

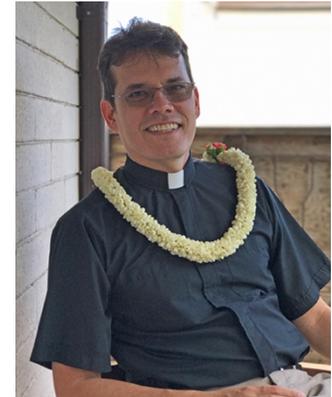


The Cathedral of St. Andrew - Honolulu

Sermon: Year A – 7th Sunday after Pentecost, July 23, 2017

If there is any parable I understand in the Bible, it's this one. I really get it.

Not long after Bryan started working here, he walked around and did an assessment of the buildings and grounds. And while he was doing that, we had a heavy rain storm one weekend and there were leaks not only in the conference room on the second floor of the Memorial Building, but there was also a huge leak right by the front door of the office and we couldn't figure out why it was happening.



So, Bryan went up on the roof for me and took a look and when he came down from the ladder he told me, "There's a tree growing on the roof and its roots have gone into the sandstone and broken it up. That's what's causing the leak." So, I of course told him to pull the tree out, and he said to me, "But if you do that, it will take all the sandstone with it and we'll have a huge hole in our roof and an even bigger problem to deal with the next time it rains."

So, we have to leave the tree there for now and do what we can to keep it from growing anymore, reminding me of the line in today's Gospel that says, "For in gathering the weeds you would uproot the wheat along with them. Let both of them grow together until the harvest."

I, of course, want to be hasty. I want to go up on the ladder and pull that tree out and off of the roof right now, but Bryan told what'll happen if I do that and I have to accept that now is not the time. Right now, that tree's roots are what's holding the roof together. And I have to be patient. I have to wait. I have to be patient and wait for a better solution to come.

And I find that, for me, it's the same with people. I want to correct their behavior. I want to put them in their place. And I want to do it now. I don't want to wait. I want a quick fix. And I also realize that when I want to correct people and put them in their place, I'm in judgment. And then I realize that I'm not God and I don't get to decide when it's right to do those kinds of things and to whom to do those kinds of things. That's God's job; not mine.

And for me, that means that sometimes I have to be in relationship and community with people that I don't want to be in relationship and community with. And that's my cross to bear. It's my cross to bear, because I'm not God. And it's my cross to bear, because I'm called to be Christ-like and to have compassion for people rather than condemnation.

And there might be a good reason for that. In my haste to play God and make the world the way I want it to be, I might make a mistake. Because who knows who the weed is. I think I'm the wheat, but maybe I'm the weed. Or I think someone else may be the weed, and maybe they're the wheat.

Pentecost 7 – July 23, 2017, cont'd

Have you all ever heard of sleeping grass? When I was a kid growing up in Guam, it was all over our yard. It was this thorny plant that had what I thought were pretty ugly blossoms on it that looked kind of like a Venus-flytrap's petal, and when you touched them, they would close up and go to sleep. When I was a little kid, my grandmother and I would sit in the yard, dig it up, and throw it on a rubbish fire. And we'd spend hours doing that.

So, you can imagine how aghast we were when we went to the yard of my Auntie Noriko in Wahiawa one afternoon when I was a little kid. Auntie Noriko was from Tokyo, Japan. She was a city girl who never had a yard before she moved to Hawai'i with my uncle. And she used to go around her Wahiawa yard and pick up the sleeping grass and put it in pots and planters, because she thought it was so rare and wonderful. She nurtured the sleeping grass and helped it grow. She saw beauty where we saw weeds. And maybe that's why God wants us to wait – so that God can decide and so that we don't make hasty mistakes in taking away something that may be unattractive to us, but beautiful in the sight of God. What you and I condemn, God may see as treasure.

And so instead of charging into the field, clearing what we decide are weeds, and playing God; perhaps this parable calls us not to play God, but instead to do what we can to be right with God, to do what we can to make sure that God sees us as wheat and not weeds. And the best way to do that might be to seek and serve Christ in all persons, to strive for justice and peace among all people, and to respect the dignity of every human being – even the ones we don't like, even the ones we want to condemn as weeds and throw into the fire.

And when someone irritates us, maybe the best thing to do is to pray for him or her – to pray that she or he may have the same happiness, health, and serenity that we seek for ourselves as we strive to feel God's presence and as we yearn to be part of the kingdom of God and shine like the sun in the kingdom of our father, as the Gospel says.

So, as we come forward to this altar and then leave the four walls of this cathedral sanctuary to go out into the world, let's do all we can to firm our resolve; and not to play God, but to be children of God and to reach out in compassion to all God's people, to be in relationship with all God's people, and to pray for all God's people with the hope that all God's people will pray for us as well. And maybe, just maybe, then God's kingdom will be nothing but a field of wheat and weeds will be no more and the end of the age can come, can come for you, can come for me, can come for all God's people. And until then, we remember the words of Jesus: let both of them grow together until the harvest.

Amen.