



The Cathedral of St. Andrew - Honolulu

Sermon: Year A –Lent 4 – March 26 (7:00 am), 2017

The Reverend Canon R. K. “Moki” Hino

I just spent five and a half years as the rector at Church of the Holy Apostles in Hilo. On the grounds, skirting the parking lot, we had a large grove of *kukui* trees. And anytime someone needed anointing, I would go out to the grove, pick one of the nuts, turn it upside down, and oil would ooze out of the place where the stem on the fruit connected itself to the tree. I loved it, because *kukui* is the symbol of light and I always felt like when I anointed someone, the oil would help them see the light of Christ.

Then about a year after I went to Holy Apostles, we commissioned the local artist, Nelson Makua, to create a parish T-shirt, and he used the *kukui* leaf as our symbol and logo. In his explanation of why he chose the *kukui* as a symbol, he referenced ‘*Ōlelo No ‘eau*.

Pupuhi kukui—malino ke kai.
Spewed *kukui* nuts—calm sea.

As Mary Kawena Pukui writes:

To calm the water, fishermen chewed *kukui* nuts and spewed them. It has the same meaning as, “Pour oil on troubled waters.” Roasted kernels, pulverized by fishermen while on the reef or in canoes, were strewn upon the ocean surface where there were small ripples and waves. The film increased underwater visibility by creating a lens on the water’s surface.

Kukui, therefore, help us to see what’s beneath the surface, as if giving us a glimpse into the soul and providing clarity about things that are mysterious and unknown.

The Hawaiians mixed *kukui* with their saliva to provide clarity about what was below the surface of the waters. In today’s Gospel story, Jesus mixes his saliva with mud to provide clarity of sight for the blind man beside the Pool of Siloam.

I’ve been to the Pool of Siloam in Jerusalem, way at the bottom of a very steep hill in the City of David. By the time my group got there, the sun was setting and we had no key; and so they had to call the security guard to come down and let us in which took extra time. When we got through the gate and beside the waters in the Pool of Siloam themselves, it was dusk and it was very difficult to see.

And it was in that darkness that I could fully grasp the story and feel what it was like to be that blind man. Yes, I was having trouble seeing; but at the same time, I had clarity of understanding about what Jesus did for this man in this place. It was as if being beside those still waters brought clarity to me about who Jesus was and the miracles he performed—almost as if someone had placed chewed up *kukui* nuts on the surface of those Holy Land waters to help me see, to help me understand, and to help me feel the presence of God and God’s son.

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Truth be told, there was actually very little water in the Pool of Siloam that evening. For some reason, most of it had evaporated out. And it left me wondering where all that water had actually gone. Perhaps it evaporated into the air to create a cloud that came back down to us as rain, only to be scooped up by some priest and placed in a baptismal font in a church somewhere so that it could be cast upon you and me in the waters of our baptisms.

And our baptismal waters provide clarity as well, clarity about what God calls us to do and who God calls us to be as kind and compassionate disciples who become aware of and see those in our midst who need us to see them, people like the women at the well (whose story we heard last week), or the poor and needy who live in our streets, or the lonely people who walk through our church doors and yearn for community—and for us to notice them.

The waters of our baptism help us to see things that we may not be able to see for ourselves. They are a manifestation of God's grace, God's amazing grace, beside the still waters.

The LORD is my shepherd; *

I shall not want.

He maketh me to lie down in green pastures; *

he leadeth me beside the still waters.

He restoreth my soul; *

he leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for his
Name's sake.

Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death,

I will fear no evil; *

for thou art with me;

thy rod and thy staff, they comfort me.

Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of
mine enemies; *

thou anointest my head with oil;

my cup runneth over.

Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days
of my life, *

and I will dwell in the house of the LORD for ever.