



## The Cathedral of St. Andrew - Honolulu

### Sermon: Year B – 21st Sunday in Pentecost – October 14, 2018 The Honolulu Sunrise

I've always said it's not easy to be a Christian. It often means making difficult decisions and going against the voices not only of the crowd, but also the voices of loved ones and friends who are very close and dear to us.

Even though it was many years ago, I still think of a time when I was teaching at St. Andrew's Priory and we had an assembly where Sandy Theunick, the Head of School, got up in front of the entire student body and faculty and told us that she had gotten a phone call from an elderly woman who was on the bus and who was upset because two girls in Priory uniforms wouldn't get up from their seats and let her sit down. I'll never forget Sandy's words that day. She looked at all of us and said, "Have the courage to do the right thing."

But that's easier said than done, isn't it? Especially when we live in a world of peer pressure. It's very easy to give into the temptations of the secular world, the crowd, and to listen and buy in to the crazy-making voices that they seem to continually produce, crazy-making voices that say things like:

Might is right.  
Money is power.  
Physical beauty is the best measure of your worth.

And I'm sure you can think of many more.

And then we hear Jesus say this:

*How hard it will be for those who have wealth to enter the kingdom of God! It's easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for someone who is rich to enter the kingdom of God. The first will be last, and the last will be first.*

Like I said, it's not easy to be a Christian.

Let's face it, the bulk of our lives is lived in the crowd, the secular world, and from time to time we need respite. I feel so blessed to live in the place where I live, on the 12th floor of a building that looks toward the Ko'olau Mountains and that has a small lanai. In the mornings for the past couple of weeks, I've been going out on the lanai and sitting on one of my patio chairs with my cup of coffee as I watch the sunrise come up over Punchbowl Crater.

I watch the sky turn from darkness into light, casting pink, red, orange, and yellow hews before me – and all else seems to fade away—my worries about money, my family, the Diocese, my job. I'm inundated by the beauty of God and somehow when I need to



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muster up the courage to do the right thing, that God shot that I get in the mornings helps me along the way.

In order for the man in today's gospel reading to walk with courage into the future, he had to dash secular notions and let go of his material possessions, sell them, and give the money to the poor so that he could be one with God and God alone.

Taking a first step like that can be exciting, but it can also be really difficult and it may seem easier to hold onto the ways of the past – even if they continue to cause us pain.

Now I don't know if I can take everything I have and sell it all. And even if I say I live a simple life in a small apartment and have a simple, economic car and that I don't have that much – compared to 90% of the people in the world, I actually have a lot. I don't know if I can sell it all, but there are things I can do. I can take the first steps. I can put the church in my will and last testament. I can work toward a biblical tithe of ten percent. I can offer myself (my time, my talent, and my treasure) – I can offer myself to God and to God alone, the God in whose presence I find in the colors as the sun rises over Punchbowl Crater.

We can all take first steps and, yes, it may be a fearful thing. It may cause us pain at first. And, yes, we risk sacrificing money, material possessions, and relationships with people we love to step boldly into the future, but it takes just one step and that's something we can all do, especially if the first step is meditation and prayer. This morning's gospel and the words of Jesus teach us that not only are change and first steps possible; they're already happening – at our baptism, at the Eucharist, and when we make a commitment to give of our time, our talent, our treasure, and ourselves – taking the courage to be one with God.

That's what I've learned from my cups of coffee with God on my lanai as I watch the Honolulu sunrise. Yes, I may want to fill my head with information and process all the crazy-making voices and think about all the loss I will have to endure in order to do what I'm called to do in my life in the church. But ultimately all I have to do is sit on the lanai and be at one with God made manifest in the colors of the sunrise—just me and the vibrant, life-giving, God-filled sunrise. That's all that matters in the end – not house, not brothers, not sisters, not mothers, not fathers, not children, not fields, not the crazy-making voices inside my head, but God and God alone – where I experience beauty, where I experience perfection, and where I experience the kingdom of God.

And that's possible for you, that's possible for me, and that's possible for all of us – it's possible if we simply let go, give ourselves to God, and bask in the colorful sunrises of our lives. May the colors be soothing, may they be comforting, may they be gentle, and may they be peaceful. May the sunrises of our lives give us all the courage to makes changes and move into the future, take first steps, and stand confident with all we have spiritually and all we're willing to give up materially. And when it's all said and done, may we stand with God and God alone.

Jesus says:

*Truly I tell you, there is no one who has left house or brothers or sisters or mother or father or children or fields, for my sake and for the sake of the good news, who will not receive a hundredfold now in this age – houses, brothers and sisters, mothers and children, and fields with persecutions – and in the age to come eternal life. But many who are first will be last, and the last will be first.*

*Amen.*