

April 22, 2018 (Third Sunday of Easter)
Emerge "Open: Into the Light"
Genesis 17:1-7, 15-27
The Rev. Lynn P. Lampman

Her name is Rosie, she is seven years old, and she stands three foot tall. She lives at the Tuscon Botanical Gardens. Some say she is a "amorphophallus titanium, others simply call her corpse flower. News is, she is set to bloom anytime now. According to some, she's an early bloomer, coming into flower on the early side of the seven to ten years it typically takes for a corpse flower to blossom. Are you set to bloom or are you blossoming? Do you see yourself as an early bloomer, so to speak or do you see yourself as a late bloomer. Yet, bloom none-the-less you will. And then, the truth for it, is also true as well as for us is - sometimes we make a stink in our blooming! It was so hard to finally get there, that when we bloom it comes with significant impact. As if to say, "I just want to make sure you don't miss my blooming."

Nature, over and over again, and God, over and over again shows us the pattern of transformation. First, there is gestation, then there is emergence, and then comes transformation.

Jesus has left the grave. The butterfly has left the cocoon. That was April 1 and 8th respectively. Thus, we have an emergent Jesus and butterfly, so, you may ask. "What's next?" The answer: Abraham and Sarah and a butterfly attached to the cocoon with folded wings.

The butterfly cannot and does not fly off upon immediate emergence from the cocoon. God does not immediately send the Holy Spirit to fall upon the disciples but rather fifty days

after Jesus resurrection. Abraham and Sarah waited 25 years: from God's promise of a son, to the actual birth of their son Isaac. So, what's up with all that waiting?

Whether we like it or not (most don't) we have a faith that asks us to periodically wait. And thus, today, we will look at how Sarah and Abraham made it through not their three days, not even fifty days of waiting, not even 7-10 years, but rather 25 years worth of waiting.

When God came to announce to Abraham and Sarah that they were to have a son in their old age, Abraham was 75 years old. That's fascinating and mind blowing right, but that is just the beginning. Nothing happened for fifteen years (talk about waiting right) and then God visited once again when Abraham was 90 to remind him of the promise. Ten years later, when Abraham was 100, Sarah gave birth to their son Isaac. Jesus left the grave behind, so did Abraham and Sarah – for all, new life and transformation came!

Now, let's not over romanticize Abraham and Sarah. At first, upon hearing she would bear a son in their old age Sarah and Abraham laughed in God's face. And then, we have Abraham, who God comes to at 90 years old, and speaks to him in such a way that God reminds him he has not been blameless by any means, but needs to be moving in that direction, if the promise is to come to be (co-partners with God).

Abram and Sarai, can't quite believe that one butterfly will come from their cocoon, much less many as God has promised! Yet, God asks Abram to rename his wife – from Sarai to Sarah, from “my princess” to “the mother of nations”, and to rename and see himself anew as well. To go from being identified as Abram “exalted father” to Abraham “the father of many”.

What an ego Abram's father must have had, he names his son in such a way; that people look at him. He was not talking about his son being an exalted father, but rather his son Abraham had an exalted father, named Terah, in other words he names his son, so people would remember and think ever so highly of him. Yet, God turned that misfortunate naming into magnificent truth, he would not be seen merely as his father's son, but be called Abraham, a person in his own right, with his own identity, who would be known for all times as "Abraham", meaning "the father of many". God gave him a name that said something about him, who he was, not who he was in relation to someone else. In other words, not be known by the name others around us, call us. We all need to go by the name God gives us, the name which indicates our potential and future.

Then, dear Sarah, the one who failed to take God at his word, who didn't believe the promise that she would have a son in her old age. Thus, she takes matters into her own hands. She arranges for her husband to sleep with one of his other wives (Hagar) as her surrogate to make sure she indeed has a son. He too must not of believed in the promise God gave, so he too had make sure it happened.

Been there, done that! No, I don't mean my father named me Lynn to exalt himself. Nor did I arrange for a surrogate, no I choose not to have children. What I am talking about is what we all do – failing to believe that God has something better, bigger and way more transformation for us and through us to the world than we can ever imagine or even trust.

Yet, that does not stop God from still banking on us. Though we must be aware we cannot move into our new identity and mission, if we do not work toward trying to be blameless

.Which I think is another way of saying, staying open and waiting with the expectation transformation is coming, and that in the fullness of time, we will move from exercising our muscles through the pumping our wings to flying.

The real truth is, we probably would never ever dare to come out of our cocoon, the comfort zone, the familiar, into the unknown, unless we believed we had a new name, new identity, and new mission. We would not emerge from the womb, but rather chose to stay in tomb, unless we knew we would get what we needed to take off.

God gave the three-fold combo: new name, new identity, and new mission. Because all three are needed, if we are to be able to spread our wings, take off, and fly.

What name have you been given? Are you seeing yourself only in relation to your last name, who you come from, what you have inherited, what family you were born into.

Yet, God reminds Abraham with his new name, that his and our new name is not there to indicate our a blood line, but a destiny.

Abram and Sarai's vision for themselves was too small. They just hoped for one kid. God decided it was way too tiny an identity and mission for them. Rather, they were to be the father and mother of Muslims, Jews, and Christians to name just a few, for all time no less!

Transformation may look incremental, but it is nothing less than major. In and through transformation we see ourselves

differently than we did before, we claim a new identity and belonging, and we fully take on a new mission.

The emergence has begun, now we stay perched, waiting for the unfurling. Question is, are we open to the possibility of flight, would we be willing, when the time comes, to pump our wings, and let the flow of energy enliven our veins, so that in the end we are ready to carry out the mission God has for us.

The spiritual life is not a destiny, but a journey. Are we ready to move, spread our wings, and fly? Is the time of waiting done?

Jesus left the grave behind. In time, will each and every one of us say, so will I? I sure hope so, for the transformation of the world depends on it. Let's make a stink, let's bloom! Amen!