

“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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## Whom Shall We Follow?

The Right Reverend  
Robert L. Fitzpatrick  
V Bishop of Hawaii

The Reverend  
David J. Gierlach  
Rector

The Reverend  
Imelda S. Padasdao,  
Priest Associate

The Reverend Peter S. M. Fan,  
Cantonese Language Priest

Fr. Mafi Vakameilalo,  
Priest Associate

The Reverend Deacon  
Viliani Langi, Deacon

Hsiao Ying “Ajaon” Chen  
Choir Director

Marie Wang  
Organist

Bill Slocumb  
Parish Administrator

—

Cathy Lowenberg  
Senior Warden

Charles Steffey  
Junior Warden

Doug Ing  
Secretary

Caren Chun-Esaki  
Treasurer

www.stelizabeth720.org  
stelizabethhawaii  
@gmail.com

I don't know about you, but I can count on one hand the number of sermons I have heard (or preached) about Judas, probably with a few fingers missing.

And those sermons that have been preached about him seem to boil down to a few similar takes on why Judas did what he did. He's a cowardly traitor. Or he's a greedy gold-digger who figures the other side is the winning side.

And sadly, over the course of too many centuries of vicious anti-Semitism that has polluted Christianity, Judas was even held up as the whipping boy for the entire Jewish people.

On a kinder note, some scholars now argue that Judas and Jesus actually planned it all! That Judas simply did what Jesus asked him to do in securing his arrest.

And yet, perhaps what motivated Judas was something beyond greed or treachery or even loyalty. Perhaps what pushed Judas to do what he did was something so deeply rooted in what it is to be human, that we all of us spend a lifetime grappling with it.

Perhaps what Judas was really motivated by wasn't greed or weakness of character, or even a secret pact with Jesus, but by his inability to surrender control.

Perhaps he, like me, and perhaps like some of you, could not fathom the notion that somehow God can create joy and peace and the beloved community out of something as strange as letting go of control.

That love of enemies rather than revenge, that walking the extra mile rather than insisting upon my just rewards, that turning the other cheek and giving the other gal the benefit of the doubt, that a life lived this way really is the path to a life that is full.

Judas, like me, and perhaps like some of you, thought he knew better. Of course we need massive military budgets! A fat retirement portfolio!

Security gates around our upper middle-class neighborhoods! And low taxes for the rich! These are the essentials to a life worth living! Judas, like me, perhaps like some of you, knew that only in this way do we find peace, joy, and community.

Of course it tends to be the peace of an empire safeguarded by nuclear weapons. It tends to be the joy that is fulfilled by biting into a fat saturated Big Mac. It tends to be a community in which everyone looks, thinks, and talks, just like me.

What Judas misses, what I so often miss, is that God wants so much more for us. Maybe what we need to see in Judas is the incarnation, the embodiment, of “the world” that Jesus keeps referring to over and over in today's gospel lesson.

This gospel lesson, so much like a quiet murmuring, a longing lullaby, that Jesus is sharing with the Father. You have to wonder whether it should be sung to really get to its depths? For in this quiet meditation, Jesus contrasts “the way of the world” with “God's way.”



He prays that the apostles will choose surrender over control. Release over recrimination. Peace over power. Judas chooses control, recrimination and power, and nothing ends well for him.

Today particularly we have an urgent need to come to grips with the way of Judas — and the way of Jesus.

Now more than ever, as our modern, sophisticated, western society stands at the brink of worldwide disaster caused by 200 years of industrialization, we might ask: whose way shall we follow?

For 200 years we have turned figuring out how to control people, places and things into its own religion.

Our modern economies depend on using the planet as an unending source of ever greater exploitation. And those economies have become a merciless juggernaut in bringing us to this current place of peril due to climate change.

Climate change that humanity is directly responsible for. Climate change that may very well bring about, if not our complete demise, then at least immense suffering.

Remarkably, even now, we continue to drag our feet in taking the steps necessary to curtail its worst consequences.

Some of that foot dragging is caused by willful ignorance. It's ironic to the point of laughing out loud (if not crying) when we hear certain social commentators talk about how our current American civilization was created from a blank slate, thereby falsely dismissing the thousands of years in which Indigenous people lived in these lands.

In harmony with nature. Sustaining it. Nurturing it. And passing it down from generation to generation. Always in better shape than they found it.

Yet, in a mere 200 years, Western man, (and it is most definitely “man”), has created a throwaway society geared toward consumption, the pillaging of natural resources, and an addiction to ever expanding growth.

As here we stand — at the precipice of catastrophe. And the question becomes quite urgent: will we continue on the road that leads to suicide on a mass scale?

The road Judas took? Or will we embrace the life giving way of Jesus? The way that favors the outcast and prisoner? The way that is kind to the check-out guy at the local grocery? The way that chooses to die rather than kill? The way that stops to chat with a lonely person? The way that structures our economy in a way respectful of, and caring toward, those future, unborn generations?

Requiring a radical shift from growth to stability. From consumption to preservation. From waste to renewal. Which requires from all of us a drastic change in how we see the world, and ourselves.

A metanoia. A change of consciousness. And that very change of consciousness, which leads to life rather than death, is beautifully set out in this morning's reading from Acts.

It's on display in the way in which the new apostle was chosen, the one needed to replace Judas. They draw lots!

And while some folks may think that God is putting her hand on the scales, that God nudges the dice, that he selects heads or tails, that she is the author of chance — maybe something else is happening here.

Maybe this choosing by lots is trying to tell us, not something about God, but is trying to tell us something about ourselves. Because choosing by lots means neither man controls his destiny.

He's not giving a speech about why he's the right choice. No letters of recommendation come flooding in. Instead, the one who is chosen and the one who isn't come to see that the choice has nothing to do with their deserving something, earning something, or being entitled to something.

Both the one who is chosen and the one who isn't come to see that they have no control over the matter.

And that whether they are chosen or not, going forward and living life in a way that is free of the need to be in control, why, that's the path that they're each called to walk.

Whether or not they are given the title of Apostle. Isn't that the question the story of Judas asks each of us today?

“Who am I following?” Judas? Or Jesus? Let us pray. “Loving God, you fill all things with a fullness and hope that we can never comprehend.

Thank you for leading us into a time where more of reality is being unveiled for us all to see. We pray that you will take away our natural temptation for cynicism, denial, fear and despair.

Help us have the courage to awaken to greater truth, greater humility, and greater care for one another. May we place our hope in what matters and what lasts, trusting in your eternal presence and love.

Listen to our hearts' longings for the healing of our suffering world.

Help us to be the change your creation cries out for. We offer these prayers in all the names by which you Lord are known.”

R. Rohr, modified.

+amen

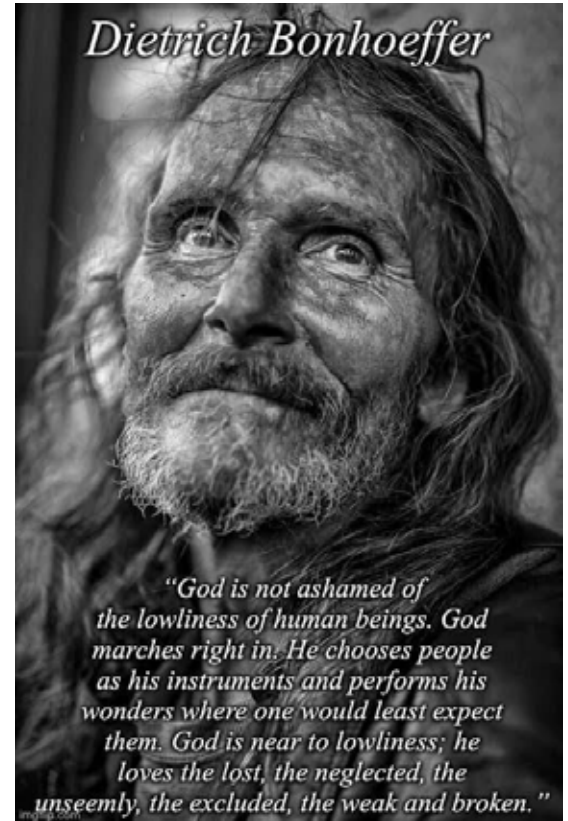
### **What If?**

*What if you thought of it as the Jews consider the Sabbath —  
the most sacred of times?  
Cease from travel.  
Cease from buying and selling.  
Give up, just for now, on trying to make  
the world different than it is.  
Sing. Pray. Touch only those to whom you commit your life.  
Center down.*

*And when your body has become still, reach out with your heart.  
Know that we are connected in ways  
that are terrifying and beautiful.  
(You could hardly deny it now.)  
Know that our lives are in one another's hands.  
(Surely, that has become clear.)  
Do not reach out your hands.  
Reach out your heart.  
Reach out your words.  
Reach out all the tendrils of compassion that move, invisibly,  
where we cannot touch.*

*Promise this world your love- for better or for worse, in sickness  
and in health, so long as we all shall live.*

*Lynn Ungar*



### **Camille + Jeremy Shout Out**

I would like to thank everyone for your support in accepting Camille and I into your world. Between the different churches and individuals helping bring food, and the people who are here helping out everyday it's nice to see how well Wallyhouse is running. I was reading 1 Corinthians 12 this week. It talks about us being the body of Christ and it really is true. That everyone working together really does make a difference. We all play an essential role. We get to reflect light into this world. He is the source of that light! How great it feels to let Him work through us. The community of people we serve really do appreciate it. And so do I. The idea is to help as many people as we can and it looks like hundreds of people are coming in. We couldn't do it without you. Your contribution has done wonders. We have Food Bank, Kay's Cafe, Saturday breakfast, Rice and fresh bread and fresh veggies as big as my head- I mean the list goes on. You guys are awesome and I love being a part of a team that is working so hard to render ourselves of service. I look forward to seeing other ways we can help. If you think of any please feel free to reach out to Camille or myself. **Jeremy**

What a life it is here at Wallyhouse! All of the nooks and crannies here are superfluous with character—from the volunteers to the ministries to the beaches to the mountains to the food bank to the farms to the people we call our neighbors. It's clear that each role is just as essential as the one before it, and we're constantly given the opportunity to learn from everybody— just as Dorothy Day shows us. It's stunning to watch the way Wallyhouse runs, with the tight knit community within and the overwhelming amount of organized support from others around Oahu- which give us the ability to say yes to people so often! Barbara lives with love and to see that same drive to care unconditionally shine through everyone that walks through the gate is refreshing. There's a truly strong team of humility here to unite forces for the good of human, each with their own skillset. Like a cooler version of the Avengers. And with infinite dog sidekicks. It's been a wonderful three weeks so far, being shown the ropes by Professional Lovers and Carers. Thank you for welcoming us to your beautiful island! **Camille**

## A Day in the Life of Wallyhouse by barbara bennett, tssf

At Wallyhouse, the chaos is relatively mild most days, but some days stand out for their challenges. Take Ascension Thursday, May 13, for example, which began with loud yelling and banging. It was Terry over at the church. She had herself so worked up she was inconsolable. Fr. David, having had enough of her screaming while pounding on doors, resorted to calling the police. They couldn't do much with her either, but we had a community of folks ready and able to guide her off of the property until she could mellow out.

Most days we serve groceries to a good number of people who come sporadically throughout the day keeping things interesting but calm enough for breaks. On this day, everyone must have been hungry because we had a consistent line of people waiting for food bags all day long; no breaks to be had. God must have noticed our need for food to hand out to all of our friends at the door because no sooner had Fr. David left to shop at the Food Bank (leaving his puppy Finnegan in Camille's able care) did a Food Bank truck pull up with three pallets of food for us to offload into the church's pantry. The problem was we had not yet moved the boxes of MRE's (dehydrated daily food rations) out of the location where the newly delivered food was to go. Poor Finnegan was left to nap alone while Camille and I moved the piles of MRE boxes. Fortunately, Jeremy arrived home from the post office in time to help with the Food Bank deliveries—both from the FB truck and from Fr. David's shopping, who had by then returned. Oh, did I mention that this was Jeremy and Camille's day off? 😞

Just as we sighed relief for a job well done, the Aloha Harvest Food truck pulled in. We were hoping for drinks from them but instead they had food, three large boxes containing bentos, sushi, musabi, takeout salads and such, and a pallet of "various stuff". Feeling a bit worn out after the Food Bank pallets, I opted for the three boxes and sent the Aloha folks on their way. But, Jinna's brother, who works for Aloha Harvest, was in the truck and Jinna came out to greet him. He told her about the pallet, and Jinna convinced me we should take it. She was right. It was a pallet of food from Whole Foods, lots of great breads, yogurts, drinks, dips and cheeses, all sorts of great stuff. We all pretty much missed our lunch break sorting through it all, but it was worth it. Now we were well stocked with canned goods and fresh foods to hand out to our guests.

By 2:00 p.m., exhausted but satisfied, were we ready to open for our afternoon shift. Guests arrived at the door, but we were not so busy as the morning. Around three o'clock, a woman arrives, comes through the gate and into the house. "I am Kathryn, I am fully vaccinated and I have food for you." Okay, I stammer. "I have milk, fruit and prepared meals." And off she went to fetch it all. The meals were warm and nicely packaged. We passed them out as fast as we could, feeling pretty much like Santa Claus 🎅 with all the food to hand out.

At four o'clock, with a sigh of deep relief as we prepared to close for the day, we heard "Help! help me!" There, hanging onto our fence was a man yelling, "call an ambulance. I have been pepper sprayed. Help!" Lovely came out, grabbed one of the milks just delivered and started pouring it in his eyes to help calm the burning. The man grabbed the milk from her and began drinking it. "It's not to drink, it's for your eyes," Lovely explained. The police and ambulance arrived and recognized the gentleman. "What did you do this time?" they asked. (This same gentleman had been harassing the women in our morning food line, seems one had finally had enough.) Once gone with the medics, we closed up and I set out on a walk with the dogs. It is a good way to slough off the day and regain composure. Noticing my state of being, I thought: I really need a shower. Well, never mind the blue sky, it started pouring rain ☁️. Couldn't help but laugh. Thanks God, yours is abundance.

