



The Cathedral of St. Andrew - Honolulu

Sermon: Year B – Good Friday – March 30, 2018:

One line really sticks out for me as we read the Passion of Jesus in John this afternoon, the line that says:

Now the slaves and the police had made a charcoal fire because it was cold, and they were standing around it and warming themselves. Peter was also standing with them and warming himself.

Evidently, it was a cold night. Cold and dark. And not only was it cold and dark outside, but also cold and dark inside Peter's spirit, down to the core of his soul. He denies knowing Jesus. He's feeling guilty. He's feeling fearful. Jesus is about to die. It's cold and dark outside as well as inside the soul.

And even though it's just past noon, today you and I are also in darkness. Three months ago we lit the wreath of Advent as we waited in anticipation for hope to come into the world. And that it did. In the form of a babe. The dawn of messianic salvation was upon us. And each week of Advent the light got brighter and brighter, until we lit the candle in the center, the paschal candle, the Easter symbol of Christ's everlasting presence through the Resurrection.

Where is that candle today? Where is that flame? It's nowhere to be found. We're in total darkness.

And how does that mirror the darkness of our lives? Look at the world we live in today. Somebody goes into Ala Moana Shopping Center last week and uses a machete to kill someone who'd been taunting him in the bus. 17 people in a Florida high school were shot and killed last month. We feel tension between our country and other countries. Diplomats are being expelled left and right.

And in our own neighborhood, we also see darkness. Homelessness is rampant in our streets and has reached epidemic levels. We all thought the end was coming when a false alarm went off and we were told that a nuclear bomb was headed our way.

And then there's you and me. We have problems. We have struggles—whatever they may be. Financial challenges. Loss of jobs. Struggles with addiction. Broken relationships. Family members with devastating illnesses. Conflicts at work. The deaths of loved ones. The problems and struggles are right here and right now. I hear about them all the time and Lord knows I experience more than one of these things myself from time to time.

And if Peter is anything like us, who can blame him for his feelings of fear and self-doubt? Who can blame him for denying Christ. You and I might've done the exact same thing. It's all over. The light in the paschal candle is gone and darkness wins.

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Or does it? The Passion says:

Now the slaves and the police had made a charcoal fire because it was cold, and they were standing around it and warming themselves. Peter was also standing with them and warming himself.

The fire is right there. And someday that fire will ignite the flame of the paschal candle, that Easter resurrection symbol of Christ. But Peter can't see it. And even though he warms himself by it, he hardly realizes the flame is even there.

And in a world of contrasts, sometimes it takes darkness to see the light. Sometimes it takes darkness to need the light. Sometimes it takes darkness to crave the light. And difficult as it may be, perhaps for today, the darkness is where we're called to be. It's Good Friday. It's a time of darkness, the darkness of the inner spirit, the darkness of our stories, the darkness of our inner lives, the darkness as we sit with Jesus and the darkness of our shadows as he dies on the cross and lies in the tomb.

So for now, we let it be. We enter into the story of Jesus and experience it for ourselves. We sit in the darkness—and we wait for the light to come.

Amen.