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**Rev. Danny B. Leonard**  
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A thief broke into a home looking to carry off as many items as he could. As he was rummaging through the house, he heard noise. He turned to see that it was a bird in a cage squeaking. He listened more closely and realized the bird was repeating, "Jesus is watching you." Again and again the bird squeaked out this sentence.

Frustrated, the robber finally yelled at the bird to be quiet.

Almost immediately he heard what seemed to be footsteps. He turned to see one of the largest pit bull dogs he had ever seen. As he was contemplating how he might escape with all of his limbs, he heard the same small voice say, "Sic'em, Jesus."

I love heart touching stories with good endings.

There was another small voice that made a huge impact.

In 2004 Victor Yushchenko stood for the presidency of the Ukraine. He was a threat to the ruling party. As his popularity grew, he suddenly became ill. It was determined that he had been mysteriously poisoned. Yushchenko's face was disfigured and he almost lost his life. He had ingested the potent chemical dioxin, a chemical used in Agent Orange. This was not enough to deter him from pursuit of the presidency.

On the day of the election Yushchenko was comfortably in the lead. The ruling party, not to be denied, tampered with the results.

The state-run television station reported "ladies and gentlemen, we announce that the challenger Victor Yushchenko has been decisively defeated."

In the lower right-hand corner of the screen a woman by the name of Nataliya Dmitruk was providing a translation service for the deaf community. As the news presenter regurgitated the lies of the regime, Nataliya Dmitruk refused to translate them.

Instead she signed, "I'm addressing all the deaf citizens of Ukraine. They are lying and I'm ashamed to translate those lies. Yushchenko is our president."

The deaf community sprang into gear. They text messaged their friends about the fraudulent result, and as news spread of Dmitruk's act of defiance, increasing numbers of journalists were inspired to likewise tell the truth.

Over the coming weeks, the "Orange Revolution" occurred as a million people wearing orange made their way to the capital city of Kiev demanding a new election. The Supreme Court ruled and the government was forced to meet their demands, a new election was held and Victor Yushchenko became president.

When I heard the story behind the orange revolution, the image of a small screen of truth in the corner of the big screen became for me an ideal picture of the church. You see, we as a church do not control the big screen. (When we do, we usually mess it up.)

Grab a newspaper or turn on the television and you see a consistent message. Power and influence are given to that which is popular. Power and influence are given to those who have a lot of money or to those who are perceived to be knowledgeable.

As a society, we quickly allow the world to guide our thinking on right and wrong. We let the world set the agenda.

It's always amazing how actors and professional athletes have risen to a level higher than life itself. As a society, we ascribe to them a tremendous level of influence.

Periodically, the church comes to the forefront. Unfortunately, it seems that when the church messes up, it grabs headlines. But for the most part, the church is not recognized as a force with which to be reckoned. We do not set the agenda for society, and certainly not the world.

Here's the thing, the church is always there. Like the sign language translator in the bottom corner of the screen, the church always shows up. When you take a look at the good that is happening, agencies that are helping people, they are supported by the church. In fact, so many of greatest relief efforts across the globe were birthed in a church.

Every day, it is the church that is feeding the hungry, providing healthcare, building orphanages.

Mother Teresa's work gained world acclaim, earning her a Nobel Peace Prize. The church. Grace Children's Hospital in the country of Haiti, where there is no healthcare to speak of, takes in children with TB and nurses them back to health. Sozo Ministry provides a home for the orphans in Uganda. Children of Vietnam is an agency birthed by a United Methodist named Ben Wilson who lives in Winston-Salem. They provide housing for families, immunizations for children, scholarships for the poorest of the poor. I could go on and on. These are just a few with which I am familiar.

Lives are being saved and hearts and minds transformed by God through the church.

The church always shows up. Quietly working, doing that which is loving and right according to the message of Jesus.

And when bad things happen, when the world is in a mess, is when the church becomes important. On an individual level, when life takes a turn, we turn to the church. We turn to God. All of a sudden, the things that we thought were important aren't. The things that society says are important aren't. The same happens on a much larger level as well.

The world says "Look out for yourself, first. Above all others, take care of yourself." The church says, "Love your neighbor as yourself."

The world says, "The powerful know what is best; listen to them." The church says, "Only God is powerful; turn to him."

During these days of staying inside, certainly we are concerned with ourselves, our friends and family. It is a time of anxiety. Just remember, in the corner of the bigger screen of the world, there is the still small screen that represents the very presence of God speaking a word of truth and hope.

Thanks be to God for his presence with us.

