

Sermon for May 30, 2021

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I don't know about you, but recently I feel like I am creeping my way out of the cocoon we have been in for the past year. Our movement has been limited. It has often felt like we have been sheltering alone in the dark. It has felt confining in some ways and we have longed to break out, to go back to the life we knew before.

It has made me think a lot about caterpillars, cocoons and butterflies. Imagine being a caterpillar. Creeping around on tiny little legs, plump and stationed to the ground under foot, spending your days eating leaves, camouflaged from predators, seemingly content focused on what you need to consume that day. Yet caterpillars have an innate sense that their world cannot stay the same. They know when it is necessary to move into a cocoon. As they curl up spinning themselves their cocoon or chrysalis, the confined little place they will dwell in for days, you wonder if they know how long they will be in there? If they know how much is about to change? If their transformation is painful?

Over 15 months ago, we became aware it was necessary to move into our little cocoons. We had no idea how long we would dwell in our own homes. We had no idea how much was about to change. I still am not sure we realize how much has changed. And I wonder as we emerge, if the pain and struggle of this time cocooned, has brought about transformation? Are we willing to emerge changed for the future?

It is miraculous to watch a caterpillar become something new – to create the space for his tiny legs to be transformed into wings to fly. Oh what God the Creator can do! The caterpillar is completely transformed, unrecognizable from the creature it was before the cocoon – free now to fly to heights never imagined.

Have you ever watched a butterfly emerge from its cocoon or chrysalis? Many years in Vacation Bible School the Butterfly Man from Gloria Dei came with monarch chrysalis. Our kids had the chance to watch as one by one the chrysalis began to break open.

But it isn't like the butterfly just unzips the chrysalis and flies on out. You can watch as slowly the monarch's new long legs stretch and pull them forward out of the lining. Slowly they make their way to perch themselves on the outside of the shell. Then they sit and they wait for hours, even days. Their wings still wet and folded take time to fill, expand and dry. And when they are ready – they don't launch from the site and immediately fly their way across the country. Their first flights are short and tentative. They take great effort and the short bursts are often followed by long periods of rest and waiting. It takes them time to be able to do what they been have transformed to do – which is to bring new life to the world, taking on a tremendous journey across the country to secure the ongoing cycle of creation.

I really believe we have something to learn from this God created creature. Imagine if the butterfly, upon exiting the cocoon, immediately tried to return to what life was like as the

caterpillar it was prior to the cocoon. What if it looked at its new fragile wings and instead of wondering what they would become and make possible, longed for its little legs back to keep it safely on the ground? What if it was so busy grieving what had been left behind that it never dared to take its first tentative flight into its unknown future? What if it failed to believe in the gift of transformation?

Today we are breaking our way out of our cocoons. We may be tempted to look back and long for our familiar little legs back on the ground. We may be filled with some grief about what was in days past. But I think God is calling us to stop and stand for a moment on the edge of this cocoon and wonder at what might have been transformed for the better. Where is God at work transforming us to fly forward?

Instead of just attempting to launch ourselves forward, as individuals or as a church community, let us take a moment and allow the dampness of our grief to dry up a bit; to take a good look at ourselves and discover new wings. Let us dare to take a few new tentative flights, stopping often to rest and reflect and wonder at the journey that God has created us for now. How have we been transformed to bring new life to the world today? What tremendous journey are we being called into to secure the ongoing cycle of God's creation.

Our preaching text from 2 Corinthians today states "So if anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation: everything old has passed away; see everything has become new." EVERYTHING has become new. We believe in God who revealed Godself in Jesus. Jesus who died in fully human flesh, was laid in a tomb, a cocoon of darkness, and who rose again to new life, transforming all creation that we may no longer fear the future but may be confident in God's transforming ways. New life after death – impossible – but not for God. New life – out of this pandemic – impossible – but not for God.

We know that someday we will experience the same death as Christ, the same cocoon of darkness, AND the same resurrection to new life. In the meantime, as our text says "we live by faith, not by sight." Faith that is not afraid to let the past go, to dare to be transformed, to wonder, to stretch out our wings confident of the breath and wind of God carrying us forward in impossible ways that will bring new life to all of creation.

This is not just the truth of coming out of a pandemic; this is the truth of being Christian. Christ is always calling us to believe in new life; transformation though difficult, is possible and necessary.

Maya Angelou said "We delight in the beauty of the butterfly, but rarely admit the changes it has gone through to achieve that beauty." We delight in the beauty of God at work in the world but rarely admit the changes that this work may require us to go through. Following Christ into the future may mean we need to leave some little legs behind. It may require patience as we discover and learn what new fragile wings we have been given and wonder at the journey we are called to fly into. The old has passed away, behold everything has become new. You are made new in Christ. We as a Trinity community are made new in Christ.

Today is Trinity Sunday – we celebrate our belief in Father, Son and Holy Spirit – one God now and forever. I invite you to wear your butterfly pin in celebration of the new life our Triune God is bringing about in you. Take a moment to stand on the edge of your cocoon and wonder and pray “God fill out my wings, give me courage and direct my flight.” Then this butterfly pin is made of wildflower seed paper. Follow the directions on the back of your pin to plant it and then watch it grow. As you wait and wonder about what will sprout, take time to pray for us as a Trinity congregation. We do not yet know what God is at work growing here but we continue to plant and pray, confidently trusting the God of new life.