



The Cathedral of St. Andrew - Honolulu

Sermon: Year B – 9th Sunday in Pentecost – July 22, 2018, Forgiveness is the ticket

As we've heard in many of the Gospel stories over the past few weeks, this morning Jesus gets into a boat yet again to go to the other side of the Galilean lake to find respite and peace for his apostles and for himself. They need a break from their demanding lives of healing and teaching.

Like I always say, and even though I don't always live into it, sabbath is a biblical concept and something we're called to do in order to refresh and rejuvenate ourselves to do the work of the Gospel.

We've got to get into the boat to get to that place of respite and peace. And it makes me think, what's our ticket? What's the price of admission for that ride? After all, we can't get there until we get in the boat.

While I was at our General Convention in Texas, we had one of those days where the legislation and the debate and the committee meetings and the discussions and the reading of the documents and the processing of it all went on and on and on and, like Jesus, all I wanted to do was get in the boat to drift to the other side.

But that's kind of hard to do in a convention hall, so what I did instead was what I often do in situations like that and I began to surf my Facebook page where I noticed a quote one of my friends had posted, a quote from someone named Les Brown, that said this:

Forgive anyone who has caused you pain or harm. Keep in mind that forgiving is not for others. It is for you. Forgiving is not forgetting. It is remembering without anger. It frees up your power, heals your body, mind and spirit. Forgiveness opens up the pathway to a new place of peace where you can persist despite what has happened to you.

That really struck me. Forgiveness. Maybe that's the price I have to pay in order to get into the boat with Jesus—by remembering without anger, by forgiving. And I think it struck me, because it's saying something to me personally; but it's also something that I feel compelled to share with all of you, because I think it's part of our gospel mandate – to forgive. After all, Jesus himself says:

- Forgive them Father for they know not what they do; and
- Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us.

The other day my yoga teacher was talking about how people talk about near-death experiences. But then she talked about how so many of us actually have what she called near-life experiences. In other words, we get so close to the fullness of life but somehow we miss the boat – getting into the boat with Jesus. Maybe we miss out on the fullness of life because we hold onto grudges, which is why there are so many admonitions from Jesus in the Gospels to forgive.

To forgive. To remember without being angry. I long to get to that place in my life, because I want to live a full life, versus having a near-life experience. And the thing is, I realize that that's not always something I can do for myself or on my own. And if I can't, then I have to have faith that it's something that God can give me through God's grace, if I can become willing to ask for it.

9th Sunday in Pentecost – July 22, 2018, cont'd.

To forgive. To remember without being angry. The problem for me is, I think I'm operating under some kind of false belief that being angry makes me powerful, when really all it's doing is showing the world that I'm continually living into my fear. Thich Naht Hahn says (and I agree with him) that the opposite of love is not hate, but actually fear, hate being a fear-based emotion. And if God is love and the opposite of love is fear, then giving into anger and holding onto it would be embracing fear (the opposite of God). And that would be sinful, because I'm embracing the opposite of God.

I want more for myself and I want more for all of you. I want full lives for us. Not just a near-life experiences, but a full-life experiences.

And maybe we get we embrace the fullness of life by asking those rough questions that we hate to ask. Questions like:

- What is it in our lives that we're being called to forgive?
- Amongst our family, who do we feel has wronged us?
- Where in our workplace have we been hurt?

And what about us as a Cathedral community? A worshipping community? Is there anyone in this community whom God is calling you to forgive?

- Me?
- The bishop?
- Past deans?
- Members of the staff?
- Brothers and sisters in Christ who we worship with every Sunday and share the same communion bread and communion wine?

Remember, we're not called to forget, but to remember without being angry. To forgive.

And for me forgiveness always brings to mind Queen Lili 'uokalani, the queen whom the Episcopal Church has authorized to be on a calendar of saints for commemoration over the next triennial. Her throne and her kingdom were taken from her and her people and yet, we sing those words, her words, every single Sunday, words that say this:

*Mai nānā 'ino'ino, nā hewa o kānaka.
Akā e huikala, a ma'ema'e nō.*

(O look not on their failings; nor on the sins of men.
Forgive with loving kindness, that we might be made pure.)

So, it's not about the offender, the other person. There's nothing we can do to change her or him. But we can change ourselves by forgiving and letting go of the anger and being made pure and so that we can persist in spite of what is happened to us.

And, boy, if we can get that place, then we are indeed with Jesus and the calm waters of that boat where we journey not only toward respite, but also to peace.

That's my prayer for us. That we find peace, and that this Eucharist that we do every Sunday where first we receive forgiveness from God for the sins we have committed and then come forward for the bread and the wine-that this Eucharist will empower us with that price of that admission to get onto that boat; so that together you and I might be made pure, and so that together we might work toward full-life experiences where we finally find peace.

9th Sunday in Pentecost – July 22, 2018, cont'd.

The apostles gathered around Jesus, and told him all that they had done and taught. He said to them, “Come away to a deserted place all by yourselves and rest a while.”

May we go to that place with Jesus, and may we get there by living into our call to forgive.

Amen.