



The Cathedral of St. Andrew - Honolulu

Sermon: Year B – 22nd Sunday in Pentecost – October 21, 2018 Princess Ka‘iulani

Today as the Cathedral community gathers to worship, we honor and remember Princess Ka‘iulani, daughter of Archibald Cleghorn and Princess Miriam Likelike, niece to Queen Lili‘uokalani and King David Kalākaua, heir to the Hawaiian throne.

It’s also worth noting that having been baptized in our font, the Princess was a member of this Cathedral congregation. And so this morning it is an honor to honor her.



Princess Ka‘iulani’s father was a Scotsman and her mother a pure Hawaiian, making her what is known in the Hawaiian Islands as *bapa haole*, half Caucasian. She was educated abroad, was an accomplished musician, and she loved animals, including the peacocks that roamed Aina‘hau, her home in Waikiki; the same peacocks who wailed uncontrollably in the midst of the heavy rainfall that ensued upon her death.

After the overthrow of the Hawaiian monarchy, Ka‘iulani went horseback riding in the uplands of Hawai‘i Island where a heavy rain fell and she caught cold and became sick, eventually losing her life in her early 20s. Indeed, her story is a tragic story.

And why do we honor Princess Ka‘iulani this morning? Is it because she was Hawaiian royalty? Because she was heir to the throne? Because she symbolizes the loss of a kingdom and a way of life that we mourn? Because she was a member of this Cathedral? That may all be, but I think it’s more than that. I think we honor her this morning because her life, her very short life, has something to teach us about how you and I are called to live *our* lives.

We remember, after all, that to enter into the story of Jesus means to suffer, the way Jesus suffered on the way to Calvary and on the cross. And perhaps the suffering that Princess Kai‘ulani endured is meant to point us to the suffering of Jesus so that together with her we can enter into that story, feel his pain, feel his call to forgive, feel his call to love, and ultimately answer his call, with fervent and unceasing prayer, to resurrect ourselves from the tombs of our sorrows.

There are many who say that Ka‘iulani died of a broken heart after the loss of her kingdom, the Hawaiian kingdom. But I wonder in the midst of that notion if she looks down at us from Heaven and consents to our being satisfied with heartache and defeat. Is that what she would want from her people? Maybe we need to ask a different question, a different question like, “What does Princess Ka‘iulani want us to learn about life from her untimely and tragic death?”

Ka‘iulani’s death, after all, embodies a loss of connection, connection to a throne that got taken away; and perhaps her death gave the people of her time permission to mourn for her in a way that they couldn’t mourn the loss of their kingdom for fear of retribution from those who took the throne away. And like Christ, she took upon herself things that were larger than her humanity. And

“Our beloved Church regards her children as having bodies as well as souls to be cared for, and sanctions the consecration of these and all that is beautiful in nature and art to the service of God.” . - Queen Emma.

22nd Sunday in Pentecost – October 21, 2018, cont'd.

so, her story indeed points us to the story of Christ who also took upon himself things that were larger than his humanity. Perhaps Kaʻiulani's greatest gift to us is to see the Christ in her so that we can see the Christ in our midst and in ourselves. Maybe that's the real reason God calls us to honor her today.

A little-known fact about Kaʻiulani is that in 1886, she threw the switch that brought electric lights to Honolulu for the first time. I like that story, because it shows us that she serves as a catalyst, a spark, if you will. 132 years later, perhaps she still serves as a catalyst and a spark—igniting you and me to look at the suffering that we've endured in our lifetimes and to see that if we are faithful, gentle, humble and meek, perhaps we won't be remembered for our sorrows but rather for our kindness, for our steadfastness, for our commitment to causes, and for our connection to things like peacocks, and other parts of God's creation. With that gift to us, Kaʻiulani lives beyond the grave, beyond the grave in the hallowed ground at Mauna Ala, the Royal Mausoleum.

Perhaps on the gentle breeze that swoops down through Nuʻuanu Valley and Mauna Ala, the fragrant mountain, the essence of her story and her life swirl around us in a mystical and metaphorical flower lei to give us the wherewithal and the courage to join her in looking upon the face of Jesus and entering into the story of Christ.

When I was a child, my grandmother and grandfather had an album of music by Gabby Pahinui. It was one of those old vinyl LPs that you played on a record player and it had a black and white picture of Gabby Pahinui on the front cover—an album cover of simple, brown earth tones. And in one of the songs, there was a beautiful slack key guitar intro and then the sultry voice of Gabby Pahinui singing *Lei No Kaʻiulani*. It's a mournful and haunting melody and waltz harkening to a beautiful young woman who represented loss; yes loss, but also so much more. The first verse of this beautiful *mele* says:

Lei of lehua blossoms
are brought for my princess,
entwined with strands of dainty maile,
adorned to beautify Kaʻiulani.
As a rainbow over the sea
is beautiful to see,
so is my royal darling

And then in Hawaiian the last line of the first verse says: *E ola mau ʻo Kaʻiunalani*. Long may you live, Kaʻiulani.

Indeed, long may you live Kaʻiulani. Long may you live to show us how to live good lives. Long may you live to point us toward the suffering of Jesus. Long may you live to teach us the redemptive love of Christ. Long may you live to show us that in death there is life that lives far beyond the grave, wafts its way into the hearts of our human souls, to build up the kingdom of God and to give glory to the God we love.

E ola mau ʻo Kaʻiunalani. Long may you live. Long may you live.

Amen.