



The Cathedral of St. Andrew - Honolulu

Sermon: Year A – Sixth Sunday in Easter, May 21, 2017

The Reverend Canon R. K. “Moki” Hino,

*O Lord your loving mercy, is high as the heavens
It tells us of thy truth, and is filled with holiness*

We sing the Hawaiian words every Sunday morning in *Ke Aloha O Ka Haku*, the Queen’s Prayer and as we gather together this morning to honor Her Majesty Queen Lili’uokalani, I’m reminded of a story that I’d like to share that I learned from the Hawaiian mele *Imi Au Ia Oe E Ke Aloha*, a song written by the Queen about a visit she took to Puna on horseback that we sang when I was part of the glee club at Seabury Hall in Makawao, Maui. The music teacher explained that Lili’uokalani went horseback riding and, without her knowing, others went on ahead of her and placed fresh lehua blossoms in a spring where she hoped to stop and wash her face, to refresh herself before riding on.

Lili’uokalani took the lehua-filled water and wet her lashes as if she were purifying her eyesight with holy water. That image reminds me of the word “integration,” to meld with and become part of. Lili’uokalani is integrated, she has integrity, blending in the essence of the nature around her and becoming one with something she knows is greater than herself.

Through the lehua-filled waters she melds with and becomes part of the springs, the mountains, the trees, the flowers, the birds, the wind—much like we meld with and become part of the body of Christ in the spirit-filled waters of our baptism, as well as her baptism, her baptism that we honor and commemorate this morning.

That desire to meld with and become part of something greater is the essence of Lili’uokalani, Lili’uokalani who also wrote:

*O look not on their failings, nor on the sins of men
Forgive with loving-kindness, that we might be made pure.*

Lili’uokalani wanted to be integrated and one with those around her, even those who did her wrong, those who took her kingdom from her. And so I wonder, what would Her Majesty think of the words we use today to objectify people and point out that they are different from us — that they are other, that they are not one with us and are apart; not integrated, but set apart.

In one way or another over the course of my life I’ve been labeled as other; even though I’m baptized, even though I’m made clean, even though I’m claimed by the Triune God, even though I’m marked by the Holy Spirit, even though I’m sealed as Christ’s own forever, the way her Majesty was. In spite of that, I’ve been labeled and I’ve been called profane. And I’ve done the same thing to others. Haven’t you?

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Think of all the labels we use to describe others who aren't just like us. Liberal. Conservative. Fundamentalist. New Ager. Gay. Straight. Black. White. Haole. Local. Young. Old. Clergy. Lay. Have you ever uttered any of these words in contempt of another? Have you ever been called one of these things in contempt by someone else? I have — and I've used these kinds of labels on others; ad nauseum, without shame, and with a great sense of self-righteousness.

The late Edmond Browning whose ashes are interred in the columbarium right outside our cathedral building, Edmond Browning, former Presiding Bishop and Second Bishop of Hawai'i, boldly proclaimed after his election as Presiding Bishop that in this church, the Episcopal Church, "there shall be no outcasts," words that are the hallmark of his time as our Presiding Bishop.

And I'm also aware that The Episcopal Church is unique in the Anglican Communion and that we are the only members with a Baptismal Covenant in our Book of Common Prayer; and in that covenant, we promise to purposely and consciously respect the dignity of every human being. We don't have to like everyone. We don't have to agree with everyone. We are, however, called to reach out in love to all of God's people, especially those who have been labeled profane by others—and with contempt. Liberal. Conservative. Fundamentalist. New Ager. Gay. Straight. Black. White. Haole. Local. Young. Old. Clergy. Lay. I'm sure you can think of other labels.

When we choose to cast aside the labels and reach out in love to all people, the Risen Christ is within us; and for that we give thanks to God by honoring yet another promise in our Baptismal Covenant by continuing in the apostles' teaching and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in the prayers. We do that by casting aside our differences and coming together at this table for spiritual nourishment and spiritual food, getting the wherewithal to continue our good works in honor of the Risen Christ.

*O look not on their failings, nor on the sins of men
Forgive with loving-kindness, that we might be made pure.*

Think of Queen Lili'uokalani washing her eyes with the lehua-filled waters and her desire to meld with and become a part of something greater than herself.

And we don't have to be Queen Lili'uokalani to make her words a part of our lives. We don't need to kneel beside lehua-filled waters in Puna, or rule island kingdoms, or write Hawaiian hymns and songs. We just have to be ourselves and strive to meld with and become part of what's around us:

- The majesty of Diamond Head as it rises above Waikiki on a glorious sunset evening.
- The red skies at dawn as the sun rises in the east over the Ko'olau Mountains.
- The glistening waters of Manoa Falls as they stream down the ravines above the valley.
- And the countenance of the Christ that we see on the faces of those around us:
 - Our mothers and fathers, grandmothers and grandfathers who came here on ships to the fields of cane.
 - Our children and grandchildren, our nephews and nieces who go to our schools, play on our playgrounds, and frolic on the shores of our beaches.
 - Our families, friends, and neighbors, and those who are alone — in this city or in places beyond its shores.
 - The members of our church family with whom we sometimes fight and then reconcile in peace to gather together in Christian love at God's table.

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- The houseless person who lives in our midst and who longs to worship with us on Sunday mornings.
- And Jesus Christ Himself — in the bread, in the wine, at our baptism, and in our loving acts of kindness toward others.

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It tells us of thy truth, and is filled with holiness*

There shall be no outcasts.