Tree of Angels. We make a difference when we travel to work camp and help families rebuild their lives.

We make a difference. John the Baptist teaches us that we can make a difference, but it is not about us. It is about God.

Paul demonstrates to us that God is faithful to us and to remember that he will strengthen us as we all work together for God's kingdom.

Martin Luther King, Jr. had a dream that all people would be seen as equals. He planted the seed – a seed that is still growing and blossoming today. What seeds can we plant both as individuals and as a congregation to make a difference?

“God is faithful; by him we are called into the fellowship of his Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.”

With God's help, we make a difference.

The peace of God which surpasses all human understanding be in your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus the Lord. Amen.