

Lesson 46: BUTTERFLIES *Papilio* by Chauncey Giles

INTRODUCTION:

Everything in nature is a symbol of something. That's the way the Lord has created the world. Today we will focus on a certain little creature, and think about what this creature shows us about life. Today's creature is something that makes a huge change during its life. Can you guess what it is? It actually changes from a creature that can only crawl slowly on the ground to one that can fly, which is pretty amazing if you think about it.

[Show pictures of butterflies.]

Yes, a butterfly is an amazing little creature. It makes such an incredible change during its life that people have long thought of it as a symbol of change. How does it make this change? (Let them describe to you the cocoon process.)

When a caterpillar changes into a butterfly, it is still the same creature that it was. A new animal didn't sneak into that cocoon and throw out the old animal. But it has changed so much that it seems like a new creature. When a butterfly comes out of its cocoon, it has begun a totally new stage of its life – you might say it has begun a new life altogether. Can you think of a way that a person goes through such a change that they begin a totally new life?

(See if they mention the passing from one life into the next after death. If not, don't tell them yet, but continue...)

PROJECT: Butterfly Paintings

I want you now, while I talk more about butterflies, to look at these pictures and choose a butterfly to create on your paper with paints. Or, if you like, you may make up your own butterfly, because I'm sure that in heaven there are butterflies unlike any that we see on earth. You can make a picture of your butterfly by grouping dots of color on a page, into shapes or into rows. If you want to make it like one of the butterflies in these pictures, look at the patterns, and try to make the same kind of shapes with dots. If you want to sketch your butterfly lightly with pencil first, you may. **(Get them started, doing a little demonstrating if necessary. Then encourage them to work quietly as you read more.)**

Supplies:

- Pencils
- White paper
- Q-tips
- Tempera paints in many colors, and lids or dishes to put paint into
- Newspaper, to put underneath it all
- Colorful pictures of butterflies, for inspiration

Procedure:

Paintings of butterflies can be created by dipping Q-tips into paint and making dots on the paper, putting the dots into rows or groups to create a pattern. Children can reproduce the pattern of a real butterfly, referring to the pictures you have brought in, or make up their own. If it is easier for them, they may first sketch the shape of a butterfly lightly with pencil.

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READING:

This is a little story written long ago by a New Church man named Chauncey Giles. Listen to how he compares the life a caterpillar and butterfly to a change that a person goes through.

Now read “Papilio” by the Rev. Chauncey Giles. (See attached story.)

DISCUSSION:

So the big change of a caterpillar turning into a butterfly is like the big change when a person dies and starts a new life in heaven. A caterpillar gets a whole new body while in its cocoon – a body that can do things that it never could do before, like fly and drink the nectar from flowers.

And a person who has died gets a new, spiritual body. When you die someday, you will still be the same person. But your new spiritual body will be much better and stronger than the one you had on earth, and you will be able to do things that you never could before, like suddenly appear in a place that you want to go, without having to travel there.

Now, even though a butterfly’s life is better as a butterfly, was its life as a caterpillar important? Yes it was. Do you know why? During its life as a caterpillar, it was eating and growing and gaining strength. Without the food it ate as a caterpillar, it would not have had the energy to turn into a butterfly.

Even though life in heaven will be better, life on this earth is very important. In this life we do a lot of important growing and learning. Learning is like getting food for our mind. Without this learning and growing, we would not be ready to choose to become angels in heaven. People live for different amounts of time on this earth. Some live to a very old age before they die, and others die when they are babies. So not everyone needs the same amount of time on this earth, but everyone needs some time to gather some things from this world before they go to the next, even if it’s only a few sights or sounds or touches that a baby would experience. All the learning and experiences of this world act as food for our minds.

There are other big changes that a person goes through in this life on earth that are like a caterpillar changing into a butterfly.

When you are young, you do a lot of important learning. That is like a caterpillar eating and eating to store energy for the future. Then someday you will start to take what you’ve learned and make your own decisions about it. You will take charge of your own life, and use the knowledge you’ve gained to do something important that you’ve chosen. That is like becoming a new person, and like a butterfly being born new out of its cocoon.

And when you are young, you are taught things about the Lord, taking that knowledge in like a caterpillar takes in the green leaves it likes to eat. But someday you will decide for yourself that you want to know the Lord even better, and want to live the way the Lord wishes because you see that it will make the world a better place. When this happens, you have become a new person who can achieve new and better things. Like a butterfly, you will begin a new life.

Papilio

The Story of His Resurrection

By Rev. Chauncy Giles

One warm and lovely summer day, I was sitting under a tree in a garden fragrant with many flowers. The flies were darting about in the sunshine, the bees were busily flying from blossom to blossom gathering honey for their hives. The ants were hurrying in and out of their holes struggling under great loads of good things almost as large as themselves. Presently a large butterfly came fluttering towards me. He flew up and down, hither and thither and finally alighted upon a flower close by my side. He was a splendid fellow. His wings were covered with brilliant golden scales which glittered in the sunshine. They were adorned with many beautiful colors and he waved them slowly up and down as if to call my attention to their exquisite loveliness. He was so confiding and friendly that I longed for a chat with him. As I know the butterfly language we began to converse, and this is what we said:

“Good morning, Mr. Papilio”—that was his name—“How do you do?”

“Very well, I think you. How are you?”

“Oh, I am well enough, but I haven’t anything to do.”

“That’s my case exactly,” he replied. “And I don’t want anything to do. I have done hard work enough in my time. It is just delightful to fly about in the warm sun, rest on the flowers and take a sip of the homey now and then. Honey is delicious, I can assure you.”

“I didn’t know that butterflies ever had to work.”

“You didn’t? Well, you don’t know much about us then. Work! Why, for a great part of our lives we do nothing but work and sleep.”

“Pray excuse my ignorance. But I don’t see how you can do much with such fragile wings, covered with such tender scales that the least touch will mar them.”

“Aren’t they beautiful, though?” said Papilio, and he flew away for a little distance, and then dropped, gently as a snowflake on a flower much nearer than the first. He wobbled around sideways and looked at me very inquisitively as if he were considering whether it would do to make a confidant of me. He seemed to think he might venture, but still he was a little shy about it. Finally he said in a low voice:

“To tell you the truth, I have not had these wings always.”

“Haven’t had them always?” I asked, in much surprise.

“No,” he replied. “I hadn’t any wings at all, once.”

“How did you get them?”

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“I don’t know,” he said. “They just came. Aren’t they beauties? I wouldn’t be without them now for anything in the world.”

“What were you, when you had no wings?”

“I don’t like to tell you. I don’t like to think about it. But you are so friendly I will let you know, though when I do I am sure you will not like me half as well as you do now. I was a---I was a---a worm!”

“Oh! Ugh! You don’t mean it, a worm! An ugly worm! And did you crawl and squirm and have a long, hairy body and a hundred feet? Ugh! Don’t say you were a worm!”

“But I was. Now I am sorry I told you. I was afraid you would hate me when you knew the truth. I won’t tell you anymore.”

“But I am very much interested. Please let me know all about it. There must be something wonderful in such a complete change.”

“There was another one before that, quite as strange.”

“Do tell me about it,” I urged, so earnestly that I regained the confidence, nearly lost by my surprise and disgust at the thought of beautiful Papilio as a worm.

“Well, then, I will tell you all from the beginning, but I hope you will not be shocked anymore.”

“I was once a little dot, no so large—not anything like so large as the head of the smallest pin. My mother put me on the underside of a leaf. She stuck me on tight and left me. I am an orphan. I don’t know anything about her except what I have been told, and that is not much. I was what you call an egg.”

“Were you one of those white spots we see on the leaves? I have scraped them off a thousand times, but I did not know they were butterflies.”

“They were not. If you had opened every one of them and examined them with a microscope, you couldn’t have found me, for I was not there as a butterfly, but as something from which a butterfly is made.”

“All I know is that one day I was there, and I wanted to get out. The place was too small for me. I was hungry and wanted to get something to eat. So I squirmed and struggled and finally broke open the door or something else and got my head out, and pretty soon my whole body which was not much more than a slender thread.”

“This change—butterflies sometimes like to use long words—from an egg to a caterpillar was called my Transformation. Sometimes, too, it is said to be my Resurrection.”

“Oh! How hungry I was, and I didn’t know where to turn for food. But my mother had taken good care of me, for the leaf upon which she fastened me, was just what I liked to eat. Didn’t I fall to, though? And eat and eat, and grow and grow? When I had finished one leaf I crawled to another.”

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“There were a great many of us worms, and we could strip the whole bush in a short time and we would have done it, if it had not been for the birds—the awful creatures! We ate the leaves and the birds ate us. Sometimes a monstrous sparrow would come along and as he hopped from branch to branch would gobble down ever so many of us. But somehow he missed me, and I soon grew to be a great caterpillar. I was fat and round and everyone hated me and tried to kill me. Little girls and young ladies, too, would scream if we crawled upon them, and the boys would step on us, if they saw us on a tree or a fence. If there had not been so many of us, they and the birds would have destroyed us all. But our numbers were too great and I was one of those who escaped.”

“After a while I grew so fat and lazy that I could hardly crawl. I lost my appetite, and I was so sleepy that it was as much as I could do to keep my eyes open.”

“What! Such a frisky fellow as you, sleepy and lazy?” I said. “I can’t conceive of such a thing. You are lively enough now.”

“Yes, I know. Isn’t it glorious to fly? To be as bright and beautiful as the flowers and neither to crawl nor live on leaves? But I wasn’t a butterfly; I was an ugly worm. Oh! I can’t bear to think of it!”

“What happened when you became so sleepy?”

“I crawled about to find some safe place in which to go to sleep. I knew the birds would eat me if they found me. After wandering for some days and running many risks of being killed, I found a corner in the fence that seemed just right. But I had no bed and nothing to put over me. So, sleepy as I was, I spun some silk and wove it all about me so that it made quite a nice dress. I made some girdle and fastened the threads to the wood so that the rain could not wet me nor the wind blow me away. When this was finished, I felt so snug and comfortable that I went to sleep.”

“Did you say that you spun some silk? A worm make silk?”

“Yes, all the silk in the world was made by worms. Didn’t you know that?”

“What! All the silk that is in ladies’ dresses and the threads of silk with which they sew?”

“Yes. Every bit of it. No one in the world knows how to make silk but worms.”

“Then they know how to do some things better than men. I never thought of that before. Worms! Those nasty, crawling things which we hate so are very useful, it seems. I shall think more kindly of them after this—but who told you how to make silk? Was it your mother?”

“I don’t know. Perhaps I got it from her somehow. Nobody told me, and I didn’t learn. I just did it. I knew how the first time—well, as I said, I went to sleep and slept so soundly that I neither knew nor cared about anything for a long time. It rained; and the snow covered the ground. The birds all went assay and still I slept.”

“You must have been dead.”

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“Perhaps I was, what you call dead. But it was not death or I should not be here now.”

“Still, you are a butterfly. Perhaps you are mistaken in thinking you were a worm.”

“Listen to my whole story and then you can judge for yourself whether I am telling the truth. After a long time I began to awake. I didn’t know where or what I was. I felt some strange things growing from my sides and I wanted to get out of my bed. I wanted to move my feet, but I was so tightly bound that I could not stir one of them. I began to be a little hungry and to wonder if there were any more leaves to be found. These feelings continued to grow stronger until I felt as if I must get out of my house and my old body. I wanted to fly as I had seen the birds do before I went to sleep. What in all it meant I could not tell. I was surely undergoing another transformation which might possibly lead to a new resurrection, but I didn’t know.”

“It might have been only a few days that I remained in this state. It may have been weeks. I was not awake enough to know. My legs and these strange things at my sides kept growing and I felt that I must get out and use them. One beautiful morning, my shroud, or grave or house—whatever you may please to call it—opened, and I was alive and free! I don’t know how to tell you. My legs were long and crooked that I hardly knew how to use them. Besides I had lost many of them. I was sure I could no longer crawl. Then these strange things at my sides began to open like a fan, and I felt so happy it seemed as if I could fly. I stretched them out and away I went. I could fly! I could fly! How bright it was! How fresh the air! I was no longer a caterpillar. I had magnificent wings! I could fly!”

“The boys and girls would be delighted to see me and perhaps they would try to catch me. But I had wings! I could fly high in the air where they could not catch me. They would no longer scream if I came near them and call me a horrid creature. They would shout with delight.”

“I am so happy I don’t know what to do with myself. So I fly about from flower to flower and I take a sip in one and another and then I fly again. Oh! I am so happy!”

“How did you get your wings?”

“I didn’t get them. They just came. They grew right out of me when I was asleep.”

“Then you weren’t dead?”

“Dead! Do you call this dead? Flying around so happily? I am more alive—a thousand times more alive than ever. If I were dead, it was when I was a worm.”

“But wouldn’t you like to have your wings drop off and get back into your old body again?”

“Go back into my old body and be a worm once more? How can you think of such a thing?”

“Do you suppose there is any danger of it?” And Papilio trembled with fear.

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“This is my resurrection; this is my life. See how beautiful I am! How happy! See how free! Go back? That wouldn’t be resurrection. It would be death! To be a worm again? Oh! Dreadful! Don’t mention it.”

He stretched his wings as if he were going to fly away. He did rise a little distance from the flower. Then he settled down again and he looked in a friendly way toward me. Finally, with some diffidence, he said: “May I ask you one question?”

“Certainly,” I replied, “As many as you please.”

“*Were you ever a worm?*”

“No, I think I may safely say, I was never a worm.”

“Then there will not be any resurrection for you. But I suppose you do not need one.”

“Yes, I do and I expect one.”

“What! To be changed into another form and have splendid wings like mine, and live in a more beautiful world than this? But nothing could be lovelier than this world. It is impossible. Please tell me how you look for a resurrection.”

“I am afraid you will not understand it. I don’t expect to have wings nor to be changed into another form. But I do confidently expect a resurrection that will be as glorious for me, as yours if for you. I do hope to rise into a world as much more beautiful, bright and lovely in every respect as the world in which you now fly about is more beautiful than the one you could see when you were a worm.”

“I don’t see what good that would do, unless you are to be changed into some other form.”

“Don’t you see that this body is almost worn out?”

“See my wrinkled face and my feeble hands. Look at those boys and girls! How they run and jump! I cannot do that anymore. But there is a new body growing within this, as your wings grew within your body when you were asleep. I shall go to sleep as you did, and while I am asleep I shall be raised out of this old body by the Lord, and then I shall be in a world inconceivably more beautiful than this. And I shall not need wings, for I can go where I like in an instant and will be with those I love, by wishing it.”

Papilio looked at me a moment, and then said, “Perhaps there can be a better world than this, but I don’t believe it and I find this one good enough for me.”

“In this respect you are right,” I replied. “It is good enough for you, but it is not good enough for me.”

Papilio circled about me as if to view me on all sides and then went quavering and rejoicing among the flowers and I saw him no more.