

Beginning to Say Goodbye John 20:19-22

According to Google dictionary, metamorphosis is the process of transformation from an immature form to an adult form in two or more distinct stages. This definition is applied primarily for insects or amphibians. However, I believe it also applies to our spiritual journey with God. Scripture makes it very clear that when we discover the mystery of Christ for the very first time, we become like infants again finding nourishment in the milk of God's Holy Spirit. The curious part of metamorphosis for me is the transformation. It includes saying goodbye to an old identity and hello to a brand new world. A great example is transforming from a caterpillar to a butterfly. Another example is moving from a follower of Jesus to a leading Disciple of Christ. Let me explain.

In our Christian year, we are still in the season of Easter. I know that for many Easter has come and gone. However, Easter Sunday is only the beginning of a fifty day journey. By celebrating only day, Easter Sunday, we have only recognized that Jesus didn't stay dead but the Disciples have scattered. Fear has pulled the Disciples away from society and withdrawn into their old self as they lock themselves in the cocoon of the upper room. They don't want to end up like Jesus. How did they ever get themselves in

this situation? Life was so much easier. How do I return to who I was before I met Jesus. Who am I now?

I would have a million questions running through my mind as I tried to sort out what to do next. Should I stay, go home, start a new life somewhere else? It is in the solitude of this cocoon that these Disciples realize they are not the same people they were before they met Jesus. Something is strangely different. I remember going off to seminary, being on my own for the very first time. I was excited that my freedom had finally arrived. It didn't take long for my anxiety and fear level to rise when I realized I was my own leader. I had to make my own decisions and live with the consequences. My first trek home was different. I think it was my first awakening to the fact that I was seeing my home and family through a different set of eyes. I was beginning to say goodbye to my "High School" self and hello to myself as an emerging adult.

The Disciples were beginning to see the world with new eyes as well. They are suddenly realizing that they are no longer at a spiritually infant. Now, they were in the Spiritual cocoon of a real transformation. What were they to do now? If they followed Jesus, walked out the door, and continued the ministry what would happen? I believe their fear is more of the unknown future. How were they to lead others without Jesus' physically there mentoring them. Jesus knew they were ready to take lead and build

his church, but they didn't have confidence in themselves. I recently found a quote from the 2000 Oprah Winfrey show that says, "We can't become stronger unless we have something to test us." The Disciples were being tested which was resulting in their own metamorphosis. The time has arrived for the Disciples to let go of the physical body of Jesus and embrace the new leader in themselves. I believe this is why Jesus' first appearance comes with the breath of the Holy Spirit.

According to John's Gospel, when Jesus appeared, the Disciples were filled with joy. Their leader was back. Life was normal again. Then, Jesus breathed on them and said, "Receive the Holy Spirit." Jesus knew this time was limited and another goodbye was coming soon. The gift of the Holy Spirit was the beginning of Jesus' goodbye. Jesus is now in the cocoon with the Disciples. It's only a matter of time before these caterpillars will be soaring into ministry. I've always wondered what really happens inside the cocoon. What is it that causes one thing to become something entirely different? In our spiritual journey, what happens inside of us is special and unique. Scriptures do not spell out for us the exact steps that took place for each of these disciples to find the courage leave the locked room. What we do know, is God was the acting agent of the transformation.

I find myself transforming into something. I'm not quite sure what that something is yet, but I know in order to grow into that person I have to let go of the comfortable part of me. For example, leaving my small comfortable town of 300 people wasn't easy. I liked being comfortable, and at the same time, I enjoyed getting to know the new me as a servant for God. While it was hard, it was the best thing that ever happened to me. I found myself in positions of leadership that was frightening, but in the pit of my stomach it felt right. This was the beginning of a new me. Now, I'm facing a new challenge as a leader. You have played a great part of helping me metamorphosize. But there is still more work to be done.

Our journey together is limited, but it isn't over yet. Over the next few weeks, we have an opportunity to become the cocoon, be transformed, and fly into new ministries with confidence, strength, and a new self. It will have it's celebrations and it's challenges. We will laugh, cry, vent, and celebrate. But this transformation is not about me leaving and a new pastor coming. This transformation is about God's work in your own soul. This is your journey with God. There has been something happen in your life where you were awakened to God's Holy Spirit. Either someone made sure you were introduced to God or you discovered God on your own. The initial encounter is only the starting point. The next step is to enter the locked

room with the Disciples and see how God can help you grow in your faith as you morph from your cocoon.

How do we enter the room with the Disciples to see Jesus? There's a story I'd like to share:

How to Become a Butterfly

"Hope for the Flowers" by Trina Paulus is the story of a caterpillar named Stripe who watched fellow caterpillars climbing and stepping on and over others with no idea about what was at the top. When he asked others what was at the top, the answer was "No one knows but it must be awfully good because everybody's going there." "Stripe tried for a while and even met a lovely female caterpillar named

Yellow and they tried together and gave up together. Stripe tried again, and one day, as Yellow was waiting for Stripe to come back, she discovered a grey caterpillar struggling to get out of a cocoon. She offered to help,

But the grey caterpillar said, "No, I have to do this to become a butterfly." Yellow asked, "What is a Butterfly?" It is what you are meant to become.

It flies with beautiful wings and joins the earth to heaven. It drinks only nectar from the flowers and carries the seeds of love from one flower to another. Without butterflies, the world would soon have few flowers.

Yellow asked, "How does one become a butterfly?"

The answer was "You must want to fly so much that you are willing to give up being a caterpillar."

Amen.