

Ephesians 4:1-6, 11-13

I therefore, the prisoner in the Lord, beg you to lead a life worthy of the calling to which you have been called, with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, making every effort to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to the one hope of your calling, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is above all and through all and in all.

...The gifts he gave were that some would be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, some pastors and teachers, to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, until all of us come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to maturity, to the measure of the full stature of Christ.

Matthew 7:7-11

“Ask, and it will be given you; search, and you will find; knock, and the door will be opened for you. For everyone who asks receives, and everyone who searches finds, and for everyone who knocks, the door will be opened. Is there anyone among you who, if your child asks for bread, will give a stone? Or if the child asks for a fish, will give a snake? If you then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give good things to those who ask him!

Grasshopper on the Road: Always

In the late afternoon Grasshopper saw a mushroom. It was growing at the edge of the road. "I will rest my feet," he said. Grasshopper sat on the mushroom. Three butterflies flew down. "Grasshopper," said the butterflies, "you will have to move."

"Yes," said the first butterfly. "You are sitting on our place. Every afternoon at this time, we fly to this mushroom. We sit down on it for a while." "There are lots of other mushrooms," said Grasshopper. "They will not do," said the second butterfly. "This is the mushroom we *always* sit on." Grasshopper got up. The three butterflies sat down.

"Each and every day we do the same thing at the same time," said the third butterfly. "We like it that way." "We wake up in the morning," said the first butterfly. "We scratch our heads three times." "Always," said the second butterfly. "Then we open and close our wings four times. We fly in a circle six times." "Always," said the third butterfly. "We go to the same tree and eat the same lunch every day."

"Always," said the first butterfly. "After lunch we sit on the same sunflower. We take the same nap. We have the same dream." "What sort of dream?" asked Grasshopper. "We dream that we are sitting on a sunflower taking a nap," said the second butterfly. "Always," said the third butterfly. "When we wake up, we scratch our heads three more times. We fly in a circle six more times."

"Then we come here," said the first butterfly. "We sit down on *this* mushroom." "Always," said the second butterfly. "Don't you ever change anything?" asked Grasshopper. "No, never," said the butterflies. "Each day is fine for us." "Grasshopper," said the butterflies, "we like talking to you. We will meet you every day at this time. We will sit on this mushroom. You will sit right there. We will tell you all about our scratching and our flying. We will tell you all about our napping and our dreaming. You will listen just the way you are listening now."

"No," said Grasshopper. "I am sorry, but I will not be here. I will be moving on. I will be doing new things." "That is too bad," said the butterflies. "We will miss you.

Grasshopper, do you really do something *different* every day of your life?" "Always," said Grasshopper. "Always and always!" He said good-bye to the butterflies and walked quickly down the road.

Sermon

How many of us have a routine to our day? I would dare to say almost everyone has a basic routine about the time to wake up, the food you eat, when you get dressed, when and why you leave the house. Routines are a normal part of life, an ordering of our time and of our minds. Routines help us to maintain balance and helps keep our anxiety down.

But often routines become traditions, and traditions become ridged and at some point we find ourselves doing things that no longer make sense, but we keep doing them because we have been doing them that way for forever. This is true in our individual lives and this is true in our corporate lives, and the church is particularly susceptible to this. In fact, do you know the deadliest phrase in a church's life? "We have always done it that way. Always." With those words, congregations continue on with their traditions, never really noticing or reacting to the changing world around us, never realizing that the old ways don't seem to connect with the current realities.

Paul writes to the church in Ephesus about their calling to build up the Body of Christ. Within his letter he begins by emphasizing the oneness of the faith: "There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to the one hope of your calling, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is above all and through all and in all." This unity and oneness can push the listener to think about uniformity and idealism. It makes us feel like if we can identify the one thing that works, the right set of traditions and routines, then we can have that unity for all time. But Paul does not leave us in uniformity, but continues to write, "The gifts he gave were that some would be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, some pastors and teachers, to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ" This is not one uniform group, but a diversity of gifts being utilized in a diverse number of ways, but with one common goal - to build up the Body of Christ. The truth is, we are changing the world, whether we know it or not.

And so how do we do it? How do we step out of the way it has always been done and step into change that actually helps buildup the Body of Christ?... I don't know.

This weekend my family started an outdoor project. We had bought a bunch of bulbs in the fall but by the time they arrived, it was too late to plant them. And so we found a place to store them for the winter. So this weekend we wanted to get them into the ground. And so we dug up the flower beds where we wanted to plant them, got down on our hands and knees and placed the bulbs, roots down and pointy end up. Then we had to cover them back up with the soil. And because we had different varieties that bloom at different times of the year, we layered some and overlapped some, all in hopes of having a beautiful garden of flowers this season and for many more.

When we finished covering the bulbs back up I told my wife, "Thankful that is done." And she reminded me that we will still have to plant annuals in the beds that are in the shade. "Arg".

That is the nature of a garden. There are some plants that you plant once and they keep blooming year after year. And there are some plants that must be planted for a season, and then something new gets planted the next time around.

Jesus tells all those who are listening on the mountain that day that “everyone who asks receives, and everyone who searches finds, and everyone who knocks, the door will be opened.” And so often I hear these words and I think “Yeah right! I don’t believe in a Google Search Engine God!” But then I have to step back, reread Jesus’ words, and I have come to a different understanding.

Asking and searching and knocking are all active verbs that imply effort on our part. So maybe the most important part of this is that we are called to ask our questions, to test our hypothesis, to have faith that is seeking understanding.

Maybe what we are called to do is to experiment, try new things, be alright that it makes us a bit anxious or challenges us to think differently. Be alright with what seems like failure, redefine failure as an opportunity to learn and to grow. God invites us to dream new dreams, to try new ways of making things beautiful. We don’t have to throw everything we love about how things are to make room for something new. We just have to be willing to keep working in the garden of God’s creation, and building up the Body of Christ in this time and this place. What new thing might you do today that will help bring beauty into the world? What new thing is God calling us to do that will help buildup the Body of Christ at White Lick? I don’t know... but lets experiment together. Amen