



The Cathedral of St. Andrew - Honolulu

Sermon: Year A – 4 Epiphany - January 29, 2017

The Reverend Canon R. K. “Moki” Hino

Our readings this morning talk about the need to be humble, that is to have a right understanding of our weaknesses and strengths, to not regard others as inferior. And the readings of course, are summed up in the Beatitudes, those lines in Scripture that Jesus delivers to us from a hillside along Lake Galilee.

I’ve been to the Mount of the Beatitudes. And to me it embodies another meaning of the word humble that I learned in seminary – to empty oneself, the way Jesus emptied himself by going to death on the cross. The Mount of the Beatitudes is empty. It’s on a hillside where there’s very little vegetation, except smatterings of golden stalks of grass and maybe an olive tree or two. If you sit on the hillside, you look out over the lake and the small hills on the other side of it. And if you look up you’ll see blue sky and maybe a few clouds hovering above you. The place is starkly beautiful, and because there are very few distractions, it lends itself to feeling the presence of God. So, I can see Jesus climbing this hillside and arriving at a quiet place to sit down and teach those who climbed the hillside with him—to explain to them what it means to be humble. And if we really think about it, we’ll realize that the Beatitudes are about being humble, becoming empty.

We’re called to be poor or empty in spirit so that there’s room for God to enter in.

We’re called to mourn and acknowledge that we’ve lost what’s most dear to us so that there’s room for God to embrace us.

We’re called to be meek and content with who we are so that we can find freedom from the desires of who the world tells us we ought to be, desires that might distract us away from God.

We’re called to hunger and thirst for righteousness so that we can take in the presence of God, especially in the form of the bread and the wine.

We’re called to be merciful so that God will know how we want God to take care of us when we need God’s mercy.

We’re called to be pure in heart so that we can see God in the world with right understanding, especially in the countenance on the faces of the poor and needy in our midst.

We’re called to be peacemakers so that we know how to cooperate instead of fight, because it’s as peacemakers that we see and feel the presence of God.

We’re called to stand firm when we’re persecuted so that we fall even deeper into God’s loving arms.

As Paul says, we’re called. And in order to honor that call, sometimes we have to empty ourselves, especially of our ego so that we become childlike; not childish, but childlike in our innocence and pure in our longing for God’s healing hands and loving presence in what can be harsh and difficult world.

“Our beloved Church regards her children as having bodies as well as souls to be cared for, and sanctions the consecration of these and all that is beautiful in nature and art to the service of God.” - Queen Emma

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This past Tuesday I went up to Mauna Ala, the Royal Mausoleum, to join the senior class at St. Andrew's Schools as they gathered in the Royal Chapel to pay homage to Queen Emma on the occasion of her 181st birthday. And as I sat in the chapel with this group of young ladies I had a sense that the words of Jesus wafted in the air and into the ether 2000 years ago and somehow (over eighteen hundred years later) landed on the heart of a Hawaiian consort, a Hawaiian consort who brought the words back to life again for her people—and for you and me, for us.

Queen Emma saw suffering in her midst after a smallpox epidemic hit the city of Honolulu. And we all know that later in her life she went through intense personal suffering at the loss of her son, then her husband. This past summer I learned from one of you that she would go up to the mausoleum and spend nights outside the crypts of her husband and her son. That's how deep her grief was.

But Queen Emma was a woman of faith who undoubtedly heard the Beatitudes during her lifetime. She made room in her spirit to let God in and she allowed herself to be embraced by God's presence. And with that she turned her grief into good works and because of that firm resolve, we sit in this beautiful Cathedral this morning, one of her many legacies to the people of Hawaii.

And that witness to the Gospel teaches us something. I'm sure that you, like me, have had times in your life when you felt completely defeated, like you couldn't go on. In that we are not unique and need turn only to the story of Queen Emma to feel compassion with her as we look back on those times in our lives, or endure them now, or nurture our faith to face them in the future.

And oftentimes that means we have to set aside dreams of what we want to do or what we might be – we have to set them aside so that maybe, just maybe God's dreams for us will enter in instead. Queen Emma's dreams were to be a wife and mother – dreams that she had to set aside. And when God's dreams for her entered in instead, look at what we have today - a hospital, a school, a cathedral, and a story to inspire us when we're feeling down and out, like we might not be able to go on.

What are the dreams that God has for us? Right now, I wouldn't be able to tell you, I wouldn't be able to tell you because I haven't become poor enough in spirit yet, I haven't become meek enough yet, haven't hungered and thirsted long enough. I've still got spiritual work to do.

And so maybe the best thing for us is to go back 2000 years ago to that hillside by the Galilean lake, that hillside where Jesus found a quiet place. Maybe the best thing would be to go back to that hillside so that those words can go back into the ether again and land on our human hearts in a new way, the way they landed on Queen Emma's heart in a new way and inspired her to good works. And it maybe, maybe then that we realize the possibility of the good things you and I can do, we can do, the good things we can do together to give glory of God—those things may just be beyond our greatest imaginings and our wildest dreams.

And in the meantime, we have the story, and we have the words—the story of Queen Emma and the words of Jesus—blessed are you, blessed are you, blessed are you.