

"I am the vine, you are the branches; abide in me and you will bear much fruit." John 15:5

Vine & Branches

from St. Elizabeth's Episcopal Church, 720 N. King Street, Honolulu, HI 96817 • Phone (808) 845-2112

Weekly Edition
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A Seamless Garment



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There's a wonderful connection between the heartbeat of our parable and our circumstances today.

After all, what's going on in this parable? It starts out when all the "best people" in town, (who know they are the "best people," who have thrived on the idea of being the "best people,") are suddenly taken by surprise by the gracious invitation to come to the King's party.

I wonder if perhaps the King's party is a metaphor for joining a community where everyone has enough, where everyone is equal, where everyone is cared for?

And if it is, do we grasp the irony when all the "best people" beg off? Do they beg off because they aren't really interested in that kind of life?

Are they stuck on (or stuck in) the way things are? Is that why they busy themselves getting on with life as it is? The hustle and bustle of business?

The marvelous vacations? The worship of pension plans and new cars? The "best people" reject the invitation, "making light of it and going away, one to his farm, another to his business..."

Others among the invited go even further. Like the Neo Nazis marching through Charlottesville shouting "Jews will not replace us!" or the Proud Boys proudly announcing their slogan "we will kill you" — the other proposed guests of the King "seize his slaves, mistreat them, and kill them."

It's remarkable how our current situation is a mirror of this parable told so long ago. We are so many of us shocked and dismayed at the unending vitriol of racism, misogyny, and just plain old hatred that seems to have infected our nation — like a foreign plague.

And yet, the harder question is: "who says this a foreign plague — a thing alien to who we are as a people?"

It's us! The "good people." I'm a card carrying member of the "good people!" You can't be a white male of a certain age, having received so many institutionalized benefits solely by virtue of being a white male, not to be among "the good people."

But there are many among us who are not shocked or surprised by what they see and hear today.

Talk with those at the margins. Listen to people of color. Listen to those who are indigenous to this land.

To those on the economic fringes. If you sit with them, they will tell you that little has changed. That the vitriol and hatred and misogyny is something that they have lived with every day of their lives.

For Black people, since 1619. For Native Americans, since 1492. In short, so many of us who have lived the privileged life are very much those who, every day, reject the King's invitation to join in a different kind of life.

We prefer holding onto the status quo. Completely oblivious to the pain, struggle, and injustice that assaults so many of our neighbors — everyday — for so many years.

We are weeks away from a momentous election.

There is no question that the decisions made by our fellow citizens on November 3 will impact our future.

And yet, how many of us long for a return to “the way things were“ before 2017?

But isn't today's gospel saying that returning to “the way things were“ is not at all what God has in mind?

That what God has in mind is imagining an entirely new kind of society?

A society where the least, the lost and the left behind — take center stage?

A society in which we, “the good people”, who feel so entitled to the best seats at the table —that we take a step back?

That we give up our seats? That we repent?

All of these musings came to me as I was struggling with what it means to be the man who is thrown out of the party — because he's not wearing the proper wedding garment.

Jesus isn't being literal here. The wedding garment is really a metaphor. Scripture is full of clothing as a stand-in for a life wrapped up in faith and trust.

So St Paul encourages the Galatians to “put on the baptismal garment of Christ.”

He implores the Colossians to clothe themselves “in compassion, kindness, mercy and patience.”

And then there's the prophet Isaiah, who speaks of God “clothing Israel with righteousness.”

While St Peter encourages his small community “to be clothed in humility.”

It's a way of reminding us that faith that fails to change us — is no faith at all.

Our faith, if it's alive, will change us. And change we must if we wish to wear the wedding garment of the kingdom of God.

It is a garment sewn not with hands, but with hearts. And there is this about a wedding garment. It is a single piece of cloth.

It cannot be divided. Like Christ's garment that the soldiers gambled over, at his crucifixion.

The seamless garment tells us something about who we are to be at the wedding feast of God, and who we are to become as we journey to that place.

We are to be seamless. With one another. And with God. The student asks: “How are we to treat others?”

And the teacher replies: “There are no others.” We are called to embrace a unity of spirit.

A sense that all people, all things, all creation, and all that is uncreated, is intimately connected.

Interwoven. Indeed, a seamless garment. We see evidence of this in the very structure of nature — in something called “fractals.”

Fractals are patterns that repeat themselves everywhere in nature.

Patterns like leaves on trees. Spots on leopards. Snowflakes — and the myriad designs on butterfly wings.

Patterns that range from the huge, like mountain ranges and galaxies, to the microscopic, like dividing cells. An infinite variety of patterns.

Each distinct pattern, identical. If all of life is fractal, reflecting in miniature the everliving Creator of all things, then can we come to see that the divisions we create are not only fruitless — but just plain dumb?

I leave you with these words to ponder. The fractal is that Repeating pattern everywhere in nature on leaves, snowflakes and tiger stripes.

Take it large and fractal is the Multiverse... The never ending existence of a billion trillion Universes in which we each exist in which we each live out every possible life experience Love, Loss, Culture, Color, Gender, Race.

What if in one such world, Blacks enslave whites, Women rule over men, And hetero sex is the oddball sex?

What if every experience that could ever be felt is felt in full by each and every one of us in a dazzling array of lives that may see me as fat and old in one, Beautiful and young in another, Married Once, Twice, Many times, or Never.

Dying young, then in another, spending years beneath white hair?

Not the successive lives of reincarnation but the simultaneous lives of fractal?

If we, in this infinity of lives, experience all experience, does it contribute to the unifying whole?

Making each of our Fractal lives priceless beyond measure? Is it then that God brings everything together?

Will we at last know as we are known? Will we see as we are seen? Will we love as we are loved?

Or, as Jesus says: ‘When you make the two into one, and when you make the inner like the outer, and the outer like the inner, and the upper like the lower, and when you make male and female into a single one, so that the male will not be male nor the female be female, when you make eyes in place of an eye, a hand in place of a hand, a foot in place of a foot, an image in place of an image, then ... you will enter the Kingdom.’” -Gospel of Thomas, logion 22.

Today, Jesus invites us to become a seamless garment.

Are we ready to accept his invitation?

+amen

A Sunday In Palama

Cops tearing through our neighborhood, a young man running
with what turns out to be a 7-Eleven bento
stolen of course, yet
worth less than seven dollars.



He steals from them all the time, the police say,
As they justify **high-speed blue lights** racing through our lot.
High-speed police chase, through our lot, right as services end,
all for the price of a **seven dollar bento?**

Risking the loss of an elder's life
who may not see a cop car racing through?
Chasing a man who is simply hungry?

What are these days that we are living in?

When the billionaires and millionaires bank so many millions and billions?

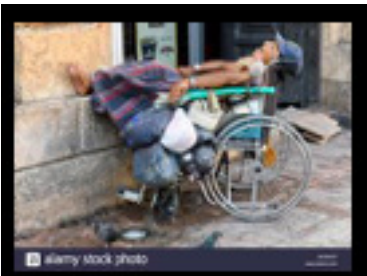
Where regular folks can't pay their rent, can't put food on the table,
who show up in shame to a food pantry?

Who are we?

What do we value?

Forget about what we preach and teach,
and proclaim from mountain tops.

It's often **Baloney.**



Our values, our traditions, our hopes and dreams, are real only if we live them day by day.

And when we don't, we invite the judgment of God, which will burn our iron ore, our impurities, our stubbornness, until all is melted away,

until all is purest, finest, unimpaired, unimpeached, gold.



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Isn't this our destiny?

Isn't this is our hope?

Can we seize the day?

Let's trust that the God who raised the crucified one will raise us too.

And not only us.

The hungry young man as well.

And the coppers chasing him down.

Because these things are true

perhaps, we can trust the hard road that God sets before us.

A road often painful.

Yet God knows that the best teacher is pain.

Thanks be to God!

