

Easter Sunday 4/21/19
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Oh, what a metamorphosis!
You'd hardly recognize this place 24 hours ago –
it was dark, stripped bare from Good Friday,
showing the emptiness of our lives without Jesus.
There wasn't a single flower or butterfly in sight.
But now, well, now it's Easter and we're bursting with life.
What a metamorphosis!

It's just like these butterflies we see all around us here,
there and up there. . .
Just like these precious little creatures of God
go through the process of metamorphosis
from egg to caterpillar into the chrysalis to finally – butterfly!
Just like butterflies emerge from the little *tomb* of the chrysalis
to spread their wings and soar into fullness of life.

That, my friends, is the arc of the story we celebrate this Easter.
As St. Luke tells it, those faithful women –
Mary Magdalene, Joanna, Mary the mother of James, and the others –
bravely trekked to the tomb of their friend Jesus
with spices to pay their final respects,
to perform their last great act of devotion:
preparing his body for burial.

But when they got there, they couldn't find the body.
Can you imagine how perplexed they must have felt?
And then terrified, as two people – or were they angels? – in dazzling white
say exactly what's written in the fine print here on our butterflies:
“Why do you look for the living among the dead?
He is not here, but has risen!”
(No wonder it also says, in bigger print, “ALLELULIA!”)

Now those women must've been not only faithful and brave,
but smart too.

Because they remember all the things Jesus taught them.
It dawns on them that they don't honor Jesus by hanging out
in the dark, empty tomb,
but by going out into the world telling others the Good News.
How Jesus emerged from that tomb into new life.

But do you think those eleven remaining disciples
got it the first time they heard it?
Nah, they dismissed it as idle chatter. Gossip.
Until, at least Peter had the good sense
to follow the women's example and go see for himself.
And, sure enough, he was amazed.

So you see we're in good company if we're amazed or confused
by the Good News of Easter.
If we're ever terrified or just plain scared in this life.
Or if we think people don't take us seriously or listen to us.
Even if we feel as if we're stuck in a dark place.

Because Jesus who brought them into new life that first Easter,
brings us to new life today.
No matter what we carry with us, however heavy or slight it may seem,
Jesus can work with and through it
to help us emerge into the fullness of life God created us to enjoy.

There's a reason we see butterflies every which way we look today,
and NOT caterpillars.
Think about it.
Caterpillars are an essential stage in the life cycle that brings us the butterfly.
You can't have a butterfly without first a caterpillar.
So thank God for the humble caterpillar.

But I still doubt we'll decorate the church with caterpillars any time soon.
Caterpillars just aren't very aspirational.
Caterpillars never leave their comfort zone –
they find a place, a plant, that feels safe and stay there. Kinda' stuck.

I already know what that feels like; don't you?

What we need is the promise that's it's ok to venture forth,
even into the dark places of our lives.

Those places don't have to feel like death.

They can be – well, they can be more like a chrysalis –
where our lives are broken down then put back together.

Where we finally come to terms
with our need for God's love in Christ Jesus.

Where we experience not just metamorphosis,
but resurrection to new life.

And when we get there, we know it's too good to keep to ourselves.

So like the butterfly, we soar,

showering the world with glorious little glimpses of hope and light.

Like those women on that first Easter morning,

we support one another and then go tell others what we've found.

Yes, we'll fortify ourselves here with the nectar of Good News
in Word and music, each other and beauty all around.

Then we'll fly out those doors,

spreading our wings to embrace others in the love of God in Christ Jesus.

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