

Hebrews 4:14 – 5:10 **Jesus Intercedes for Us**

¹⁴Therefore, since we have a great high priest who has ascended into heaven, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold firmly to the faith we profess.

¹⁵For we do not have a high priest who is unable to empathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are—yet he did not sin.

¹⁶Let us then approach God's throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need.

¹Every high priest is selected from among the people and is appointed to represent the people in matters related to God, to offer gifts and sacrifices for sins.

²He is able to deal gently with those who are ignorant and are going astray, since he himself is subject to weakness.

³This is why he has to offer sacrifices for his own sins, as well as for the sins of the people.

⁴And no one takes this honor on himself, but he receives it when called by God, just as Aaron was.

⁵In the same way, Christ did not take on himself the glory of becoming a high priest. But God said to him, "You are my Son; today I have become your Father."

⁶And he says in another place, "You are a priest forever, in the order of Melchizedek."

⁷During the days of Jesus' life on earth, he offered up prayers and petitions with fervent cries and tears to the one who could save him from death, and he was heard because of his reverent submission.

⁸Son though he was, he learned obedience from what he suffered

⁹and, once made perfect, he became the source of eternal salvation for all who obey him

¹⁰and was designated by God to be high priest in the order of Melchizedek.

Good Morning, my Sisters and Brothers in Christ. Do you have a reason to praise Him this morning? Can you praise Him for waking you up? Can you praise Him for starting you on your way? Can you praise Him for another opportunity to use your life to bring Him glory? If you can praise Him this morning, then make a joyful noise for God. Praise Him with the clapping of your hands; praise Him with the stomping of your feet; praise Him with shouts of praise. Praise Him with your tambourine. Let everything that has breath Praise the Lord! Just in case you are wondering... this joy that I have the world did not give it to me, and the world cannot take it away.

For the past two weeks I have been inviting us to consider who and what we could be as individuals and a congregation if we were to pray with **Shameless Audacity** and believe that any positive **Transformation Requires Prayer**. I wish to build on that concept this morning by asking you to consider the boldness required for Transformation. Transformation as defined by Merriam Webster on line dictionary:

"a complete or major change in someone's or something's appearance, form, etc."¹

Are you willing to imagine who and what we could be if we were willing to allow God to transform us into what He would have us to be?

As we consider this letter written to a 2nd generation church that was being persecuted for daring to believe that Jesus was the Messiah, the long awaited Savior, the Son of a Living God I want us to focus on three phrases that served as directions to the first hearers of this word and provide that and more to us in the 21st century as we have history to support the truth of what it says.

let us hold firmly to the faith we profess
 approach God's throne of grace with confidence
 receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need

¹ <http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/transformation>

Allow me to link this back to the Kid's Time and the Butterfly story and work with this topic:

ARE YOU WILLING TO DO WHAT IT TAKES TO BE A BUTTERFLY?

SHALL WE PRAY!

God of heaven and earth thank you for sending your Word in a new and different way. Help me to preach this Word with the power and clarity needed for the moment. Father, please help your people to find and hear the message that is for them right here and right now. Do what only you can do – change and transform hearts and minds to be pleasing to you. Bless us in this teaching moment. Give us wings to fly and spread your Word. In the name of Jesus the Christ, Your Son we pray. AMEN and AMEN.

ARE YOU WILLING TO DO WHAT IT TAKES TO BE A BUTTERFLY?

Most of you know that I collect butterflies and like most collections mine has a story or two. The story I will share this morning is taken from a book published in 1972 titled: *HOPE FOR THE FLOWERS!*

It all starts when Stripe, the main character, first hatches from an egg. He begins his life by eating the leaf he was born on. He realizes that there must be "more" to life than just eating leaves. He senses there must be a way to get up into the sky. He searches for a way and finds himself at the base of a pillar made up of caterpillars. They are all struggling to get up into the sky as well. Here he meets Yellow who also wants to get up into the sky by climbing to the top of the pillar. But she feels bad about what must be done to achieve this goal. You have to literally step on and climb over all the other caterpillars who are also trying to reach the top of the pillar. The two of them eventually decide to stop climbing and go back down the pillar. They live together for a while. But Stripe's curiosity and unrest overcome him and he decides that he must get to the top of the pillar. Stripe says good-bye to Yellow. He focuses, adapts, and drives to reach the top, and eventually he succeeds at being on the top of the caterpillar pillar. This results in disillusionment, as he takes in a vast vista of other caterpillar pillars. Is this all there is at the top? He has not really gotten in to the sky. He just has a view of other caterpillars struggling to reach the top of their respective caterpillar pillars. Yellow, however, has followed her instincts, continues to eat and then spins a cocoon. She eventually emerges from the cocoon transformed into a butterfly and flies into the sky effortlessly. She has found the real answer to the feeling that there must be more to life than eating leaves, and who caterpillars really are. She is waiting for the disillusioned Stripe as he descends the pillar and eventually reaches the ground again. She shows Stripe her empty cocoon, and he eventually realizes what he needs to do. Stripe makes a

cocoon of his own. Yellow waits for him. Stripe emerges transformed into a butterfly, and they fly off together²

ARE YOU WILLING TO DO WHAT IT TAKES TO BE A BUTTERFLY?

a butterfly spends the necessary time as a caterpillar before becoming a butterfly

if you wish to transform others you must be transformed

¹⁵ Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth. (KJV)

¹⁵ Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a worker who does not need to be ashamed and who correctly handles the word of truth (NIV)

a butterfly lets go of the old to embrace the new

¹⁴ If my people, which are called by my name, shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways; then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin, and will heal their land.

***12** Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God—this is your true and proper worship. ²Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will.*

a caterpillar was born to be a butterfly

in order to meet this one goal

must act like a caterpillar – eat, spin a cocoon, digest itself,
become something new

a butterfly has a job that a caterpillar cannot do
over 100 types of butterflies in north America
each was a caterpillar first
pollinates flowers – food for others – adds beauty

² http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hope_for_the_Flowers#Plot_summary

27 Now you are the body of Christ, and each one of you is a part of it. 28 And God has placed in the church first of all apostles, second prophets, third teachers, then miracles, then gifts of healing, of helping, of guidance, and of different kinds of tongues. 29 Are all apostles? Are all prophets? Are all teachers? Do all work miracles? 30 Do all have gifts of healing? Do all speak in tongues? Do all interpret? 31 Now eagerly desire the greater gifts.

a butterfly creates another caterpillar to continue the life cycle

18 Then Jesus came to them and said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. 19 Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, 20 and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age."

ARE YOU WILLING TO DO WHAT IT TAKES TO BE A BUTTERFLY?

let us hold firmly to the faith we profess

approach God's throne of grace with confidence

receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need

It is the Sunday before the Monday designated to celebrate the life and legacy of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. It is difficult to be a Baptist pastor and preacher, an American History student and teacher, and a child of the Civil Rights Movement and not want to quote Dr. King. I want to remind those who lived through it and teach those who know it only as a history lesson or sound byte during Black History Month that having a dream is a starting point in any process for change.

Think for a moment about three transformations that occurred in the life of MLK Jr. **First** his father changed his name after he was five years old.

- ability to name yourself held value
- the name chosen meant something
- the name was designed to reflect your place in the world

Second, changed his career path

- doctor
- lawyer
- preacher

Third, changed his focus

preacher to leader

By the summer of 1963 these personal transformations and others lead to the words many of us know by heart...

I have a dream that one day every valley shall be exalted, every hill and mountain shall be made low, the rough places will be made plain, and the crooked places will be made straight, and the glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together.

This is our hope. This is the faith that I go back to the South with. With this faith we will be able to hew out of the mountain of despair a stone of hope. With this faith we will be able to transform the jangling discords of our nation into a beautiful symphony of brotherhood. With this faith we will be able to work together, to pray together, to struggle together, to go to jail together, to stand up for freedom together, knowing that we will be free one day.³

I believe MLK Jr was right when he told us and the world that it would take faith to change things. I believe that faith, PRAYER. GRACE AND MERCY still changes things.

³ http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2012/01/16/i-have-a-dream-speech-text-martin-luther-king-jr_n_1207734.html