

Nothing but the Truth

Sermon notes for the sermon
Given by Rev. Dr. Gregory B. Young
On Sunday, June 5, 2011

Many of you send me emails that contain stories, jokes and insights. This past week I received such an email and upon reading it I felt compelled to share it with you. It was a story that told of someone who in walking through the garden came upon a butterfly just beginning to emerge from its cocoon. The person watched as the butterfly struggled to break the membranes holding it captive. The tiny sac would wiggle and shake until a little bit more of the butterfly, trapped inside, would be revealed. Getting halfway through the process the butterfly suddenly stopped from exhaustion. The person watched and for several minutes noticed not activity. Sensing that the butterfly had exhausted all of its energy the kind person gently reached out and worked to complete the process of freeing the butterfly from the confined quarters of the cocoon to the bright and spacious world of God's creation. What happened next has become a lesson for all of us to learn.

The person watched as the butterfly clung to a leaf, its wings slowly unfolding. When they were fully extended the person noticed that there was something wrong. The butterfly's wings were not fully developed. As the butterfly struggled to fly off into the air its wings could not support it and it fell to the ground. The stranger gently

picked up the butterfly and brought it to a friend who knew all about such things. The friend explained that by helping the butterfly emerge from the cocoon, the stranger had unintentionally doomed it to have undeveloped wings. The friend explained that the butterfly would soon die all because this person had tried to help.

Sometimes we look at the difficulties of our lives and question why is God either doing this to me or why God is allowing this to happen to me. Why am I ill with this disease? Why did I lose my job? Why does my friend treat me so badly? Why do bad things happen to people who are trying to be good? Many of the difficulties of our lives we bring upon ourselves: poor diet and exercise; bad work habits; not doing the things that cultivate a good, strong relationship. Other times there are circumstances beyond our control that cause us pain and difficulty: corporate down-sizing; mosquito bites or genetic abnormalities or infections; people change and with the change can come a changed relationship. If we take the time to look back upon the difficulties of our lives we come to see that through faith in God they have strengthened us for the present moment.

Living through difficulties gives us compassion for those around us who are facing similar things. Living through struggles in life brings us wisdom and deepens our faith. When Jesus told his disciples that he must go to Jerusalem and be rejected, beaten and put to death, Peter tried to stop him. When James and John approached Jesus asking to be his commanders, Jesus shared with them that they must first be baptized with the baptism that he was going to receive. The

whole truth about God's incarnation in Jesus is that Jesus was born to die on a cross to restore us to God in love. That is the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth. In dying to ourselves with the water of baptism we rise to God's kingdom, here and now, in the resurrected body of Jesus the Christ. That is the truth. It was the truth to which Jesus pointed for Peter, James and John and all the others to see. It was the truth to which Jesus referred when he interrogated by Pilate. It was the truth that became reality as the sins of the world brought Jesus to hang on a cross on a hillside just outside of Jerusalem. Finally, it is the truth that reveals to us God's love and reconnects us to the true source of all life.

Struggles in life with come and threaten to do us in; to wash us away as quickly as a tsunami wave washes away hundreds or an earthquake swallows thousands. The only thing that lasts forever is God and God's love for all creation. That is our hope. As we faithfully seek to live through life's difficulties we come to see just how deep God's love is for us and just how much we can place out trust in the one who gives us life, gives it to us abundantly and forever.