

CHANGE THE WORLD

Sermon Starter
Third Sunday of Easter 2010
April 18, 2010

Lectionary Text: Acts 9:1-6, 7-20 Psalm 30 (UMH 762) Revelation 5:11-14 John 21:1-19

Recommended Focus: John 21:1-19

1-3 After this, Jesus appeared again to the disciples, this time at the Tiberias Sea (the Sea of Galilee). This is how he did it: Simon Peter, Thomas (nicknamed "Twin"), Nathanael from Cana in Galilee, the brothers Zebedee, and two other disciples were together. Simon Peter announced, "I'm going fishing."

3-4 The rest of them replied, "We're going with you." They went out and got in the boat. They caught nothing that night. When the sun came up, Jesus was standing on the beach, but they didn't recognize him.

5 Jesus spoke to them: "Good morning! Did you catch anything for breakfast?" They answered, "No."

6 He said, "Throw the net off the right side of the boat and see what happens." They did what he said. All of a sudden there were so many fish in it, they weren't strong enough to pull it in.

7-9 Then the disciple Jesus loved said to Peter, "It's the Master!" When Simon Peter realized that it was the Master, he threw on some clothes, for he was stripped for work, and dove into the sea. The other disciples came in by boat for they weren't far from land, a hundred yards or so, pulling along the net full of fish. When they got out of the boat, they saw a fire laid, with fish and bread cooking on it.

10-11 Jesus said, "Bring some of the fish you've just caught." Simon Peter joined them and pulled the net to shore—153 big fish! And even with all those fish, the net didn't rip.

12 Jesus said, "Breakfast is ready." Not one of the disciples dared ask, "Who are you?" They knew it was the Master. 13-14 Jesus then took the bread and gave it to them. He did the same with the fish. This was now the third time Jesus had shown himself alive to the disciples since being raised from the dead.

15 After breakfast, Jesus said to Simon Peter, "Simon, son of John, do you love me more than these?" "Yes, Master, you know I love you." Jesus said, "Feed my lambs." 16 He then asked a second time, "Simon, son of John, do you love me?" "Yes, Master, you know I love you." Jesus said, "Shepherd my sheep." 17-19 Then he said it a third time: "Simon, son of John, do you love me?" Peter was upset that he asked for the third time, "Do you love me?" so he answered, "Master, you know everything there is to know. You've got to know that I love you."

Jesus said, "Feed my sheep. I'm telling you the very truth now: When you were young you dressed yourself and went wherever you wished, but when you get old you'll have to stretch out your hands while someone else dresses you and takes you where you don't want to go." He said this to hint at the kind of death by which Peter would glorify God. And then he commanded, "Follow me."

Preaching Focus: *Are you ready to get out of your routine...out of your rut? Are you ready to change direction, so that together we can change the world?*

CHANGE THE WORLD

When Jesus told the disciples to throw the nets off the other side, they immediately responded by doing what he said. Think about it. If someone came into your workplace and told you how to do your job, how would you respond? Defensively? Or would you simply follow?

The disciples did what Jesus said and reaped a great blessing. By following his direction, they witnessed once again the power of the One who had made what seemed impossible possible. They also experienced how God-infused action reaps greater results than simply doing things the way they've always been done while expecting different results.

How is this relevant in your local church? What is a "new way of doing church" or "rethinking church" that the people in your congregation have resisted? What vision of better results could be held before them to make changing from "the way we've always done it" more attractive?

The scripture goes on to challenge us further. Jesus asked something of Peter – "Will you feed my sheep... Will you shepherd my sheep?" These requests are more difficult than casting a net off the other side of a boat! Feeding and shepherding requires relationship! How do you know who's hungry until you are standing alongside them? How do you guide someone else until you've created trust for them to follow you? We must get outside our comfort zones to experience the needs in our communities firsthand and respond by demonstrating God's love in a tangible way.

As we look towards April 24-25, we know that changing the world is not a clean and easy job. Hands will get dirty. Getting a team of people to move in the same direction may be tough. Building trust in new relationships may be difficult. So why will we try? Because God calls us to love others as He loves us.

Today's life challenge is that we be receptive to change in our own lives, so that we can become the pliable tools of God to change the world.

Visuals:

Coupled with today's scripture and next week's focus on World Malaria Day, consider using nets as part of the visuals for worship to symbolize evangelism, the call to follow God's lead, and the simple device that can prevent a killer disease – malaria. What other tools will your congregation use to engage community? Work tools, cell phones, planning sheets, Bible study books may be among the things you use to connect and engage. Consider placing things representative of your work before the altar, as a symbol of your offering to God.

CHANGE THE WORLD

Response:

We ask that your congregation join today with voices from around the world in a unifying call to action. A litany which calls us to demonstrate our love for God by serving our neighbor will be posted online, along with a collect and sending forth. This resource will be translated into the nine official languages of General Conference, bringing the people of The United Methodist Church into a time of spiritual solidarity. Check back with www.rethinkchurch.org/changetheworld for download.

As April 24-25 approaches, there will be many more pictures added to www.rethinkchurch.org/changetheworld. If you have multimedia capability in your sanctuary, consider playing a slide show of these images as voices are raised.

Touchpoints:

- How will your congregation reach out to those they will encounter during the Change the World event? Are you equipping them to invite and engage strangers?
- How will you keep the momentum going in your congregation and community? Consider providing each participant with a Change the World booklet to inspire greater involvement in the mission of Jesus. These booklets are available at Cokesbury and packaged in sets of ten for cost effective distribution among laity.
- How will your leadership team continue with the message and mission of Jesus beyond April 24-25? Consider further engagement of this concept by equipping your lay leaders each with a copy of "Change the World: Recovering the Message and Mission of Jesus."
- How is your congregation preparing to offer hospitality during the event? Some members may enjoy baking cookies and offering refreshments to those at work. Be sure to include them.
- Are you prepared to receive those who may not have worshipped in a long time? Consider the questions they may have about how to dress, how to follow a bulletin, how to respond after scripture reading, etc. What can you do to help them not feel like outsiders?
- Consider equipping your congregation with "business" cards that give their names and contact information through the church, so they can make connections with their neighbors.

CHANGE THE WORLD

Social Media:

Interact with others through social media. In the week before, pose a question through texting, email, Facebook, or Twitter which you will address in the sermon. Following worship, send a message which sums up the sermon (in 140 characters or less) to be shared with others. Examples for this week follow:

Pre-Message: *Would this community notice if our church were to close? How?*

Post-Message: *“Commitment to Christ is measured not in belief but in action.”*

Attribute the post-message text online to Mike Slaughter, author of “Change the World: Recovering the Message and Mission of Jesus.” Follow the message by encouraging people to visit your church website, perhaps offering the sermon online as a podcast or simply as text. Since you will be limited in the number of characters posted, use www.tinyurl.com to shorten the length of the web address.

In addition, let your congregation know about a hashtag created for this event in Twitter: #changeworld. For more information on Twitter and hashtags, go to:

http://onlinepublishing.suite101.com/article.cfm/what_is_twitter_and_how_does_it_work.

Multimedia (includes stories to inspire)

Event Promotional Piece: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YXsTRSxSBWk>

Book Trailer: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=srHfSLTItys>

A Church without Walls:

http://www.umc.org/site/apps/nlnet/content3.aspx?c=IwL4KnN1LtH&b=5723451&content_id={C2A2A3C7-2F39-4183-9D48-88BD64E763BE}¬oc=1

College Campout for Haiti: http://umtv.org/archives/college_campout_for_haiti.htm

Teen Second Chance Ranch: http://umtv.org/archives/teen_second_chance_ranch.htm