

“Unwrap: Waking Up”

“Dr. Tony Campolo is a well-known and highly-respected, inspirational speaker. Over the last several years, Tony Campolo has spent much of his time traveling around the world on speaking tours.

Meanwhile, his wife, Peggy, has chosen to stay home and give herself and all that she has to the ‘Bringing Up’ of their two children, Bart and Lisa. On those rare occasions when Peggy does travel with Tony, she finds herself engaged in conversations with some of the most accomplished, impressive, influential, sophisticated people in the world.

After one such trip, Peggy told Tony that sometimes as she visits with these powerful people ... she finds herself feeling intimidated and sometimes even questioning her own self-worth.” **“Tony said to her: ‘Well, honey, why don’t you come up with something you could say when you meet people that will let them know that you strongly value what you do and you feel that it is dramatically, urgent and crucial and important.’”**

“Well, not long after that, Tony and Peggy Campolo were at a party ... when a woman said to Peggy in a rather condescending tone, ‘Well, my dear, what do you do?’ Tony Campolo heard his wife say: ‘I am nurturing two Homo Sapiens into the dominant values of the Judaeo-Christian tradition in order that they might become instruments for the transformation of the social order into the kind of eschatological utopia God envisioned from the beginning of time.’

And the other woman said: ‘O, my, I’m just a lawyer.’”

After telling that story, James Moore concluded, **“I like that story because it reminds us that there are a lot of important jobs in the world today but not one of them is more important than the job of being a mother.”** (Tony Campolo adapted by James Moore, “Collected Sermons”, www.Sermons.com)

On this Mother’s Day Sunday, our focus and the Scripture are closely related to the tasks of a mother. The previous Sundays of the current “Emerge” Worship Series put the focus on the calling or tasks of individuals in their own transformation – similar to the metamorphosis process of the caterpillar becoming a butterfly. **Today’s focus moves from the individual to the community of believers.** The responsibilities of the community of faith to one another and to others in need of the New Faith Relationship with God is very similar to that of a Mother or Father and their child or children. Agape loving care and nurture are crucial for the raising of children, as well as, for the support and encouragement of individuals, who are going through the transformation to realize and live their freedom in Jesus Christ.

The message of the Threshold Moment puts it this way, “In the opening of the tomb of Lazarus, in the unwrapping of his funeral clothes, the community had to face their unknowing — and perhaps disbelief — and trust that the resurrection Jesus had facilitated was real. The range of emotions was vast.” **“As the butterfly’s cozy environment cracks further open still, it is the participation of the whole community that will make change possible — waking up, rolling away the stone, unwrapping what will be.”**

Before zeroing in on the Scripture, consider what Judith Viorst once wrote in **“an essay based on interviews she had with children. The subject was ‘What’s a good mother like?’”**

“Viorst reports that the children expected their mother to get angry from time to time. ‘She has to,’ said Ted, ‘or she’ll faint from holding it in.’

‘But it’s best to remember,’ said Randy, ‘that when your mother starts to act real weird, you have to look scared and serious. Don’t giggle. When mommies are mad, they get madder if you giggle.’

‘My mommy got so mad,’ said Megan, ‘that she yanked the plate off the table and all the mashed potatoes flew into the air.’ ‘And why,’ Viorst asked, pretending she’d never heard of such shocking behavior, ‘why would a mother do a thing like that?’”

“Well,” said Megan, “she told my older brother, Mike, he’s 11 years old, to eat the potatoes on his plate and he said ‘Later.’ And then she told him again to eat the potatoes and Mike said ‘Soon.’ And then she told him he had better eat those potatoes right now and he said, ‘In a minute.’ And then she stood up and Mike finally took a bite and told her, ‘**How can I eat them? They’re cold!**’” (King Duncan, www.Sermons.com, adapting Judith Viorst, “All in the Family”)

Rev. Samuel G. Candler shared his insights about our Scripture Reading around the focus of the calling of the community of believers when he wrote, “**‘Unbind him, and let him go!’** I like these words more than I like **‘Lazarus, come out.’** Indeed, these words may be more powerful than the words ‘Come out!’

Candler continued, “Because now, the community needs to assist in the resurrection. **‘Unbind him, and let him go.’** There are some people yearning to live resurrection lives. There are some folks who have been born again; they have risen from the dead!

But they are still tangled up in burial clothes. They still have the sheets and coverings of death all over them. They are still bound up in something, bound up in old bondages, old arguments, old sin.

You know what that’s like. You know you are living a new life, but you seem somehow to still be in bondage to the old life.”

Further, Candler explained, “This is where we need community. We need others. Often, it is the task of Christian community to complete the action of Resurrection. **Jesus has called forth new life: ‘Lazarus, come out!’ But Lazarus still has burial clothes on.**

So, Jesus says, ‘Unbind him, and let him go.’” Chandler explained, “Those should be the words which are our orders every day, every new day. Unbind somebody. Where you find someone in bondage: your friend, your wife, your husband, your companion, even the stranger.” **“Where you find someone struggling to be free, unbind them and let them go.”** “Do not keep them tangled up in the old affairs of sin and death. Those clothes constrict and make us ill.”

Candler elaborated, “When we refuse to let someone go, when we refuse to forgive, when we refuse to see new life, it is we who are keeping them dead. The community has that power.

Jesus, therefore, proclaims to us, to all of us, to the Christian Church: **‘Unbind him, and let him go.’** Those are really the powerful words of today’s gospel. Don’t hold on to the past. Don’t hold on to sin. Don’t hold on to death!” Chandler challenges us, **“Let someone go today. Release someone!”**

Chandler asked, **“Can we come out of our tombs? Can we unbind someone and let them go?”**

Chandler concluded, “If so, the work of Jesus will indeed be revealed, and the world will believe that he is the Savior of the World. (“Unbind Him and Let Him Go!” by The Very Rev. Samuel G. Candler posted on Day1.org)

As part of the Community of Believers, we are called to agape love one another and others seeking God’s Agape Love to help them be **unwrapped from their old lives**, which are in bondage to self-centeredness and the world’s false gods. **We are to let them loose – to help them wake up from their lives of meaninglessness, poverty, anger, hatred, and violence.** Indeed, Round Grove United Church has a rich history of doing this, such as bringing food for the hungry through the **Christian Community Action Bags of Blessings Program** and our seeking to manifest the **“God Is Still Speaking”** emphasis of Inviting and Welcoming All People. **Let’s be about Unwrapping and Letting Loose – Waking Up those lulled into the selfish stupor heaped upon us in society!** Amen.