

*"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

**Special Weekly  
Edition  
March 25, 2020**

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## Sight and Insight

One of the biggest criticisms about Christianity by modern, scientific, sophisticated folks has to do with the miracles that Jesus performs.

None more so than restoring the sight of a man born blind. We modern folks tend to pooh pooh such tales as ancient magic or the superstitions of a gullible people.

And yet, as with all things Jesus, we frequently miss the point, especially when it comes to the miracle stories, especially when it comes to the blind being able to see.

Today's gospel, like last week's, is a long story! Some may wish we did some editing and summarizing rather than plow through the whole thing!

But we plow through because, just like last week's beautiful story of the Samaritan woman, today's story is full of priceless jewels, if only we walk slowly enough to spot them.

Because while on its surface this is a story of a blind man cured, in fact, it's the story of those who think they can see, yet who are in fact truly blind.

The real miracle that Jesus pulls off isn't so much restoring the physical ability to see, it's that he takes blind folks like us: blind to the wonder of creation, blind to the interconnection between the sacred and the ordinary, blind to the unfolding of God's kingdom on this good earth, and slowly helps us begin to see.

Like that other blind man cured in a different gospel, we at first see only through blurry eyes, and what we see is often fuzzy and out of focus.

But if we hang in there with Jesus, our vision slowly improves, and then the real miracles begin to happen. That smelly bum hanging out at the street corner, if you see him through the eyes Jesus gives us, why, lo and behold, that bum turns out to be Our Lord, standing in our midst!

When life throws its slings and arrows our way, like this virus now consuming our world, in our blindness we often greet such things with anger, resentment, self-pity or fear.

But with Jesus eyes, we begin to see these as soul shaping gifts, intended to change us into more human beings; into people who, because we know suffering, can extend mercy and compassion to others in the same boat.

And when we feel that life is spinning out of control, and in our desperation seek to hold on tight to life as we think it ought to be, when we put on Jesus eyes, it's possible to let it all go, to move with the wild wind that is God's Spirit — letting her take us where she will.



The journey from blindness to sight is a journey from unbelief, to belief, and from belief to faith, and from faith to a new consciousness about the very nature of reality.

A life of unbelief just sees what's obvious: a dog eat dog world — where we better learn to bite!

But belief begins to see beyond the obvious, even if it's just a hint that life must be more than “eat, drink and be merry, for tomorrow we die.”

Faith begins to put meat on the bones of belief, as we actually try to start living differently, more generously, more intuitively.

And that's when we notice the often slow awakening of a new consciousness, one that peeks behind the curtain of what seems to be real — and into the profound mysteries of the Really Real.

The poet puts it like this: “If the eyes of perception were cleansed, we would see things as they are — infinite.” W. Blake.

He expands on this thought in another place, where he urges those with eyes....

“To see a World in a Grain of Sand And a Heaven in a Wild Flower, Hold Infinity in the palm of your hand, And Eternity in an hour.” Id.

Perhaps during these days when our normal routines have come to a halt, when the uncertainty of daily life screams from every headline, perhaps now is the time to sit for awhile, and ask for the grace to really see, to ask for the humility to be open to the gracious Creator of all things, who holds you tenderly in the palm of her hand.

+amen



The happy campers at the Lenten Series: Learning Our Faith Again... for the first time... So sorry it turned into classes interruptus due to the pandemic....We miss you all!!!!!!

# PLEDGE CENTRAL

Dear Friends of St. Elizabeth's Episcopal Church:

**DOLPHINS are frolicking in the Peace Garden pond!** Just kidding! Do we have your attention? We hope so and hope you keep reading.

To state the obvious, we are all adapting to a new lifestyle with the current "state of the State." One constant hasn't changed and that is **your donations are needed now more than ever**. The Church operates on a whopping \$40,000.00 a month to serve our long time members and to assist the many in need within our disadvantaged community. Pledge donations account for 25% of this sum. Water and electricity bills, salaries, repair and maintenance and of course outreach expenses still continue to rack up just the same in a pandemic. Our endowments are effectively unavailable with the serious decline of the stock market. Blah, blah, blah, blah, blah, blah, are you still reading along?

**So what can you do to HELP?** Here are a few suggestions:

1. **Send your entire pledge for the year in one lump sum or please mail in your weekly offering.** If you make the lump sum contribution, you will be all good for 2020.

2. **Contribute through GIVLIA.** It's easy as pie. Visit [www.stelizabeth720.org](http://www.stelizabeth720.org) and click on the "GIVE" at the top center of the page. Scroll down and click on the link: [www.givlia.com/g/stelizabeth](http://www.givlia.com/g/stelizabeth). You can make a one-time electronic gift contribution or a recurring one. Consider saving a tree (no check writing) **while racking up miles or getting cash back on your credit card.**

3. **You didn't pledge yet this year?** No problem! This is a great time to give. For each donation of \$1,000.00 or more, your name or your loved one's name will be displayed on the **new St. Elizabeth's 2020 "Year of the Pandemic" Contribution plaque**. Did you know that Donald Duck doesn't wear any pants? Still checking if you are paying attention.

Thank you for your attentiveness. It's never easy to deal with a crisis, or to ask for money, but we are all in this together. Please take good care of yourself and your families. We will be worshipping together soon!

Love,  
Caren Chun-Esaki, Douglas Ing, Grethen Jong,  
Nella Kleinschmidt & Cathy Löwenberg,  
The Stewardship Committee



**It's true! He doesn't wear pants!**

## MINISTRY IN THE MEANTIME

**Wallyhouse** continues to serve the hungry every day and has set up a safe mechanism to get food to folks....

Volunteers always welcome to pitch in!

**Saturday Musubi Breakfast** continues and we're all good through April 11 with musubi makers....

## ONLINE WORSHIP

**9 AM Sunday:** just go to our web page (home page)

[www.stelizabeth720.org](http://www.stelizabeth720.org)

and click on **Facebook** or **ZOOM** to join in the fun!

