

Shaking Up

Message for North East United Methodist Church

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A butterfly starts life as a very small, round, oval or cylindrical egg. The coolest thing about butterfly eggs is that if you look close enough you can actually see the tiny caterpillar growing inside of them.



When the egg hatches, the caterpillar will start his work and eat the leaf it was born onto. When the caterpillar starts eating, it instantly starts growing and expanding. Their exoskeleton (skin) does not stretch or grow, so they grow by “molting” (shedding the outgrown skin) several times over.



As soon as a caterpillar is done growing and they have reached their full length/weight, they form themselves into a pupa, also known as a chrysalis.



Inside of the pupa, the caterpillar is rapidly changing. Within the chrysalis the old body parts of the caterpillar are undergoing a remarkable transformation, called 'metamorphosis,' ...Tissue, limbs and organs of a caterpillar have all been changed by the time the pupa is finished.

As soon as the butterfly has rested after coming out of the chrysalis...



...it will pump blood into the wings in order to get them working and then will begin to fly. Usually within a three or four-hour period, the butterfly will master flying and will search for a mate in order to reproduce and start the life-cycle all over again.

Many people over the years have seen similarities...



... in the life cycle of the butterfly and the spiritual journey God calls us to travel.

I want to share with you a few thoughts on this journey as we begin the New Year...

First comes our birth and early life, what would be in a butterfly's life the time of the caterpillar. Let's call this part of the process **ORIENTATION**. Orientation is when we develop likes and dislikes, personalities and habits, we begin to take on baggage that we carry with us for years, we take on attitudes and prejudices, our experiences lead us to react to certain situations in certain ways.

Over the course of time God challenges us, uproots us... His Word penetrates our hearts and convicts us of our sin, our shortcomings... God uses our experiences to teach us, guide us... to help us come to new understandings and help us to drop some of the baggage we have been carrying, changing a bit of the personality we have developed, letting go of the prejudices we have learned... This is our **DISORIENTATION**. Whenever we meet God our lives become disoriented as we see our lives in light of His goodness.

Now it is during this part of God's process of shaping and molding us that a lot can happen...

Often when we meet God, talk with Him, lean on Him, listen for His voice... and God speaks to our hearts... tells us what we need to do... what we need to change... we **RESIST**. We don't want to be in a cocoon... a chrysalis... we don't want to be disoriented, transformed... we like being a caterpillar... climbing slowly across the branches... we are comfortable...

Take Gideon for example. In the book of Judges we find Gideon living during a time when Israel has been overrun by the Midianites. The Midianites have ransacked Israel for 7 years... stealing, destroying crops... the Israelites have resorted to hiding in caves, and in the mountains.

And then... Judges 6: 11-16...

Then the angel of the LORD came and sat beneath the great tree at Ophrah, which belonged to Joash of the clan of Abiezer. Gideon son of Joash was threshing wheat at the bottom of a winepress to hide the grain from the Midianites. The angel of the LORD appeared to him and said, “Mighty hero, the LORD is with you!”

“Sir,” Gideon replied, “if the LORD is with us, why has all this happened to us? And where are all the miracles our ancestors told us about? Didn’t they say, ‘The LORD brought us up out of Egypt’? But now the LORD has abandoned us and handed us over to the Midianites.”

Then the LORD turned to him and said, “Go with the strength you have, and rescue Israel from the Midianites. I am sending you!”

“But Lord,” Gideon replied, “how can I rescue Israel? My clan is the weakest in the whole tribe of Manasseh, and I am the least in my entire family!”

The LORD said to him, “I will be with you. And you will destroy the Midianites as if you were fighting against one man.”

Did you hear Gideon resist?



“But Lord,” Gideon replied, “how can I rescue Israel?”

Gideon is not the only one who resists God’s call and directions...that resist the DISORIENTATION that takes place when God enters one’s life...

Moses – "*Send anyone else...*"

Jonah – Ran the other way

Ananias – "*But I have heard of this man...*"

Myself – From teaching to ministry

When God comes into our lives...into the life of our church...and suddenly everything is disoriented...things don't look like we expected...things are not what we are used to...What is it that God wants us to do?

It is during this time...during times when we shout like Gideon, "...*But Lord;*" cry out like Moses, "*Send someone else;*" or like Jonah simply run the other way...It is during such times we must **RECLAIM** our faith...

It is during such times that we must look up...we must attach ourselves to our God...hold tight...and allow God to surround us in a shell of His creation, a place like the caterpillar's chrysalis, where we can truly be transformed into something new...

When it seems God is leading us or leading our church in a new direction...perhaps in ways that are not comfortable...ways that do not go along with our orientation...We must turn to our foundation – the Bible, guidance, prayer...Do we, can we trust God?...Might God be moving?...Instructing?...Leading us to a new place?...Might God be molding us into something new...something that will burst forth from the shell surrounding it and fly?

Gideon turns to God...He makes offering, draws close to God, gets his heart right...Gideon says, "*Ok, perhaps this is the Lord.*"

This is what each of us has to do...We have to draw close to God...perhaps God is moving...perhaps it is God who is changing things...perhaps God is challenging us on our beliefs, on our way of living...on how we have always done things...

Judges 6: 17-24

Gideon replied, “If you are truly going to help me, show me a sign to prove that it is really the LORD speaking to me. Don’t go away until I come back and bring my offering to you.”

He answered, “I will stay here until you return.”

Gideon hurried home. He cooked a young goat, and with a basket of flour he baked some bread without yeast. Then, carrying the meat in a basket and the broth in a pot, he brought them out and presented them to the angel, who was under the great tree.

The angel of God said to him, “Place the meat and the unleavened bread on this rock, and pour the broth over it.” And Gideon did as he was told. Then the angel of the LORD touched the meat and bread with the tip of the staff in his hand, and fire flamed up from the rock and consumed all he had brought. And the angel of the LORD disappeared.

When Gideon realized that it was the angel of the LORD, he cried out, “Oh, Sovereign LORD, I’m doomed! I have seen the angel of the LORD face to face!”

“It is all right,” the LORD replied. “Do not be afraid. You will not die.” And Gideon built an altar to the LORD there and named it Yahweh-Shalom (which means “the LORD is peace”). The altar remains in Ophrah in the land of the clan of Abiezer to this day.

And as we draw close to God to make sure we are hearing correctly...to seek what God wants and not what we want...**REVELATION** occurs...God confirms what we are being called to do...

Judges 6: 25-26

That night the LORD said to Gideon, “Take the second bull from your father’s herd, the one that is seven years old. Pull down your father’s altar to Baal, and cut down the Asherah pole standing beside it. Then build an altar to the LORD your God here on this hilltop sanctuary, laying the stones carefully. Sacrifice the bull as a burnt offering on the altar, using as fuel the wood of the Asherah pole you cut down.”

This is the birth of the butterfly, its breaking out of the chrysalis to spread its wings and fly, can be compared to what happens if we are willing to listen to God, to follow God, to trust God during those times of disorientation...those times of difficulty...This is

REORIENTATION...God teaches us new ways...loving us just like we are but refusing to leave us that way...wanting us to be just like Jesus. God recreates us. As Paul writes in 2 Corinthians 5:17,

“Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: The old has gone, the new is here!”

But to experience reorientation, to experience being molded by God, accomplishing what God calls on us to do, receiving the blessings God has for us...we must **RISK**...Risk is required to go with God...

Gideon...



...Tears down the altar to Baal

Moses...Goes and confront Pharaoh

Jonah...Goes to Nineveh

Ananias...Goes and pray over the man who has been sent to destroy all Christians

Paul...Goes and preach Christ, the very thing he had spent years preaching against, to preach to the very ones who had sent him to persecute those of the faith

I think of my own story...Risk...selling home, seminary, leading the church...

***Nowhere in the Bible...does God show up...and say, keep doing what you're doing...great job...

God doesn't do that because none of us have arrived...God has much more for us to do...God has new revelations for us to understand...God wants to stretch us, move us, challenge us to be, to love, to live like His Son, Jesus...

God wants to shake us up...

Luke 4: 31-35 -

Then Jesus went to Capernaum, a town in Galilee, and taught there in the synagogue every Sabbath day. There, too, the people were amazed at his teaching, for he spoke with authority.

Once when he was in the synagogue, a man possessed by a demon—an evil spirit—began shouting at Jesus, “Go away! Why are you interfering with us, Jesus of Nazareth? Have you come to destroy us? I know who you are—the Holy One sent from God!”

Jesus cut him short. “Be quiet! Come out of the man,” he ordered. At that, the demon threw the man to the floor as the crowd watched; then it came out of him without hurting him further.

Jesus heals a man with an unclean Spirit – shaking him...



God is doing the same thing today...in us, in the church...He's shaking things up...Isn't that what Jesus did when He entered the Temple? Isn't that what God did to Paul on the road to Damascus? Isn't that what Christ did to Peter, asking him to leave his livelihood, his fishing boat on the shore, his family, and follow Him? Isn't that what God did to Gideon, to Moses, to Jonah, to Isaiah, to Jeremiah, to Hosea, to Esther, to David, to countless others throughout history? God shook things up in their lives...

Isaiah 43: 18-19 - ***“But forget all that—***

it is nothing compared to what I am going to do.

For I am about to do something new.

See, I have already begun! Do you not see it?”



God is moving in our midst...He is all around us...Will we listen? Will we allow Him to come into our lives, into our church, and turn everything around...

- Will we allow Him, as it says in 2 Corinthians 5...Will we allow Him to make us into a “*new creation...to have the old things pass away...and all things become new*” ...
- Will we believe that God has, as it says in Jeremiah 29:11, that God has plans for us...”*plans for good and not for disaster, [plans] to give you a future and a hope*” ...
- Will we believe Jesus when He says in Matthew 28:20, “*I am with you always, even to the end of the age.*”

Will we resist or will we take the risk and follow?

ORIENTATION, DISORIENTATION, REINORIENTATION.

This is a process that we as Christians travel throughout our lives as God (1) meets us where we are, (2) shows us what we could be, and (3) molds us into something new and beautiful.

In this New Year, when God DISORIENTS our lives, stops in and disrupts our thinking, how we perceive the world, what our responsibilities are, makes us look at our behavior, attitude, speech, future...Will we RESIST or will we RECLAIM our faith, trust in our God, and allow Him to lead us to a fresh REVELATION in this new year, to REORIENT us so we might become more like His Son? Will we take the RISK and be made into a new creation?

In other words, in this New Year, like those first disciples, will we follow God and allow Him to SHAKE us UP?