

Are We There Yet?

1. Warm up: Jeff began Sunday's sermon with a story about ice fishing. Some of us love to fish, while others of us don't get it. For those who love to fish, tell us about the best fish you ever caught – and please explain (for those of us who don't get it) what lures you to fishing (pun intended). ☺
2. In the Old Testament, God often delivered messages to Israel through prophets. The New Testament tells us that the gift of prophecy is something God still gives believers. Acts 2:17 says, "I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh, and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy. . . . Even upon slaves, both men and women . . . , I will pour out my Spirit, and they shall prophesy." Acts 2:17-18. Tell us about a time when you feel you received a direct message from God for yourself or someone else.
3. The prophetic message Jeff felt led to share with us on our church's 34th anniversary was, "Consider the butterfly." Although Jeff focused on what that meant for our life together as a congregation, the three stages of the life of a butterfly also offers a great way for us to reflect on our individual lives. The butterfly begins as a beautiful caterpillar, then goes through a chrysalis/hibernation phase during which it encases itself in a cocoon-like structure, but eventually emerges as a breathtakingly beautiful creature able to spread its wings and fly. During chrysalis, an outside observer might be tempted to think nothing is happening – maybe even that the caterpillar died. But inside, an amazing transformation is happening.
 - a. The caterpillar represents a time in life that was beautiful, but before we reached our full potential or destiny. What part of your life does that remind you of?
 - b. The chrysalis represents a difficult time in our life – a time during which we may even have felt stuck – but during which God was/is preparing us for something far greater. When in your life have you experienced chrysalis?
 - c. The butterfly represents the fullness of our destiny when we reach levels God dreamed we could someday achieve. Are you there yet? If so, describe what that looks like for you. If you're not there yet, what phase do you feel you're in?
4. On Sunday, Jeff urged us to use the phases of the butterfly's existence to better understand where our church is in our process of growth and development. He suggested that we began as one thing, that we're destined to ultimately become something even greater, but that right now we're slogging through that difficult, awkward in-between phase of chrysalis (transformation and preparation). Let's reflect on each phase. First, our caterpillar phase. We were founded in 1990 as a "church for ALL people," but because of religious and cultural prejudice we became a church of refuge for LGBTQ people – not by choice, but out of necessity.
 - a. Let's remember what it was like "back in the day" to be LGBTQ in an unaffirming church. If you experienced that, describe what it was like.

- b. To give newer folks a glimpse of what it was like to be part of LifeJourney back in the day, Jeff told about the bold pray-in protest we did at the Indiana Statehouse in the early 2000s. When you heard that story, how did it make you feel about our church?
 - c. If you were part of our congregation back when we were almost exclusively a church of refuge for LGBTQ people, driven together by persecution, finding life in Christ and taking a bold stand for LGBTQ justice, describe for others what that era in the life of our church was like. Do you miss that era? Why or why not?
5. Jeff suggested that our ultimate destiny as a church – our butterfly phase – is to become a Revelation 7:9 church. Revelation 7:9 describes a vision of heaven where “a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages” stand before the throne of God worshiping together in perfect unity. Read Revelation 7:9-17 as printed on p. 3.
- a. As followers of Jesus, we’re not supposed to wait till we get to heaven to start living into the heavenly vision. Jesus taught us to pray, “Thy will be done, Thy kingdom come, on earth as it is in heaven.” Matthew 6:10. In his final prayer in the Garden of Gethsemane before his crucifixion, Jesus said, “I ask on behalf of those who will believe in me . . . that they may all be one. As you, Father, are in me and I am in you, may they also be in us, so that the world may believe that you have sent me.” John 17:20. The world needs to see something that’s real, something that’s transcendent. If Jesus isn’t great enough to help us overcome our petty human differences, why should anybody believe in what he or we have to say? With all that has changed in American culture, our church now has a real shot at living into our original vision to be a church for ALL people – to actually becoming an earthly anticipation of the heavenly reality. We have a shot at modeling for central Indiana something miraculous, something beautiful, something refreshing. Does this vision of our future resonate with you? Why or why not?
 - b. How close do you think we are to breaking out of chrysalis into our butterfly phase? Explain your answer.
6. Jeff suggested that we’ve been in our chrysalis phase for a number of years now. Chrysalis is hard because change is hard and takes time to take hold.
- a. Read the National Geographic description of chrysalis on p. 3. What insights does that offer for us as a church right now?
 - b. The chrysalis process does not result in a total transformation. Instead it creates a dynamic blend of both the old and the new. What are some old things from our church’s caterpillar phase that we must always hold onto? What are some new things our church needs to embrace to rise to meet the fullness of our future?

Revelation 7:9-12 and 16-17

9 After this I looked, and there was a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, robed in white, with palm branches in their hands. ¹⁰They cried out in a loud voice, saying, 'Salvation belongs to our God who is seated on the throne, and to the Lamb!'

¹¹And all the angels stood around the throne and around the elders and the four living creatures, and they fell on their faces before the throne and worshipped God, ¹²singing, 'Amen! Blessing and glory and wisdom and thanksgiving and honor and power and might be to our God for ever and ever! Amen.'

¹⁶ They will hunger no more, and thirst no more; the sun will not strike them, nor any scorching heat; ¹⁷ for the Lamb at the center of the throne will be their shepherd, and he will guide them to springs of the water of life, and God will wipe away every tear from their eyes.'

National Geographic

“Scientists are only beginning to grasp the miracle of what goes on in a chrysalis. New research shows that the makeover is a mix of destruction of old ways of being and thinking combined with brand new ways of being and thinking. Certain cells die, and body parts atrophy. Meanwhile, other cells, in place since birth, rapidly expand. The adult emerges completely remodeled, capable of flight and possessing a completely rewired brain.”