

# CHANGE THE WORLD

## Sermon Starter: April 25, 2010 Fourth Sunday of Easter 2010

**Lectionary Text:** Acts 9:36-43 | Psalm 23 | Revelation 7:9-17 | John 10:22-30

**Recommended Focus:** John 10:22-30 (*New International Version*)

**22.** Then came the Feast of Dedication at Jerusalem. It was winter, **23.** and Jesus was in the temple area walking in Solomon's Colonnade. **24.** The Jews gathered around him, saying, "How long will you keep us in suspense? If you are the Christ, tell us plainly."

**25.** Jesus answered, "I did tell you, but you do not believe. The miracles I do in my Father's name speak for me, **26.** but you do not believe because you are not my sheep. **27.** My sheep listen to my voice; I know them, and they follow me. **28.** I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; no one can snatch them out of my hand. **29.** My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all; no one can snatch them out of my Father's hand. **30.** I and the Father are one."

**Preaching Focus:** We are known as followers of Jesus Christ by our faith and works.

It is clear from the scripture that even as Jesus Christ stands before the Jews as the author of miracles, some are blind to his divinity. When God's works happen before your eyes, do you see them? How do you respond?

We pray for the touch of God's hand, but are we truly listening for his intervention?

As God closes a door, he opens another. We must listen, as Jesus commands, for that opportunity; for that newly opened door. A lost job may mean an opportunity to pursue your true calling. Tragic, and even unnecessary, deaths may call the world to come together in His name.

We have seen this in recent months in the global response to Haiti. We see this ongoing in our global fight against malaria. Every day, a world of Christians comes together to put their faith into action. Are you part of that world?

Today is World Malaria Day. People throughout the world are standing shoulder-to-shoulder with a common mission – to eliminate death and suffering from malaria. Today also marks the formal launch of

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Imagine No Malaria, a ministry of our church to be a light on a continent plagued by the shadow of death cast by malaria.

God will always challenge us to connect faith and works. A hurricane, an earthquake, a disease that plagues an entire continent. Usually when we least expect it. Is now the perfect time in our lives to do more? Likely not. Is that exactly God's plan? Absolutely, it is.

So if we are listening, how do we respond? 1 John 3:18 says "Dear children, let us not love with words or tongue, but in actions and in truth." In Matthew 25:40, Jesus calls us to love the least of us, for that is how we demonstrate our love of God himself.

Jesus calls us not only to believe, but to listen; to live in fellowship with one another. In His eyes, we are not bound by borders or separated by rugged geography. We are one family and we are transforming the world by our works. Is our fellowship strong enough to help the African continent beat malaria? Yes it is. Does our work and support of the Imagine No Malaria ministry connect us to a worldwide response to this scourge? Yes it does. Will we unite to honor God; to take action and share a blessing with our brothers and sisters in Africa? I believe we will.

We may call it going the "second mile" or "above and beyond" but in its essence, reaching out to our brothers and sisters in Africa to overcome malaria is simply our responsibility as part of the flock. It's what we do as Christians and how we uphold our Wesleyan tradition of reaching out to those who need it most. This is who we are – connected to one another through Christ.

## **Response:**

Response is a very important part of worship. In this message, a response that allows people to connect to families in Africa will help fulfill the message of action. The premise behind holding a Sunday To Save Lives on World Malaria Day is to bring the entire congregation together as one; to share a common purpose as a church family. In addition to a special offering, connecting to families in Africa through a drum circle or singing a traditional African hymn. Offer some tangible ways that people can create relationships with those in need. A Christ-like outreach can come in many forms.

## **Touchpoints:**

- We are a connectional church. Locally, we connect through personal relationships. Globally, we can connect symbolically and through our support offering.
- What can we teach our children about honoring God through our works?

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- Is there an event or activity planned to engage the church to help fight malaria? Can the event include the community at-large, providing an opportunity to demonstrate a Christ-like example?

**Social Media:** Interact with others through social media. In the week before, pose a question through e-mail, Facebook or Twitter to address in the sermon. Following worship, send a message to summarize the sermon.

Examples for this week follow:

*Pre-Sermon: Is there enough evidence to convict you of being a Christian?*

*Post-Sermon: "Where you live shouldn't determine whether you live."*

Follow the message by encouraging people to visit your church website perhaps offering the sermon online as a podcast or simply as text.

On the website, be sure to cite credit for today's post-sermon quote to Bono, activist, lead singer of U2.