**‘MOLES, FOXES, HORSES AND CATERPILLARS’**

Let’s start with some questions: What do these animals have to teach us about the word ‘becoming’? I wonder what you want to become. Has anyone ever asked you this tricky question and it freezes you on the spot? Especially if you just enjoy each day as it comes. How on earth are we meant to work out what job we will do when we are grown-ups? I think that being a child is about experiencing life, learning skills, making friends, playing sports, creating music, pictures – the list is endless! That is why I enjoyed a simple line in Charlie Mackesy’s book and brilliant cartoon film *The Boy, the Mole, the Fox and the Horse*. The animals ask the boy, ‘What do you want to be when you grow up?’ and he replies, ‘Kind.’

Being kind is not the answer we expect. Being kind is never going to get lots of attention, because it is a quiet action, even just a thought sometimes. If we become a footballer or a dancer, there’s a moment when others see that we have achieved these goals. We might be up on a stage, in front of crowds, thrilling people with what we have become on the outside. But what if we don’t all make it?

What Paul describes in his letter to the Romans is something we can *all* become. By changing how we think about becoming successful, and instead aiming to become *living sacrifices* for God, we become *transformed*. It sounds strange, because in Paul’s day a sacrifice would have been a dead animal on an altar; but we are very much alive, as alive as a digging mole, a curious fox or a galloping horse.

For a Christian, a transformed life is about becoming what God wants us to be as we grow. It’s not about standing still – that would be a dead sacrifice. It’s not even about finding the perfect job, becoming famous or having the greatest number of likes on social media. Instead, it’s about being changed from the inside out into a *kind person*; and the most kind person I’ve ever come across is Jesus. So many people had their lives improved by meeting him, and one by one, quietly, he made a difference for good. Talking to them, caring for them, he became the most famous person in the history of humankind. Imagine being transformed to be more like him! How would your world, your country, your school, your class or your family look different?

This process of being transformed by following Jesus takes time. He may not make us kind overnight. By reading about him, praying to him, bringing your questions to him, you will be able to grow up running all your thoughts past him and discovering which paths to take. It’s a brave journey to go on because it’s sometimes done in private, but this is how to offer your life before God *as a transformed living sacrifice.*

When you were really young, you may have read Eric Carle’s picture book about another animal, *The Very Hungry Caterpillar*. The caterpillar eats far too much food all week before hiding away in a cocoon. The brilliant ending to this story is that when the caterpillar emerges he is transformed into an amazing butterfly. But this secret process happens out of sight. It’s almost magical when the ‘big, fat caterpillar’ re-appears, and it makes for a wonderfully colourful ending. I wonder if Heaven might feel like that?

So today, try not to become worried about what you will be when you grow up. Instead, think about *who* you want to be as you grow up, and be changed from the inside out. As Paul says, ‘*Take your everyday, ordinary life – your sleeping, eating, going-to-work, and walking-around life – and place it before God as an offering’* (Romans 12:1 *MSG*).Of course, you still might appear on a stage one day as an opera singer or ballet dancer, artist or writer; but whatever you do, emerge like Jesus and become kind.

‘1Therefore, 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. **2**Do 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.’ (Romans 12:1-2)

‘So here’s what I want you to do, God helping you: … Embracing what God does for you is the best thing you can do for him. Don’t become so well-adjusted to your culture that you fit into it without even thinking. Instead, fix your attention on God. You’ll be changed from the inside out. Readily recognise what he wants from you, and quickly respond to it. Unlike the culture around you, always dragging you down to its level of immaturity, God brings the best out of you, develops well-formed maturity in you.’ (Romans 12:1-2 *MSG*)