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## The Cathedral of St. Andrew - Honolulu

### Sermon: Year B – Easter Sunday – April 1, 2018, The Promise of the Kolea:

Years ago in the South Pacific a group of islanders are in despair. They have to leave their homes. Perhaps it's due to famine, perhaps it's due to exile. Whatever the reason, they have to leave their homes and there's nothing but ocean out there. They don't know where to go. They don't know what to do. They have no hope – no matter how many oracles they consult, no matter how many gods they beg. All hope is lost. They have to go.

And then hope comes – only not in the way they probably hoped it would come. Instead they gaze into the sky and see a bird, a golden plover, the *kolea* – and inspiration comes.

They know this bird. They've seen it before – every year they see it when the *kolea* flock together on the South Pacific shores, having flown in from the skies to the north. And the islanders notice that the *kolea* never rest on the water, but only on the land – and they figure out, then, that there must be land to the north. Alas, there is hope.

So they build canoes. They pack them with provisions. They take a leap of faith. They hoist their *hala* sails and venture northward on the sea – northward, borne on the path of the *kolea*. And eventually they find land – the Hawaiian Islands. A people who seem to have no hope are now in a new home in a new land of promise, ready to build new lives.

As they stand on the South Pacific shore and face their banishment, do they believe it's possible? Do they know for sure that they'll find land? We can't really know what's on their minds and in their hearts. But what we do know is that out of the depths of their despair comes a symbol of hope – and through that symbol of hope the South Pacific islanders die to an old way of life and are resurrected into one that's new. They have a second chance. It's an Easter-like story that speaks to us as an Easter people in an Easter faith – a people who believe in death and resurrection, the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

We know that Christ must die. But we also know that God gives us hope when Christ rises from the tomb. In that moment it seems impossible, doesn't it? Even Mary Magdalene doesn't recognize it on that first Easter morning in Palestine two thousand years ago. At the entrance to the tomb she mistakes Jesus for the gardener. She doesn't know who he is. She doesn't really understand what's going on. She has no reason to believe it's even possible. She has no expectation that she will ever see Jesus alive again. Yet there he is.

And he calls her by name. And when at last she recognizes him, she responds with great emotion, grabbing on to him, not wanting to let him go, clinging to his physical presence in the garden. Disbelief becomes belief. Belief becomes hope. Hope becomes promise. Promise becomes salvation. We are saved. We are redeemed. We are people of the resurrection. We are an Easter faith.

## Easter Sunday – April 1, 2018, contd.

What does that mean to us today? What does that mean to us two thousand years later? Does it mean we have to be perfect? Does it mean we can never make any mistakes? Does it mean we can never fall short? Is that what the resurrected Christ expects from us?

Maybe it means that even though we're not perfect, God sees us as beautiful. Maybe it means that even though we make mistakes, God is willing to give us a second, a third, and even a fourth and fifth chance. Maybe it means that even if we fall short, God has faith in the promise of who we can and will become. We are worthy. We are valued. We are loved. We are saved.

We see it in the Book of Exodus when God leads the people of Israel out of Egypt, through the Red Sea and into the Land of Promise. We see it in the Book of Acts when the scales fall from Saul's eyes, he sees the truth of a life in Christ, and he becomes Paul – the greatest evangelist the world ever knows. We see it this morning in the Gospel of John when Mary Magdalene weeps outside Jesus' tomb and he stands by her side, showing her and showing us that Christ is risen. We are saved.

We see it when we stand at the waters of the baptismal font, reaffirm the promises in our covenant, and welcome new Christians into the fold. We see it when we feed God's people at our altar and in our kitchens. We see it when we gaze upon the flame in the paschal candle and believe and proclaim the words in our Eucharistic Prayer: Christ has died, Christ is risen, Christ will come again.

And now the challenge before all of us is to recognize that and see it in our midst – the same way the islander stands on the shores in the South Pacific, sees the *kolea*, and recognizes it as a symbol of promise and hope in the midst of his seeming despair.

We can say it isn't easy, but I think it actually is. All we have to do is look upon the Christ we see on the faces of the people sitting next to us in our worshipping community this morning, take in the Christ present in the bread and the wine at the table, feel that presence alive in our hearts, and then go forth from here to spread the Good News, transform lives, and change the world – a world that believes and boldly proclaims, "Alleluia Christ is risen! The Lord is risen indeed. Alleluia!" We are worthy. We are valued. We are loved. We are saved.

*Amen.*