



## The Cathedral of St. Andrew - Honolulu

### Sermon: Year A - Proper 24 – October 22, 2017

This morning the Cathedral community gathers to honor and remember Princess Victoria Kaʻiulani Cleghorn, daughter of Princess Miriam Likelike and Archibald Cleghorn, niece to King Kalākaua and Queen Liliʻuokalani, and Crown Princess of Hawaiʻi who died after the overthrow of the Hawaiian monarchy in her early twenties, many say as a result of grief at the loss of the Hawaiian kingdom.

Whenever I think of Princess Kaʻiulani, I think of her home in Waikiki, the home that is known as ʻĀinahau. ʻĀinahau was a 10-acre estate that was built on land given to Kaʻiulani by her godmother Princess Ruth when Kaʻiulani was a toddler – a home that had over 50 stately peacocks that roamed freely on its grounds, peacocks for which ʻĀinahau gained its renown. It is said that Princess Kaʻiulani used to hand feed all of ʻĀinahau's peacocks whenever she was on the estate, and when she died, they screeched so loudly and so intensely because they felt her absence and cried out in grief to the point that several of them had to be destroyed.

From what I've read and learned from many of you over the years, it seems to me that ʻĀinahau gave Kaʻiulani a much-needed connection to a sense of place, a sense of place in a world that was constantly changing around her with the continual deaths of beloved family members, being sent to England for schooling, and the demise of the kingdom which so many felt she was destined to lead.

ʻĀinahau undoubtedly gave Kaʻiulani strength and groundedness, strength and groundedness to the point that she felt a strong and spiritual connection to the land and to animals like the peacocks that roamed ʻĀinahau's grounds. And without her, its essence changed forever – and so the peacocks cried out and mourned.

A sense of place. This cathedral, this Cathedral of St. Andrew of which Kaʻiulani was a member because of the roots of her Scottish Anglican father, this cathedral gives many of us a sense of place and it serves as a touchstone to the spiritual world. It's a community and a place that enhances spiritual experiences and fosters spiritual growth through music, through worship, through service, through the community, and through prayer.

And while you and I still have our cathedral, today ʻĀinahau is no more, and in its place stands the Sheraton Princess Kaʻiulani Hotel, along with its 29-storey ʻĀinahau Tower. The physical place is no more, but the spiritual power of what it did for Kaʻiulani and the legacy that she leaves us is not gone. It's not gone, because the spiritual world overpowers, overcomes and outlasts temporal physicality, and the legacy of Princess Kaʻiulani lives on in culture, in literature, in theater, in film, and in good works; good works like the Princess Kaʻiulani Girls Home and the ʻAhahui Kaʻiulani (who is with us this morning)

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And as the legacy of Princess Kaʻiulani lives on, it all makes me wonder, what would Princess Kaʻiulani say about our world today? What would she say about a world where 60 people get killed by machinegun fire in Las Vegas, Nevada? What would she say about our response to the hungry, the thirsty and the homeless who are victims of a horrendous hurricane on the island of Puerto Rico—an island of which we as citizens of this country are its stewards? What would she say about people espousing hate, division, and violence on the streets of Charlottesville, Virginia? Or better yet, what would she say about the state of houseless amongst her native people on the streets right outside our Cathedral this morning, or worshipping with us from our pews?

I don't know what Princess Kaʻiulani would say, and I don't want to be presumptuous enough to even try to conjecture how she would respond. For now, that will have to remain in the realm of speculation. But what I do know is that in the midst of these kinds of challenges, Princess Kaʻiulani had 'Āinahau and you and I have this cathedral. And so perhaps the challenges of the world are a call to return to our sense of place, to go to there for comfort and solace; not to stay there, but rather to go out from the strength we get from our sense of place and speak our truth with love, the way Princess Kaʻiulani spoke her truth with love at the overthrow of her auntie's throne and the Hawaiian kingdom to which she was the heir presumptive. Kaʻiulani wrote these words:

*Four years ago, at the request of Mr. Thurston, then a Hawaiian Cabinet Minister, I was sent away to England to be educated privately and fitted to the position which by the constitution of Hawai'i I was to inherit. For all these years, I have patiently and in exile striven to fit myself for my return this year to my native country.*

*I am now told that Mr. Thurston will be in Washington asking you to take away my flag and my throne. No one tells me even this officially. Have I done anything wrong that this wrong should be done to me and my people? I am coming to Washington to plead for my throne, my nation and my flag. Will not the great American people bear me?*

Kaʻiulani wrote these cool, calm, and measured words at the age of 18, and she spoke her truth in love—love of God, love of the land, and love for her people.

In the Hawaiian language 'Āinahau means “cool land”. And perhaps its name serves as a reminder to us to cool our tempers and cool our souls to speak our truth with love from sense of place and groundedness rather than out of reactivity and fear.

'Āinahau. Cool land. A sense of place.

Princess Likelike, mother of Kaʻiulani, wrote a beautiful mele about 'Āinahau. I close this morning in tribute to Princess Kaʻiulani by sharing the words of her mother's mele and her own sense of place with all of you:

*It is the perfume and the lovely fragrance of roses that sweeten the leaf buds of the flowering plants. The peacocks and the yellow-feathered birds are the adornments of my home*

*My home is beautiful, 'Āinahau so regal, where the fronds of the coco palms sway. The beautiful grove, the fragrance of flowers—at my home, my home so regal.*

*It is the gentle breeze from the sea that brings the sweet odor of lipoa seaweed, mingling with the fragrance of love for my home, my home, my home so regal*

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And from our sense of place, God bless Princess Ka'iulani, God bless the memory and legacy of the place that was 'Āinahau, and God bless all of you.

*Amen.*