

**Lent 2, 2007, March 5
St. John's**

A woman was on vacation on the New England coast. One morning very early she was walking along the beach. The sun was still below the horizon, but the sky was clear and the bluish grey light, right before dawn, gave a beauty to the beach and the calm sea. As she looked down the beach she saw a figure of a young man silhouetted against the sea. He was skipping and frolicking as if he were performing a ritual dance to celebrate the dawn. As the woman moved closer she realized that he was not dancing but, with graceful and joyous movements, was picking up objects and throwing them into the sea.

As she got closer she saw that they were not objects but starfish.

"Why are you throwing starfish into the sea?" she asked him.

"Well the tide is going out and if they are still here when the sun rises they will die." And without breaking rhythm he carried on his ritual.

"That's ridiculous," she said. "There are thousands of miles of beach and there must be millions of starfish. You can't really believe that what you are possibly doing is going to make a difference."

The man smiled, bent over, and picked up another starfish. He paused thoughtfully and as he tossed it into the waves he said, "It makes a difference to this one."

It makes a difference to this one.

Over the last 4 weeks, in our community of faith, I have been one of those that it has made a difference to.

Over these last 4 weeks I have come to realize that the heart of Christian community does not lie in the grand and major schemes or the wondrous plans of bigness.

The heart of Christian community is when people are prepared to dance a life that is willing to give a little time that makes a difference to one person.

To our spouse and our children. To our friend. To the child who needs time to help read. To the person who needs someone to listen to. To the person who lives alone and simply needs a call or a visit. A card that says I am thinking of you.

Even just a smile to the stranger can be just what that person needs. The simple acts of kindnesses that come from the heart.

When Jesus looked down on Jerusalem it was with a heavy heart.

He could do nothing about the city or the bigger picture. He knew that. Yet he also knew that where he was most effective was one on one. The kindness he showed individuals. The compassion he had for individuals. The time he gave to individuals. The simple act of showing that he cared for individuals.

The church is called the New Jerusalem and we know full well that we are still killing each other and stoning each with words and accusations.

And Jesus may look on us and say the same thing as he said about the city of Jerusalem.

Yet I hope that when he looks on us at St. John's he sees the community of individuals who are intentional about taking the time for other people. A community of individuals that can really say, "It made difference to this one.

Amen.