

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

Vine & Branches

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Weekly Edition
December 1,
2021

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Endings

I saw a movie last week entitled “How Things End.” It was, as the title suggests, a movie about the end of the world.

Suddenly, bad things are happening everywhere. Power is out. Massive storms arrive. And people are left in a general state of confusion.

The most pressing point made by the movie, of course, is that endings have a way of getting our attention like a few other things. Whether those endings be the dramatic end of the whole world or the end of our own individual world, endings have a way of focusing the mind!

And so a week after the feast day of the holy sovereigns, Emma and Kamehameha IV, we can't help but recall the ending of the Hawaiian monarchy, and for too long, the near ending of the Hawaiian culture itself. Other endings may come with a cancer diagnosis.

Or news of chronic heart failure. Or the end of a marriage. Or the countless other catastrophes that each life inevitably confronts. Endings, like a fist in the eye, have that uncanny knack for grabbing our attention.

Which is probably why on this day of beginnings, (the first Sunday of Advent, the first day of the new church year), we're invited to pay attention to endings.

Whether it's the prophet Jeremiah longing for the day when God's justice will at long last reign supreme, to the Psalmists' prayer to bathe in God's ways, to the gospel lesson, as Jesus warns of the wrapping up of all things.

The thing is, paying attention to endings says a lot about how we live our lives “now.” Because if we don't pay attention to endings, chances are pretty good that the life we're living now — will be a mess.

If we don't have a good sense of our own endings, we're much more likely to get lost in the siren songs of wealth, power or fame.

We're much more likely to succumb to the lie that merely practicing religious rituals makes us better people. As the old rabbi remarked when the student told him he'd been all through the Torah that year:

“The question, young man,” said the rabbi, “is not whether you've been through the Torah, but whether the Torah has been through you!”

In other words, am I simply going through the motions? Or am I really changing? Keeping our endings front and center every day makes it more likely we'll remember why we're here in the first place.

Isn't it to make this place better for our fellows, and for those who come after us? Endings remind us that life is short and can end at any moment.

A glimpse at the daily headlines confirms that truth. Whether it's a family enjoying a holiday parade in Waukesha, Wisconsin, who is mowed down by an enraged man with a long criminal history, or the tragedy of Isabella Kalua's short, brutal life right here in Waimanalo; life is meaningful only when it's lived by devoting ourselves to those activities and concerns that really matter - rather than the passing pleasures of mere entertainment.

Wealth reveals its true purpose when it's used not simply for our own security, safety and comfort - but when it's shared.



Because money, like manure, is only useful when it's spread around — helping things to grow.

And we're able to develop that mindset of generosity if we practice living in the only place that actually exists. The present. The "now."

This moment. How many people spend their entire lives pining away with nostalgia for the past, or living in abject fear of the future, when neither past nor future even exist?

It's the story of the young monk who asks the old master where to look for enlightenment.

"Here," the Holy One says. "When will it happen?" "Right now." "Why don't I feel it?" "Because you aren't looking." "What should I be looking for?" "Nothing, just look."

"At what?" "Anything you happen to see." "Is there a special way I need to look?" "No, the ordinary way is fine."

"But I always look that way!" "No, you don't." "Why do you say that?" "Because to look, you must be here. And most of the time, you're somewhere else." J. Chittester, *The Rule of Benedict*, 299-300, modified.

Which is why we are here today. It's why we show up each and every week. To prepare, yes. As individuals. But even more so, as a community.

Because whatever endings may come our way, we're learning to live, as much as possible, in the ever present "now."

Together, we hear the Word and sing songs. We recite the deep truths of our faith. We confess our sins.

And we take in — through the bread and wine — the body and blood of the one who assures us that all shall be well.

But these steps, our participation in the rituals of our faith, as important as they are, aren't the end.

In fact they're only the beginning of our preparation. As we continue our spiritual journey, what we come to see is that the key to spiritual maturity is something we normally run away from.

That key is surrender. But let's be clear. Surrender isn't about rolling over.

"Surrender is about relaxing into a sort of 'inner alignment' that allows you and I to stay in the flow of the deep wisdom that is always and forever moving through us.

Surrender is a place of openness. An openness that frees us to face with serenity anything that life throws our way.

According to the 17th century mystic John Boehme: 'HERE, NOW, is the right place for you to wrestle before the divine face.

If you remain firm, if you do not bend, you shall see and perceive amazing wonders.

You'll even discover how Christ will invade the hell in you and subdue every one of your beasts." C. Bourgeault, *The Wisdom Jesus*, 174, paraphrased.

Surrender connects us to Christ. Heart to heart. Mind to mind. Spirit to spirit.

With surrender comes the ability to see the very thing that all of our endings are preparing us for.

That which is True and Real and Eternal. That which we so often call the glory of God.

C.S. Lewis says: "The sense that in this universe we are strangers, our longing to be noticed, to hear some response, to bridge the abyss that stretches between us and Reality, is part of every person's inconsolable secret.

And so we long for that glimpse of the glory of God. A glory that beckons us, that even longs for us. For glory means relationship with God. Acceptance by God. To be welcomed into the heart of all things." Modified.

And here's the promise of surrender. Surrender allows that door to at long last, open.

We catch glimpses of God's glory when we till the fields that yield the fruit of our faith.

It's every Saturday morning, at breakfast in the hall. This marvelous ministry that the Lino family created and that the loving hands of so many continues — sees on a weekly basis not only the hungry fed — but this rainbow collection of God's people.

Anglicans, Hawaiians, Romans, Chinese, Unitarians, Filipinos, Jews, and even Nones, coming together as one. As we are all graced with a peek inside the banquet hall of God. We catch a glimpse of God's glory during the Tuesday hot lunches served by the Catholic Workers and the many community members who support them.

Where it's not only about a hot meal or a bag of groceries — but taking the time to talk story — to learn from each other's stories.

To see those in need as sisters and brothers. As fellow travelers, trudging this road of happy destiny.

So, welcome to Advent! May it be a season of noticing endings. May it be a season of living in the NOW.

And may you feel the joy, grace and delight that Almighty God pours out every minute of every day!

+amen

What's Coming Up?

Advent Adventure: Living the Way of Love, 10 AM each Wednesday, Live and Via Zoom (see church website for the link)

About half of last year's pledge cards are in.....if planning to pledge for 2022, kindly send yours too!

Please look for Doug Ing's letter in the mail this week for A/C Capital Fund drive!

Thinking of Christmas Party Drive By for the Keiki on December 18....gift buyers and wrappers needed please!

Christmas Eve service at 9 PM will be Live and Streaming!

Christmas Day at 9 AM will be Live only!

Free Covid Instant Tests still available!

Did we mention Pledge Cards?



Ani's To De Rescue!!!!

Many thanks to our friends at **Ani's Bakery** for running a canned goods food drive for St E's on Thanksgiving Day!!!!

Food of the gods like SPAM, Vienna Sausage and Corn Beef were received by the truckload today!!!!

Not to mention Ani's year round donations of delicious bread every week for the Food Pantry!!!!!!

Annnnd, they even donated \$500 to our Food Pantry Fund!!!!!!
Mahalo!!!!!!!!!!!!!!



(And say hello to Aunty Lynette's newest edition!)