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The Cathedral of St. Andrew - Honolulu

Sermon: Year C – First Sunday after Christmas – December 30, 2018: Momentum Generation

In this morning's letter to the church in Galatia, Paul writes and uses the words "fullness of time." I hear that and I wonder to myself, "How does time become full? And what does it mean if time's empty?" I hear the words and I wonder.

It makes me think back to a couple of weeks ago when I was channel-surfing on HBO and I came upon a documentary called Momentum Generation, a film about a group of professional surfers who are good friends and who were at the height of their game in the 1990s. The movie has incredible surfing footage and it talks about how the careers of this close-knit group of friends evolved over the years and how their relationships had their ups and downs as they traveled the world on the professional surfing circuit.

The documentary showed interview after interview where the surfers talked about how the perfect waves didn't come to them on their timetables, but on Nature's timetable. And so those young surfers spent a great deal of time waiting, anticipating, and being patient, and when the right wave came in they would get on their boards and do all they could to catch and ride it. Time became full.

Momentum Generation also talked about how we remember the thrill of victory and seeing the champions decked with flower lei on podiums at the ends of competitions, but the surfers also talked about how many times they had to lose versus how many times they actually won surfing competitions and tasted victory – in other words, the majority of their time was spent losing and it was then that time began to become full, because they learned about competition and what it takes to win and when time became truly full and they won, it meant so much more to them than if victory had been all they ever knew. And when I think about it I realize that their time was full, because the marking of time involved life lessons and rich experiences that the surfers' treasure, even to this day.

And then Momentum Generation talked about the end of the surfers' professional careers and how so many of them were in darkness, the spiritual doldrums, if you will. But then they worked through it to the point where each of their lives is full again, and full not because they all professionally surf, but because they use the experiences of that fullness of time to help others and to make the world a better place and to make time full for everyone they encounter through charitable foundations, workshops, filmmaking, and reaching out to young people.

After their professional surfing careers were over, time could have been empty for them. They could have forsaken the hope and belief in good things to come. But they made different choices. They made the choice for time to become full. And today they make contributions to the world and help make it a little bit better for others and for themselves.

"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.

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It's been a little over 2,000 years since the birth of Jesus Christ in the Holy Land—far from our shores and in the desert where there is no surf. But ponder with me the amount of time between the dawn of humanity and the birth of Jesus – probably several million years. That span of time became full of history, human development, trials and tribulations, desperation, and the belief instilled in us from the prophets of good things to come. Time was full. And the birth of Jesus was a culmination of time, and it means so much to us because time became full.

And as we move forward and into our lives from this story, the question for me is: How do we continue to make time full? We could, after all, live dull and empty lives. We know many people who do. But the birth of Jesus empowers us to make time full through prayer, worship, and service to others.

But I think there's even more to it than that. In the two years that I've been back at the Cathedral, what strikes me about the fullness of my time with you is the richness of the experience of the relationships that I have with you—baptizing you, your children, your grandchildren; officiating at your weddings; visiting with you when you're ill; presiding at your funerals; standing with you at your ordinations; and also smaller, simpler moments of joy—drinking coffee and eating donuts in the sacristy; laughing and talking story under the tent; or just simply sharing what's going on in our lives. It has definitely made time full—at least for me.

And I think that comes about as a result of trust and vulnerability, letting one another into each other's lives, even to the point of sharing the pain of our lives. Many of you have been with me through some very tough and dark times and I have been with you through some very tough and dark times; not only dark times as a community, but also individually. And yet here we are together in this place of worship. And our doors are still open and available for people to come in for respite and sanctuary. And we continue to be in relationship with one another—not just superficially with niceties and formalities, but true, deep, meaningful relationships.

And, yes, we may argue and disagree. We may engage in conflict. But the question for me is: Can we continue to show up in the midst of that and come together and take communion as a Cathedral community? And the answer for me based on what I see from all of you is a resounding yes. We can come together, and not only does that make time full, it also gives glory to God and this time is full because it's quality time.

This Christmas, with the arrival of the Christ child in our midst, I have faith that we will continue to create full, quality time together and that we will make time to look toward the horizon of the future and to discern God's call to us as a community that's here not only for ourselves, but also for those who have yet to walk through our doors, for those who are desperate for the presence of Christ in their hearts and in their lives, and for those who need us to be there for them.

But for now, and in this present moment, let us come forward for this bread and this wine, knowing that God so loved us that God came to us in human form to experience us as fully as God could. And as we take in the bread and wine into our bodies and into our hearts, may we understand and truly believe that God loves us and that time is full right here and now, that time is full of grace and truth, that time is full of peace, and that time is full with possibility of even greater things yet to come.

And for now, with the Christ child present in our midst, that perfect wave is upon us as we paddle out toward it, catch that wave, jump on the board in a leap of faith, not knowing where the wave is

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really going to take us, but knowing that it will be the thrill of a lifetime—a lifetime where time is full and that wave, that spiritual wave, that perfect wave is the fullness of time made manifest for us, all the while knowing that that's all it really takes to make this a very merry Christmas.

We are in the fullness of time.

Amen.