

"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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V Bishop of Hawaii

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—
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www.stelizabeth720.org
stelizabethhawaii@gmail.com

Myth

A Lutheran pastor was running a book study a few months ago and got herself into some hot water.

As the class talks about different genres of books: science fiction, biography, autobiography, someone pipes up and asks: "what genre does the Bible fit into?"

And the pastor immediately responds: "Mythology!" Everyone in the room gets real quiet.

The pastor quickly changes the topic. But she's right. The problem is, we don't really understand what "myth" means.

We think of myth as fiction, things we hope might be true but know are not.

For most folks, myth is what's up on the movie screen, it's superheroes, cartoon characters. But in fact, as this pastor later argued in a magazine article, myth is the sum and substance of that which is Really Real.

It's how we mark out, live out, and define our lives. Myth is the very thing that structures our values, our hopes and dreams and aspirations, and ultimately the very society that we build and live in.

Without myth, there is no human life. And so yes, we live in a world of myth. When people speak of America being the greatest nation in the world, God's special gift to the world, that's myth.

When those on the left envision a society where goods are shared, where each receives according to her needs and contributes according to her abilities, that's myth.

That capitalism is the most efficient driver of human well-being — is myth. So you can see, myth is anything but unreal or unbelievable.

Myth is actually how we structure our day to day lives. But which myth we choose to live by can and does have wildly different consequences.

We see that playing out in our daily news as the president continues to refute his loss. He's promoting a myth of rampant and systemic corruption that robbed him of his hoped for "overwhelming victory."

The consequence of that myth is distrust in our electoral system, distrust of our democratic form of government.

The point being, the myth that we choose to devote our lives to — matters. Myth is like worship. Just like it's never a question of whether we shall worship, only what or whom we shall worship, just so, it's never a question of whether we shall choose a myth to live within — only which myth shall we put our faith and trust in?

Today, in Mark's gospel, the writer invites us to throw our lot in with the myth of Jesus. In Jesus, we are invited into a world in which God takes centerstage.

Always and everywhere. Never leaving us alone. A world in which God is so in love with every human being that God becomes human.

Lives, breathes and walks among us. So that one day, we may live, breathe and become ourselves, one with God. It's a story, a myth, that shifts our gaze from anxious, often neurotic worries over day to day survival, and asks us to take the broader view.



It reminds us that no one is asked their permission to be born. No one knows the day of their last breath.

Meanwhile, the time between those two events becomes ever shorter the longer we live.

And this fact invites us to focus on the bigger picture of life. I once said, quite wrongly, that the difference between Christianity and say, Buddhism and Hinduism, is that Christianity sees time with a distinct beginning and ending, whereas the other great faiths see time as circular, never ending.

In fact, we too experience time as circular as we every year reexperience our church year, starting with Advent, moving to Christmas, then Epiphany, then Lent, then the Easter season, followed by what we call “ordinary time” — all ending up once again with Advent.

And like our Hindu and Buddhist sisters and brothers, it’s not an endless merry-go-round.

With every season, and every year, we are called not to go far, but to go deep.

The repetition is intended to take us into the depths. When we’re just getting started, we read the stories quite literally, wanting it all to be scientifically provable.

We can even become quite rigid about what is “true” and what is not.

But as we continue, season after season, year after year, we begin to find the lines softening.

The edges get chipped away. As we slowly discover the deepening Mystery that holds all things together.

Instead of seeing the Bible as God’s dictation to humanity, we begin to experience it as a record of a long conversation between God and humanity.

We stop using the Bible to determine what love means, and instead use love to determine what the Bible means.

“The beginning of the good news of Jesus Christ, the Son of God,” as Mark begins his story, is all about God coming to be among a people far too wrapped up in ritual and power struggles.

A people who have forgotten where they come from — and what their true destiny is.

A people very much like us today. And to those people, and to us also, Jesus brings something new.

Through water and the Holy Spirit, he comes to restore us to our original truth, our original calling, by placing us back in our original myth.

One that sees the world and all that is in it as the beloved treasure of God. One which sees every person as a miracle, a creature made in the image and likeness of God.

As Brian McClaren puts it: “I believe that the Spirit of God works everywhere to bring and restore aliveness— through individuals, communities, institutions, and movements.

Movements play a special role. In the biblical story of Exodus, for example, Moses leads a movement of liberation among oppressed slaves.

They leave an oppressive economy, journey through the wilderness, and enter a promised land where they hope to pursue aliveness in freedom and peace.

Centuries after that, the Hebrew prophets launch a series of movements based on a dream of a promised time. A time of justice, when swords and spears, instruments of death, shall be turned into plowshares and pruning hooks, instruments of aliveness. Isaiah 2:4; Micah 4:3.

Then comes John the Baptist. A bold and nonviolent movement leader who dares to challenge the establishment of his day, who calls people to a movement of radical social and spiritual rethinking.

Then a young man named Jesus comes, siding with John’s movement through baptism, and John says,

“Here he is! He’s the one!” Under Jesus’ leadership, the movement grows and expands in unprecedented, unimaginable, ways.

It rises again through a new generation of leaders like James, Peter, John, and Paul, who are filled with the Spirit of Jesus.

They create learning circles in which activists are trained to extend the movement: locally, regionally, even globally.

Wherever activists in this movement go, the Spirit of Jesus is alive in them, fomenting change and inspiring true aliveness.

Christianity begins as a revolutionary nonviolent movement promoting a new kind of aliveness, on the margins of society.

It claims that everyone, not just an elite few, have God-given gifts to use for the common good.

It exposes a system based on domination, privilege, and violence and proclaims in its place a vision of mutual service, mutual responsibility: the peaceable kingdom.

It puts people above profit. It makes the audacious claim that the Earth belongs not to rich tycoons or powerful politicians, but to the Creator who loves every sparrow in the tree and every wildflower in the field.

It is a peace movement. A love movement. A joy movement. A justice movement. An integrity movement. An aliveness movement.” B. McLaren, *We Make The Road By Walking*, modified.

This is our story. This is our myth. May we embrace it. Live it. Share it. And revel in it!

For when we do, we too shall witness “mercy and truth meeting together; righteousness and peace — kissing each other.”

Bento Bliss

Our pal **John Yano** (here with **aunty Kerry**) made a few kazillion deeeelicious breakfast bentos to share with our Saturday morning friends. Red hot dog, portagee sausage, rice with furukake and more!!! Thanks so much John!!



Annual Wallyhouse Christmas Appeal

And the Word became flesh and pitched his tent among us." John 1:14 (REV). "We can certainly try to grow in love, and it is good practice, this giving what we've got, whether it is a cup of coffee or money to pay the grocery bill. We ask you in the name of St. Therese, on whose feast I write, and in the name of St. Francis, whose feast comes tomorrow. It is always a feast where love is, and where love is, God is." —Dorothy Day

Dear Family and Friends,

We are blessed to count you among our larger community, we are blessed by the love and support each of you give us here at Wallyhouse, we are blessed by daily opportunities of finding God dwelling in our midst. Yes, it has been a challenging year beyond anything any of us might have imagined, but pitched in the middle of it all has been love, and that carries us through to where we find a feast of gratitude. And grateful we are, dear ones.

We say... Mahalo, Thank you... to our many donors, friends and volunteers who helped Wallyhouse rise to the occasion of the near overwhelming increase in those needing food and basic services during the pandemic. We could not carry on without you. You are our community for whom everyday we pray, Mahalo! Thank you!

Appeal needs... This rise in numbers of guests at our door has strained our budget and brought about some new expenses, including... an increased bill at the food bank where we obtain most of the food that goes into the near 5,000 bags of groceries we give out each month, and an increase in cost to run Kay's Cafe, our weekly hot lunch program.

Not only has our number of guests increased, but because it is now take-out style, we have the added expense of serving the food in carry-out containers. the addition of a port-a-potty since folks can no longer come inside to use bathroom facilities. the addition of a cardboard recycle bin to accommodate the ridiculous amount of cardboard generated by the cases and cases of foods we give out. We can no longer justify allowing all of that cardboard going into the landfill.

We ask you to help in any way you can with your tax deductible donation which can now be made online with Givvia at St. E's website: www.stelizabeth720.org, click on "GIVE" then follow instructions for Givvia. Choose "Catholic Worker Fund" on the "where do you want to give" dropdown menu. Or, we still like checks which may be made payable to:

St. Elizabeth's Episcopal Church, memo: Wallyhouse CW
 Mail to: Wallyhouse at St. Elizabeth's, 720 North King St, Honolulu, HI 96817

Thank you for your gift to the Wallyhouse ministry! With gratitude and blessings of this Holy Season. May peace and good prevail,

barbara bennett, tssf, Wally & Kay Inglis, and Fr. David Gierlach, SCP

