



The Cathedral of St. Andrew - Honolulu

Sermon: Year B – King Kamehameha IV Feast Day – November 25, 2018 *The Book of Proverbs*



The king's heart is a stream of water in the hand of the Lord; he turns it wherever he will.

Quite often across to Diocese of Hawaii when we honor our Holy Sovereigns, we comment and reflect upon the reading assigned to their feast day from the Gospel of Matthew. You know it well, the reading that says: *For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, I was naked and you gave me clothing, I was sick and you took care of me, I was in prison and you visited me.*

But there are three other readings assigned to King Kamehameha VI and Queen Emma's feast day, including the one I just cited, from the Book of Proverbs: *The King's heart is a stream of water in the hand of the Lord and he turns it wherever he will.*

And I believe that this is true of King Kamehameha IV.

Several years ago, I undertook a project in the diocese where I interviewed people on Oahu, Maui, Hawaii Island, Kauai, and Molokai and asked them about their insights into the king and his consort, Queen Emma.

More than one person talked about the king's temper and the fact that it sometimes got the best of him – even to the point where he shot another man during an argument they were having. But isn't it interesting, that that's not what we remember him for? And perhaps that's because the Lord had the king's heart in his hand and it was like the king's heart was a stream of water that was formed where the Lord wanted it to go—flowing down the path of forgiveness, kindness, compassion, and reconciliation.

We know from history that the king felt so horrible about what he had done to the man he shot, that he cared for the man for the rest of his life.

We also know that he cared for his people, going door to door and forgoing pomp and circumstance by walking the streets of Honolulu with his wife to solicit funds from downtown business so that they could build a hospital, the hospital that has become The Queen's Medical Center.

We also know that the king did not exercise his royal privilege by taking communion first when he went to church on Sunday mornings, but instead joined the midst of the congregation, citing that all were equal in the sight of God. Truly, King Kamehameha IV embodies the line in the book of Proverbs: *The king's heart is a stream of water in the hand of the Lord; he turns it wherever he will.*

27th Sunday in Pentecost – November 25, 2018, cont'd.

And I believe that this is true of King Kamehameha IV.

Several years ago, I undertook a project in the diocese where I interviewed people on Oahu, Maui, Hawaii Island, Kauai, and Molokai and asked them about their insights into the king and his consort, Queen Emma. More than one person talked about the king's temper and the fact that it sometimes got the best of him – even to the point where he shot another man during an argument they were having. But isn't it interesting that that's not what we remember him for? And perhaps that's because the Lord had the king's heart in his hand and it was like the king's heart was a stream of water that was formed where the Lord wanted it to go—flowing down the path of forgiveness, kindness, compassion, and reconciliation.

We know from history that the king felt so horrible about what he had done to the man he shot, that he cared for the man for the rest of his life.

We also know that he cared for his people, going door to door and forgoing pomp and circumstance by walking the streets of Honolulu with his wife to solicit funds from downtown business so that they could build a hospital, the hospital that has become The Queen's Medical Center.

We also know that the king did not exercise his royal privilege by taking communion first when he went to church on Sunday mornings, but instead joined the midst of the congregation, citing that all were equal in the sight of God. Truly, King Kamehameha IV embodies the line in the book of Proverbs: *The king's heart is a stream of water in the hand of the Lord; he turns it wherever he will.*

And brings to mind the words that Jesus taught us to pray in The Lord's Prayer, the words that say: *Thy will be done* — in other words, thy will; not mine be done.

And I think that this is why the Episcopal Church chooses to honor him. And I choose the word *honor* very carefully, because it isn't about worshipping King Kamehameha IV. That's not what we're doing when we gather today and when the Royal Civic Societies attend our 8:00 service. That's not our purpose. We come to *honor* the king, but not to worship him and we know that by his actions, that the king himself would be very uncomfortable with our worshipping him, because he believed that all were equal in the sight of God and that we are, therefore, all equal in our call to worship God. And we come together to honor the king, because by the example of how he lived his short life and the decisions that he made in the midst of his personal flaws, he points us toward the face of Christ, the same Christ who teaches us to pray saying *Thy will; not mine, be done*, so that our hearts too are like streams of water in the hand of the Lord.

And as we place our hearts in the hand of the Lord, we must allow the Lord to lead our hearts where he will, even when it means taking us to places that we don't want to go.

But the line in the Book of Proverbs and the life and example of King Kamehameha IV, flawed, challenging and tragic as it may have been, lead the stream of our hearts in the hand of the Lord to a different direction, dashing secular standards of what is right and wrong, the same way Jesus Christ dashed secular standards of what was right and wrong and did things that were revolutionary like hanging out with prostitutes and lepers and women, defying the social, institutional standards of his day and honoring the will of God, even if it meant that ultimately he was going to lose his life for it.

King Kamehameha IV points us to that story and as his people who come to worship in this Cathedral that he and Queen Emma built for us, isn't it incumbent upon us to step into that Christ story with faith and to have our life decisions formed not so much by self-will, but by God's will,

27th Sunday in Pentecost – November 25, 2018, cont'd.

asking that the sacrament of Holy Communion make our hearts malleable in the hands of God as God guides our hearts to do God's will, turning our hearts wherever the Lord will.

May we be faithful to that call and may we honor our founder not through worship and adoration, but by continually asking him to point us toward the face and story of Jesus, the kind, loving, compassionate, self-sacrificing Jesus whose church and Cathedral the king built so that we could worship the Lord and descend the Word of God on our spirits and into our lives: *The king's heart is a stream of water in the hand of the Lord; he turns it wherever he will.*

Amen.