

The Vine and Branches

A Christmas Story

For years now, every July 25, KSSK radio plays Christmas carols all morning long. They do that to remind folks how many people die in accidents during the months before Christmas -- and to remind all of us to slow down and improve our chances of being around for Christmas this year. Today's readings are something like KSSK's "Christmas in July" because the readings have an awful lot to say about life, and death, and in a roundabout way, Christmas too.

First the Christmas part!

Doesn't this parable about the rich man and Lazarus remind you of a Christmas story? Doesn't it remind you of that very famous one: the one entitled "A Christmas Carol" -- the story of Ebenezer Scrooge? He's the miserable tightwad rich man who is visited by three ghosts, the ghosts of Christmas past, present and future.

He becomes the rich man who repents, as in "enters into the larger mind" and therefore "changes his mind" about everything he thought he knew. "A Christmas Carol," by Charles Dickens, is a tale told every year at Christmastime and it's a tale about choices, and consequences, and money, and what we mean to one another.

The parable Jesus tells us today is very much like the



Rector

Fr. David J. Gierlach

Sunday Mass 9 AM



Sunday School adorables inside!



Jack Grimm,
Breakfast Gravy
Master!

Scrooge story; and, the parable, like Scrooge's story, has its roots in a folktale. And because Jesus takes up and embellishes what is a common folk tale from his day, let's NOT join our fundamentalist friends who love to say: "Here we have a birds eye view of the afterlife!" "The good go to heaven and have front row seats – watching the bad burn to a crisp for all eternity!"



You don't need to spend much time thinking about that scenario to understand how crazy, not to mention, how completely anti-Christian, such an afterlife would be! We know that in Jesus, eventually, all will indeed be saved. For how else are we to understand our Lord's promise that "when I am lifted up I will drag all things to me?" John 12:32. Or Paul's repeated insights that just as all of humanity died in Adam, all of humanity shall live in Christ. 1 Cor. 15:22.

And so it seems likely that Jesus isn't talking about what the after-life is like, any more than Charles Dickens is talking about the actual existence of ghosts. These stories, both for Jesus and Dickens, are intended to shed light on how we live, not about what happens after we die.

The difference between Scrooge and the rich man in the parable is that Scrooge, at long last, gets the message, and changes -- while the rich fella in our story today keeps missing every chance to turn around. Man, is he stuck! And his stuckness is a testament to the power of money and social position. It's a testament to the power of the sense of entitlement that those who have -- deserve what they have. It is a testament to how power and position and money can blind us to who we really are; and to who we are meant to become; blinding us to the truth of who we belong to.

Just think of Jeffery Epstein, whose life of opulence and power over others ended at the end of a handmade noose, in a prison cell. And then there's the head of Home Depot, who recently complained in the Wall Street Journal that, "these days getting rich off a profitable business is regarded as almost sinister. But we have nothing to apologize for and we don't think the government should have more of our profits." And wouldn't you know, the owner of Home Depot is a prominent member of the Greek Orthodox Church, and a lavish giver to the Roman Catholic Archdiocese in New York. Commonweal, 9/11/19. And Jesus scratches his head and asks: "why give the money if you keep missing the message?"

At any rate, Scrooge eventually comes around and happily opens his heart and his wallet (in THAT order!) to people he once despised -- people he now sees as his brothers and sisters. The rich man in the parable, legend calls him Dives, like Jeff Epstein, like that owner of Home Depot, well, he isn't so astute. Even though he calls Abraham "father" and sees Lazarus snuggling into Abraham's bosom, dopey Dives still doesn't make the connection that since he and Lazarus are children of the same father, they are also, and have always been, brothers. He didn't make the connection when Lazarus starved outside his gate and he doesn't make the connection even now, in death. Instead, he tells Abraham to turn Lazarus into a delivery boy -- "I'm thirsty!" -- because after all, Lazarus should serve this rich man -- that's the way of the world!

Our Jewish siblings believe that even sinners in hell can repent, and when they do, Abraham himself goes into hell and brings them into paradise. But before that can happen, they need to see, they need to hear. They need to change. You see, the flames are not to punish, but to encourage a change of heart. But Dives isn't there yet, and the class on change will not be cut short, even if he is dying of thirst.

Maybe with enough heat it will occur to the man that money and prestige and power really aren't God's ways; really aren't what we are created for. And maybe, like Scrooge, he will come to see that life is intended to be lived with generosity and humor, and freedom from greed, and freeing others from need. That the bounty of this world is the gift of God for the people of God. But this rich man's not there yet. Since Dives Plan A doesn't work (issuing commands), he quickly moves to Plan B: begging! Begging on behalf of his social equals, his equally tight

waddled, uptight, privileged brothers! Abraham responds that Dives' plan to save his brothers is a non-starter.

They have the Holy Scripture, which commands and cajoles and pleads that we have mercy on the poor, that we welcome the illegal immigrant, that we care for those with little, whether or not in our eyes they are deserving. This is the way and the wisdom of God, after all. But Dives is still clueless, and so he insists that the wisdom of God isn't wise enough, and he doubles down, arguing that God's way of giving us his Word just won't cut it. And Dives has the solution! Send someone back from the dead! In fact, since Lazarus won't be busy bringing me some water, sent HIM back to my rich, self-centered brothers: that will certainly do the trick!

And here is where the irony of Jesus' wonderful story is especially sweet. All this time, Dives himself is dealing with two dead guys, Abraham and Lazarus, and none these dealings with the dead move him an inch from his conviction that the world runs on money, power and prestige! If a face to face meeting with the dead can't melt Dives' heart, what chance will it have to melt his brothers' hearts? As Jesus concludes his story today, we are left to wonder whether the rich man and his brothers, like Scrooge, will find life. Scrooge gets the message, and opens his windows and heart and wallet to those in need.

Will Dives and his brothers do the same? Will they allow the life that Paul writes so eloquently about, a life that remembers every day that "we brought nothing into the world, ... we can take nothing out of it" -- will they let that life in?

For you see, what Paul discovers -- after his own rude awakening to the ways of God -- is that selfless giving places us squarely in the river of creation -- a creation that starts as Nothing -- only to become -- Everything.

In the act of selfless giving, we find harmony with the Mystery we call God.

We step into the flow of creation that carries us in her currents to places more magnificent than we can ever imagine. We find the narrow door that leads to the Kingdom of God. A kingdom that turns the world's expectations and judgments and certainties upside down. A kingdom where everyone is welcome.

And so, I say to you what Paul says to Timothy: “Tell those who are rich in this world’s wealth to quit being so full of themselves and so obsessed with money, which is here today and gone tomorrow. Tell them to go after God, who piles on all the riches we could ever manage — to do good, to be rich in helping others, to be extravagantly generous. If they do that, they’ll build a treasure that will last, they’ll discover the life that is ... truly life!” 1Tim 6:19, The Message TR.

+amen

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SUNDAY SCHOOL SCOOPS!

The children have been filling the classrooms with happy faces and meeting new friends. And thank you to the older students participating in the Sunday service as acolytes and helping in the classrooms. Our studies have focused on the parables of Jesus and praying with Jesus. With the start of October spooks, goblins and ghosts start filling the air with the anticipation of Halloween on Thursday, October 31st! What spookiness will Fr. David stir up in his cauldron this year?!? All saints day follows all hallows eve (Halloween). This feast day is celebrated on Sunday, November 3. The children will sing the offertory hymn, When the Saints Go Marching In! We honor our saints at St. Elizabeth’s. We remember and pray for the souls of the people who have died and we commemorate the faithful departed.



WHETHER IN UNIFORM OR CIVVIES, IT'S A GREAT BUNCH!

What a gorgeous gaggle of gangling yet gracious gab-a-teers who make up the largest Sunday school in all of lovely downtown Palama!!!!!!!!!!!!!! Many thanks to our long suffering never complaining, always smiling Sunday School teachers!!!!!!!!!!!!!!



And then there's the Saturday Morning Breakfast Banditos below led by Gravy Gourmet Jack Grimm, the always preaching his heart out Archness of Deacon (and lovely Rae) and of course — the brains of de operation, our dear Lynette Shim!



BOOK CLUB IS BACK!

Fr. Greg Johnson and pals will host a new monthly book club to read new stuff and discuss, debate, demand and defray....

Saturday, November 16 from 10-11:30 am at Pier Nine By Sam Choy in Aloha Tower!!! First book is that-a one!



The most beautiful people are those who have known defeat known suffering, known struggle known loss, and have found their way out of the depths. These persons have an appreciation, a sensitivity, and an understanding of life that fills them with compassion, gentleness, and a deep loving concern. Beautiful people do not just happen.

-Elisabet
Kübler-Ros



DA YUTE REPORT

Well Hello October!

My most favorite season is here! Welcome Fall! I know, I know in Hawaii we don't have seasons, but we can at least pretend. However I personally believe Hawaii is the best place (in the world) for all seasons anyway! With that been said, who's ready for the fall festivities? I sure am! Heads up everyone as we look forward to another eventful season! Kicking things off with our annual Service in the Cemetery with our trusted and ever so faithful Rector Father David. With Anyone who is brave enough to trek the cemetery at 6pm with him on All Hallows Eve October 31 are encouraged to go along! You brave souls, you! Followed by an eventful TRUNK OR TREAT evening. Safe for the entire family, to enjoy treats, eats, fun and games! Everyone's invited 6:30 pm October 31 on Halloween night! Come dressed in your Halloween best!

Dont forget Youth Bible Study. Fridays 7pm. Come fellowship with us, we don't bite, I promise! Hope to see you there!

This holiday season please be safe out there. Don't drink and drive. Watch your children very carefully. Be aware of your surroundings.

Have a wonderful October festivities!



Your friend,
Melanie Langi



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CATCHING UP WITH DA CATHOLIC WORKERS!

Inquiring Minds Want to Know: What is happening in the Container?

After our resident, Dr. Farouk Asvat, moved out of the shipping container located just east of the church at the edge of the parking lot, St. Elizabeth's vestry suggested that since the shipping container sits alongside **Wallyhouse Catholic Worker** (the former rectory), that Wallyhouse take on oversight of using the container for emergency housing. We, the folks at Wallyhouse, rolled up our sleeves and, along with our **Junior Warden Charley Steffey**, got to work refurbishing the container. We (Charley really) repaired the roof, laid a new floor, painted inside and out, and installed 2 ceiling fans along with 3 beds, 2 bunk style and a single to accommodate up to 3 persons. We purchased basics: mattresses, sheets, pillows.

Once all was ready, on Saturday, August 3, three women from the Kanoa Street encampment— **Lovely, Jinna and Sunshine**— moved into the container for a 90 day stay. This was just two days before the final double-sweep that scattered the remains of our Kanoa Street community

they moved in, we did
In the afternoon of the
emerged. When asked
said "Asleep!" They were
with a roof over their
They could actually sleep
taking their things right

On Sunday, August
Assisi (St. Francis's
'**Aina O Makaha Farm,**

Fr. David blessed because he claimed that **St. Augustine says you can bless anything**. He also blessed the newly refurbished dwelling, and we dubbed it **Elizabeth House** after Elizabeth of Hungary, patroness of the homeless and of the Third Order Franciscans (which is what we are). St. Elizabeth was a princess who lived in the 1200s. With support of her husband, Louis IV, Landgrave of Thuringia, Elizabeth gave alms to the poor out of the court's wealth. But when Elizabeth was 20 years old, Louis died. The other members of the court did not approve of Elizabeth's charity and evicted her. Elizabeth, by then a Third Order Franciscan (like us), became homeless. She lived down by the stream where she fished in order to continue to feed the hungry. Finally, her in-laws took pity on her and built her a tiny house, like the container, for her to live in. Elizabeth continued her almsgiving, fishing and serving in the hospitals she built before her personal poverty. And so we have St. Elizabeth's Church named after the mother of John the Baptist with St. Elizabeth House next door named after one of the Franciscan patron saints.

The toilet instigated more work for Charley who built a neat attachment to the container, with an "outhouse" and storage units.

It has been almost 2 months since our 3 women moved in. One, Sunshine, left after just a couple of weeks. She found another place to live that was better for her situation. Jinna, in the meantime, has found a job at a bakery; and Lovely is going to get teeth after completing a 6 week self-care course. Both women have been more than helpful on campus with watering, picking up litter, helping **Mrs. Terno** in Shim Hall, and helping us with our ministry. We will miss them when they move on but will also be happy for the positive steps this opportunity has offered them.



anywhere but here. The day after
not see hide nor tail of the women.
third day, one by one they
where they had been, each one
in luxury sleeping in soft beds,
heads and best of all in safety.
without worrying about someone
out from under them.

11, the feast day of St. Clare of
complement), **Gigi Cocquio**, of **Ho**
gifted us a composting toilet which

"Don't call me a saint. I don't want to be dismissed so easily." Dorothy Day

