



The Cathedral of St. Andrew - Honolulu

Sermon: Year B – Epiphany 3 – January 21, 2018: Hawaii's False Alarm

After John was arrested, Jesus came to Galilee, proclaiming the good news of God, and saying, "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God has come near; repent, and believe in the good news."

The words of Jesus are interesting words to ponder as we gather for the annual meeting of the congregation this morning and look back on our accomplishments over the past year as we look forward to the possibility of things to come on and beyond our spiritual horizon.

Yes, we are operating in the black when we were operating in the red. Yes, we have a vitality and a joy in our worship. Yes, when you walk into the Cathedral office, you hear joy and laughter. But is that the good news? I don't think so. And so, what is the good news?

To me, the good news is that God loves us unconditionally and that nothing can separate us from the love of God in Jesus Christ our Lord.

I don't know about you, but that all came to a hilt for me last week Saturday morning. At 8:07 AM last week Saturday morning I was in the shower, getting ready to come over for Nat Potter's funeral. For some reason, I did not get the first text message that said that we were under nuclear attack and that this was not a drill. But I did get a frantic phone call from a friend asking me if I had heard about it and at the same time Father JaR and Mother Annalise, my neighbors, were knocking on my door with pillows and blankets in their hands asking if they could go into the basement of the Cathedral. This was at 8:20 AM and by my calculations, I had 24 minutes left. What is the good news?

The disciples left their prized nets on the shores of Galilee and followed Jesus. With 24 minutes left, I didn't have time to think about going into basements or gathering food or calling loved ones. The only thing I felt I could do at that point was to take the totality of my life, the good and the bad, and offer it up to God's truth with the hope and prayer that it was pleasing in God's sight and with gratitude and thanksgiving that I was loved unconditionally.

So, as I walked across the lawn to be with the people who are gathered for Nat's funeral, I stood in Queen Emma Square, said a prayer, and told God I was ready if that was God's will. And I will confess to you that in my 53 years, the rubber hit the road in terms of my faith.

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And with that I moved forward and walked into the rest of my life, however long that life was going to be.

And when I got to the Cathedral I found Karen Ogata, Linda Oba, and Judy Masuda. We stood there and talked about what was happening in the four of us agreed that if it was our time, it was our time. And then in one of those beautiful, Holy Spirit moments, a white turn flew down and hovered literally two feet in front of us, at eye level, and then flew up toward the bell tower. Somehow, in that moment, I knew that no matter what happened, I could be at peace and I pray that others could be a peace as well.

"Our beloved Church regards her children as having bodies as well as souls to be cared for, and sanctions the consecration of these and all that is beautiful in nature and art to the service of God." - Queen Emma

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Later on, of course, I saw the footage on TV of the students at UH Mānoa running down the mall that I traversed for five years of my life as a student there as they tried to seek shelter. I also saw the footage of a father in Waikiki gently coaxing his daughter into a manhole. And then I went on Facebook and read the stories and the anxiety and panic and the concern of my Facebook friends, including a mother on the mainland whose daughter, son-in-law, and grandson had called to say I love you and then informed her that they were going to do the best they could to find shelter.

And now, a week later, as we gather for the annual meeting of our Cathedral to discern and discover how we are going to move forward and mission and ministry, I find that I have some PTSD and I'm struggling with what to do with it. Maybe I wasn't as at peace as I thought I was.

It was scary. It was terrifying. And it was surreal. I can understand the panic and the fear and wanting to protect ourselves and our children. And today all I can say is, "Thank God they got it wrong." It's as if the world somehow repented and we've all been given a second chance – a second chance to use the gift of life to the best of our abilities and to love God, to love one another, and to love ourselves.

And I don't know about you, but the only thing that I can think to do is to live each day as if it might be my last, to be kind and loving, to do everything I can to live in to the will of God and to give God glory, and to make friends with my death by striving to get to the pearly gates not with no regrets; but with as few regrets as possible and to offer it all up to God – the totality of my life, the truth of my life.

And on top of that, I stand or sit and look out at the beauty of creation around me – the mountains, clouds, the ocean, the sky, and all of you; and I give thanks for the gift of life with the hope that I won't squander it or waste it by holding onto grudges or giving into the temptations of things like backbiting and gossip and vengeance; but instead that I will love as fully as I can, secure in the knowledge that God loves me and God loves you. For today, I pray that that's good enough because life is a beautiful thing and I thank God for my family, for my friends, and for all of you. You are a blessing and a gift to me and while I remember that every day of my life, now's the time for me to say it out loud. You are a blessing and a gift to me.

The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God has come near; repent, and believe in the good news.

That good news is God and that good news is you.

Amen.