



The Cathedral of St. Andrew - Honolulu

Sermon: Year B – 15th Sunday in Pentecost – September 1, 2018, Lili'uokalani Ali'i Sunday 2018

This morning as the Cathedral community gathers together to worship, we remember our next-door neighbor; not Governor and Mrs. Ige, but Her Majesty the Queen, Queen Lili'uokalani.

Queen Lili'uokalani is now well known across the broader Episcopal Church as she has appeared on a list of people approved to honor and celebrate as a feast day, in her case, on the date of her death, November 11. We will have an Evensong here in the Cathedral on that date this year where we will invite the entire Diocese to honor her that evening with prayers, eulogies, and song.

And from what I've learned about Lili'uokalani over the years as a priest in our diocese, I know that this is something that she would greatly appreciate. Queen Lili'uokalani, after all, was a dedicated and devout Christian whose theology of forgiveness comes through in the famous *mele* that she composed during her imprisonment, the same *mele* that we sing here every Sunday, *Ke Aloha O Ka Haku*, The Queen's Prayer.

The third line of that *mele* speaks to me, the third line that says:

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

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

Her Majesty strived to forgive, to make her heart pure, by letting go of anger and resentment, especially toward those who took her kingdom and placed her under house arrest, even accusing her of treason against the government that overthrew her.

We sing The Queen's Prayer every Sunday here in the Cathedral, and it's a beautiful *mele*. But I must confess, I have a favorite song not written by Queen Lili'uokalani, but written in honor of her – a song that was taught to me by Auntie Victoria Hollinger when I was here as your Canon Pastor ten years ago.

The song is *Makalapua*, and the first verse says this:

The sweetest and most fragrant flowers of the garden,
for the *lei* of Kamaka'eha.

The goddesses of the forest weave a *lei* for Kamaka'eha,
the ladies with baskets of flowers.

I always wondered what Kamaka'eha meant, and why Queen Lili'uokalani was given that name. I later learned that *ka maka 'eha* means "sore eyes", and that it was given to her at her birth by Kina'u, her grandaunt who was suffering from sore eyes when Lili'uokalani was born.

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I'm also told that when one is named in the Hawaiian culture, one takes on the essence of that name. My Hawaiian name, for example, Ke'alamokihana, fragrance of the *mokihana*, the island flower of Kaua'i, was the name given to me through my father upon whom it was bestowed at his birth by an old Hawaiian man on the island of Kaua'i. My father never used that gifted name, and so it was passed on to me. And even though I have not one ounce of Hawaiian blood coursing through my veins, I do take on the essence of my Hawaiian name. Whenever I step off the airplane on Kaua'i, I feel like I am at home on an island where I've never lived and for some strange reason, the stress flows out through my feet and into the ground and I feel a sense of peace – and it happens to me every time I go to the island for whom my middle name (Ke'alamokihana) is a namesake.

And I have a feeling the same was true for Queen Lili'uokalani, and that she took on the essence of the name Kamaka'eha. Her eyes must've been sore at the things she saw in her lifetime – not only the loss of her kingdom, but also the loss of her husband, not being able to bear children of her own, and dealing with what I'm told was a rather daunting mother-in-law. She must've looked at her life through sore eyes, sore eyes that you know she soothed with the balm of her faith and with the cleansing gift of song.

When you look at any portrait of Her Majesty, you will indeed see sore eyes and sad eyes, but also eyes that are windows that give us a glimpse into a very old soul, a very old soul that had the ability and spiritual maturity to ground itself in indefatigable faith, an abiding sense of purpose, and the call not to squander life, but rather to embrace it, forgive, and move on.

When I have had the privilege of speaking with family members of Her Majesty, they don't talk about the overthrow or things like that. They talk about Lili'uokalani's love for children and how she adored and embraced them, fostered and cared for them, nurtured and affirmed them. That's how her family members seem to remember her.

And what I would like for us as a church to remember Her Majesty for is not so much for the overthrow, but the way that she dealt with the overthrow – writing *mele* about forgiveness and looking not on the failings nor on the sins of humankind, but forgiving so that we, you and I, might be made pure; not just Her Majesty, but also you and me. That was the vision for the future of Hawai'i that this devoutly Christian woman had, and perhaps we're called to embrace that vision in a world that needs forgiveness, where forgiveness seems daunting and unattainable.

I think of Her Majesty this morning. I think of her and her sad eyes looking at me, those sad eyes that are windows into an old soul and saying to me, to us the words of Colin Tipping. I can hear Her Majesty saying:

Look, whenever someone upsets us, we must recognize it as an opportunity to forgive. The person upsetting us may be resonating something in us that we need to heal, and in that case, we can choose to see it as a gift—if we care to shift our perception.

And so, we shift our perception with a prayer that time will heal our spiritual wounds and that those with sore eyes, sad eyes may be given the grace of looking at the world through happy eyes, peaceful eyes.

And until we have the grace to achieve that end, we have history to teach us, the Eucharist to nourish us, and the examples of people like Queen Lili'uokalani to inspire us with visions of a world and a future where we can forgive and attain peace of body, mind, and spirit.

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And as we gather to honor her this morning, may we place a symbolic lei upon Her Majesty Queen Lili'uokalani, a symbolic lei of our intention to help her bring that world to fruition, and may we bestow that lei upon her with the words, the words in honor of her:

'O Makalapua ulumāhie

'O ka lei o Kamaka'eha

No Kamaka'eha ka lei na Li'awāhine

Nā wāhine kēhene pua

E lei ho'i, e Lili'ulani ē

E lei ho'i, e Lili'ulani ē

The sweetest and most fragrant flowers of the garden,
for the lei of Kamaka'eha.

The goddesses of the forest weave a *lei* for Kamaka'eha,
the ladies with baskets of flowers.

Here is your *lei*, o Lili'ulani

Here is your *lei*.

Amen.