



The Cathedral of St. Andrew - Honolulu

Sermon: Year A – Fifth Sunday in Easter, May 14, 2017

The Reverend Canon R. K. “Moki” Hino,

I missed the boat a couple of months back. I missed the boat on Sunday, March 7th when I should've noted that 150 years ago to that day Lot, King Kamehameha V, laid the cornerstone of our Cathedral, right out back here to my right behind the altar. He laid the cornerstone in honor of his late brother for whom he grieved, for whom he grieved along with his late brother's widow, our beloved Queen Emma, Kaleleonāiani.

Lot placed the stone in the ground and eventually people built up and around it and the stone grew into the cathedral that we have today, the cathedral that Hawaiian royalty gave us to serve as a house of prayer and to provide their people with a spiritual home.

In his letter this morning, Peter writes this:

Come to him, a living stone, though rejected by mortals yet chosen and precious in God's sight, and like living stones, let yourselves be built into a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God.

Whenever I hear “living stones,” I think of one of the many trips I took as a little kid down to Waipi'o Valley, the childhood home of King Kamehameha the Great. And I think of the one trip down into the valley that I took with my Uncle Mike Higashi to watch him as he walked along the shores of the beach and cast his line to reel in the priceless silver *moi* that Auntie Irene steamed for us when Uncle Mike brought his catch home.

On that trip, when I was about eleven years old, we parked Uncle's Jeep under an ironwood tree and in the black sand on the Hamakua side of the river and Uncle said to wade across the river with him to the Kohala side where he saw that we would have the beach all to ourselves – just me, Uncle Mike, and the stones; the many, many black, porous lava stones that rolled back-and-forth in the water as the waves came ashore and went back out again in an even cadence and ceaseless rhythm.

They rolled in the surf as Uncle Mike cast his line, and the stones hit each other and made a clacking sound in the water and they spoke to me, spoke to me as I stood on the shore in the salt spray and watched my Uncle Mike cast his line and reel in the priceless silver *moi*.

I don't know very many things for certain, but one thing I do know: I know those stones rolling together in the surf spoke to me that day and they told me, *You are in the presence of God*, a young boy standing on the shore in the childhood valley of King Kamehameha the Great. *You are in the presence of God*.

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At one time those stones were large pieces of lava that broke apart from mountain slopes and made their way over waterfalls, down through rivers, and into streams of that Hawai'i Island valley to get to the shore and become rounded out as they frolicked back-and-forth in the Waipi'o surf. And as a little boy, I remember thinking that they would eventually break up and become small grains of sand one day, small grains of sand that make up the black sand beaches that are so famous back home, beaches like Kalapana, Honoli'i, and (of course) Waipi'o.

The stones crumble and become grains of sand. And as much as we may not want to admit it, eventually the same thing will happen to the stone that sprouted forth into this Cathedral. Like the ruins of Athens, Pompeii and Rome, one day it'll all crumble to the ground, just like the Colosseum, the Acropolis, and the Temple in Jerusalem. One day it will all crumble to the ground. That's life's rhythm and that's life's way. It's fate.

And that's why even though Queen Emma gave us a building, she also gave us a charge, a charge to be living stones, not ones that would eventually crumble to the ground like the sands on our Hawaiian shores, but ones whose legacies we are called to carry forward and make this world a better place, the way Queen Emma made this world a better place; not only by leaving us tangible things like hospitals, schools, and churches; but also life lessons about kindness, compassion, humility, and love. Emma is a queen, after all, who tended to the indigent sick who came to her father's infirmary, who ministered to prostitutes when she was queen, and who reached out to patients who had been conscripted to the leper colony at Kalaupapa as a widow.

And while the buildings she left us will eventually crumble and turn into ruins, that legacy to us of good works will never crumble, dissolve, or fade away; not if we use our sacraments and our prayers to keep them going. And that's a really good way to honor our royal benefactors – by keeping their legacy and way of carrying out good works alive, to be living stones.

Waipi'o Valley and its living stones have had their fair share of trauma over the years. The valley frequently floods with heavy rains. It falls victim to tsunami after tsunami. Most of its population has faded and dwindled away to just a few scattered residents today. And from time to time the two-pronged falls of Hi'ilawe are diverted for agriculture, leaving one side of the waterfall barren and dry. But the spirit of Waipi'o always remains constant and forges on to keep it a special place for those who go into its valley, walk along its rivers, and frolic on its shores; little boys like me who went down to watch his



uncle fish for *moi* one Big Island afternoon, to watch his uncle fish for *moi* and to listen to the living stones that spoke to him, that let that little boy know that he was in the presence of God.