

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

Vine & Branches

Monthly News from St. Elizabeth's Episcopal Church, 720 N. King Street, Honolulu, HI 96817 • Phone (808) 845-2112

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Why Not Three?

By The Rev. David J. Gierlach

Whenever I hear the story of the two brothers, I'm always wondering --- why not three brothers?

You know what I mean: where's the really good guy?

The one who, when dad says "go," not only says "yes," but goes right away?

Instead, Jesus gives us two nitwits.

One who shames and embarrasses his dad by telling him "No" to his face, and the other who blows smoke up dad's wahzoo with a fake "yes," and then goes bowling.

Where's the good kid in all of this who says "yes" and does it?

Where's that kid?

But maybe Jesus gives us two brothers rather than three for a very good reason.

We humans, when it comes to our faith in God, when it comes to responding to what God is calling us to do, it seems we tend to fall sometimes into the camp of those who refuse at first, and then reconsider, or into the camp of those who spend their lives trying to look good, saying all the right things, but never really walking the talk.

Truth be told, most of us are probably a mixture of the two, depending on which side of the bed I wake up on or on how well or badly the spouse treats me today.

We are a mixture of the two.....

What we are not, Jesus seems to be saying, is the invisible third child: the one who hears, obeys, and goes to the task set before her.

And that's kind of a kick in the gut,

since most of us who make our way to church each and every Sunday, yours truly especially, want desperately to believe that we are that blessed third child at least most of the time.



Instead, what I think Jesus is asking us to take a close look at is how we can fool ourselves into thinking that we are the third child, and in the fooling, fail to see the presence of God standing right before our eyes. Keep in mind Jesus is telling this story to the church-going, tax paying, PTA belonging, Rotary Club members of the Pharisee class. They are the pillars of society, the men everyone looks up to; and yet, they are also the very same class who will instigate, with others, the arrest and torture and heinous crucifixion of the very Son of God, and as he is being nailed to the tree, they believe with all their hearts that they are performing the highest of sacred duties owed to God!

What Jesus is perhaps inviting us to consider today is how we, in our efforts to look like the blessed third child, instead are so very often, like the not so blessed second child, the one who says "yes," but who doesn't actually go.

What Jesus is perhaps inviting us to consider is how we so easily turn true faith in the living, incomprehensible, unknowable, free yet intimate God, how we so often turn that faith, into idol worship.

Remember that idol worship happens whenever we put our hopes and dreams on something or someone that is not God.

Idol worship happens whenever we

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try to rein in the free, creative, powerful, mindchanging, life giving power that is the true God — when we try through rules or dogmas or tradition to say: “This is what God is like, and nothing more,” when we try to force the vastness of God into the tiny confines of my personal sensibilities.

This is idol worship.

Last week at the clergy conference in Virginia, one of my brother priests was telling me about how he got fired from his last teaching gig in an Episcopal school.

During one class, he took a Bible, put it on the floor, and stood on it.

Within nanoseconds he was on the carpet in front of the guy dressed in purple, his bishop.

He said the Bishop's face was the same color as the Bishop's shirt!

My colleague stammered that he wasn't showing disregard for the scriptures, but rather he was making what he hoped to be an indelible point in the minds of his 11th graders: even the Bible can be turned into an idol.

You see, he was living and working in an area of the country that has lots of fundamentalist churches, lots of very literal evangelicals, some of whom try to justify all sorts of abuse and inflict all sorts of pain on others — all in the name of

“The Bible.”

Idol worship often has its roots in fear. Fear I won't be accepted, fear of a punishing God, fear I will be financially insecure, fear of being alone. And these fears can and do lead to the worship of abusive spouses and alcohol and drugs and military power and mystical stones from Sedona and pension plans.

We most of us can fill out several sheets of paper listing all the idols in our lives.

Idol worship is the water we drink and the air we breathe in 21st century life.

So we come here week in and week out to remember that we are made for so much more.

Each of the two sons in today's story went his own way, for a little while or for a life time, because each was afraid of missing out on what his own best thinking told him he needed.

Yet we are made for so much more than our own best thinking.

We are beloved children of a God who loves us so overwhelmingly that he becomes one of us, he comes and lives with us, and he submits to our barbaric best thinking, dying for us at our hands.

And so here comes Paul, reminding us in today's achingly profound song that God's way is the way of letting go.

God's way is the way of letting all things be.

Paul says to the Philippians today in the Latin: “Fiat”; not as in the Italian car, which, I've been told, stands for Fix It Again Tony, but “fiat” as in: “Let it be.”

“Fiat” — Let it be — is the gateway into this new life.

“Let it be” God says at the dawn of creation.

“Let it be” the teenage girl says to the angel.

“Let it be” Jesus says, sweating blood in the Garden as he awaits his arrest.

“Let it be” say you or I after enduring the excruciating pain of loved ones ripped from our lives.

“Let it be.”

It is not the end.

“Let it be” is instead the gateway into the new creation that was our birthright from the very start.

At the dawn of creation, “Let it be” is followed by light.

Mary's “let it be” allows her womb to hold the child who will join together heaven and earth.

The “let it be” of Jesus in the garden leads, finally, to the miracle of resurrection: the sign and promise of the new life awaiting us all.

And then there is our own “let it be.”

It never comes easy.

It never comes quickly.

But when it comes, it opens a door to a new kind of life; one with plenty of scar tissue to be sure, but also one, after a long time has passed, with a sense of depth, a sense of calm, a sense of peace.

A radio guy was interviewing a psychiatrist who was concerned about the great fear so many people have of dying these days.

He decided to help them conquer or at least reduce their fear.

The common refrain was: I will be forgotten after I die; all of my

Rector's Message, continued

accomplishments and achievements will be lost to the sands of time.

So the psychiatrist came up with a very 21st century solution, one that grows directly out of our sense of self, our ego.

He had them tell their stories, which he edited and revised with them until each story told of each life exactly as the patient wished it to read.

And I couldn't help but think how different this is for a Christian.

The call of Jesus is to let it be, to let it go, it is to say "yes" when you and I are told to go, trusting that you and I are not islands adrift on some uncaring sea; but that we are holy and vital members of the body of Christ; we are sons and daughters of the living God, who purchased our redemption at great price; the God who never abandons us, the God who danced on the day you were born.

No, our hope is not in posterity.

Our hope is in the loving embrace of the self-giving God, the God who bows to creation, who bows to you and I, this fantastical God who makes all things new.

And so, with that hope, perhaps we can, from time to time, be that third child who says "yes," and who goes and does immediately, perhaps as well we can be the one that bows to God, saying with conviction and joy: "let it be."

+amen



October is Pledge Drive Month

"Give, and it will be given to you. A good measure, pressed down, shaken together and running over, will be poured into your lap. For with the measure you use, it will be measured to you." Lk 6:38

"All the believers were together and had everything in common. They sold property and possessions to give to anyone who had need." Acts 2:44

"Send them away so that they may go into the surrounding countryside and villages and buy themselves something to eat." But He answered them, "You give them something to eat!" Mk 6:36-7

"Do not worry then, saying, 'What will we eat?' or 'What will we drink?' or 'What will we wear for clothing?' 'For the Gentiles eagerly seek all these things; for your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things....' Mt 6:31-32.

Nuff said!!



Mass of the Peasants

You are the God of the poor, the God,
human and simple, who sweats in the street
the God with the sun burnt face
that's why I speak of you just as my people speak of you
because you are God the worker
Christ the worker.



The photo is of migrating geese who stopped at the retreat center for some R&R of their own.

A Time Away

Many thanks to all of you for the great gift of time away this month. After a housing conference and some lobbying in DC for our Micronesian friends, and for more affordable housing here at home, after a few days with mom and siblings, there followed an 8 day of wonderfulness at CREDO's clergy retreat just outside of Richmond, Virginia.

I'm told Episcopal clergy receive an invitation to CREDO once every 7 years. Bishop Chang told me even before I was ordained that when my turn comes, be sure to take it. It was a time of hard work with many classes on spirituality, vocation, physical and mental health, and finances.

It was also a time to rest, to take long walks through deep woods in silence; and a chance to talk story with priests from all over the country. So to you who allowed me this great grace and to you who picked up the laboring oar in my absence, THANK YOU, THANK YOU, THANK YOU!!!

Father David

Happy Birthday

God's blessings on those with October birthdays!

Raquel Timonio	10/1
Annette Chee-Akana	10/1
Jermic Shuru	10/1
Bernice Kau	10/2
Isi Lavulavu	10/4
Carole Fujishige	10/5
Daniel Tyau	10/8
Jamie Chock	10/8
Inorie Eichy	10/9
Michelle Ramos	10/9
Daniel Oshiro	10/9
Mia Starkman	10/9
K. O. Eichy	10/10
Fane Lino	10/11
David Kleinschmidt	10/12
Beryl Goo	10/14
Nora Blaisdell	10/14
Rayne White	10/14
Judith Kokubun	10/15
Shigeru Awakuni	10/17
Maileen Cardenas	10/18
Kolby Batangan	10/18
Viola Arabe	10/19
Victor Noket	10/19
Donovan Young	10/20
Jayden-Ryan Ruz	10/20
Jonson Jong	10/21
Suzanne Shak	10/21
Wynter Marlow	10/22
Dennis Akauola	10/22
Katherine Crosier	10/24
Collette Arakawa	10/24
Luciano Sarceda	10/25
Antor Raymond	10/25
Alex Nagamine	10/25
Kjirstin Propernick	10/25
Ariel Badua	10/26
Casey-Eder Sungalu	10/26
Tate Anderston	10/26
Esther Tyau	10/29
RaeLynne Steffey	10/29
Betty Awakuni	10/30
Lydia Vallejo	10/30
Kris Sorcey	10/31



Wine Tasting and Silent Auction

It's baaaaaaaack! A few years ago, through the generosity of our friend **Michael Hopkins**, we had a spectacular **Taste of St. Elizabeth** which included *maaaaaahhvalous* appetizers, a great silent auction with really cool stuff and over one hundred different wines from all over the world to sip on.

Well, we're gonna do it again! **Saturday, December 13**, here at the church, stay tuned for more details!



The Garden Groweth!

The St. E's community garden is blooming all over again, what with the aquaponics churning out King Kong sized eggplants, Manoa lettuce to die for and all of it fertilized by happy little fish living in the water of the holding tank! In other locales, green onions are in bloom, we have enough mint to satisfy all your mint julep needs and the basil is making a terrific comeback.

Stop by for a gander and enjoy.



Kakaako Homeless Action Group

On Friday, September 5, we were very pleased to host our United States Senator **Mazie Hirono** here at the church as we work with several community groups to find solutions to the houseless problem that is especially serious at Kakaako Park.

Just before last month's hurricane, folks from St. E's and St. Andrew's pitched in to find temporary shelter for families camping on Kakaako sidewalks — among them was a young family with a one week old infant.....sleeping on the sidewalk! *Auwe!*



Future Clergy of the Diocese!



So happy to say that St. Elizabeth's is raising up leaders for the wider diocese. We have four of our members at some stage in the process that may lead to ordination to either the diaconate or the priesthood. Please keep these our friends in your prayers as they embark on the twisting and turning road of God's call.



Fane Lino, Fran Kramer and Preston Lentz are shown above.

To the left is **Viliami Langi** who is also on the path of answering God's call.

The experience of the Spirit is an undeserved, unmerited becoming a new whole greater than the sum of all the parts. It draws us out and beyond ourselves in spite of ourselves. It is radical grace. To walk in the Spirit is to allow yourself to be grabbed by God and taken into a much larger world of meaning. (From The Great Themes of Scripture)



"And if you don't have an attorney, we've got millions of them."

It's Halloween Month

and you know what that means!! Back to the graveyard, Oahu Cemetery to be exact, to the gravesite of Bishop Restarick, our first American Episcopal Bishop in Honolulu, and the graves of many of our faithful Priory nuns.

Wanna come by??? Wait for dark, then come on down to the Diamond Head Section to the right of Nuuanu Avenue, Oahu Cemetery. Gotta say, last year's was a hoot and this year's should be a holler!

Monthly Medical March for Mercy



Many thanks for those who joined our 6th, count 'em 6th!!!

March for Medical Mercy on the last Thursday of September -- next march is Thursday, October 30 at 10 am (*shall we dress in costume????????????????????*)

Sunday School News

This school year the Sunday School teachers and children are using a new curriculum called *Feasting of the Word*. The first lesson began with “Keeping Peace,” and the children heard about Jesus’ teachings about handling conflict - their word of the day, RECONCILE! What a challenge with the diversity of children we have!

Ajaon Chen will be working with the children every 4th Sunday as they learn new songs that are part of this curriculum and the children will share some of the songs they learn with the congregation during the offertory.

Fane, Seini and Viliami Lino have scheduled to take the older children (middle school through high school) to visit various churches and take their songs and ukuleles with them. They have visitations planned once a month. The children have gained much from these visitations!

We will focus on the book of Matthew in October--the parable of the greedy farm workers--and learn the Golden Rule! The lessons generally focus on the gospel readings or the 2nd Lessons of each Sunday.

Loving God, we want to show acceptance for each child in our group so they know your acceptance through us. Amen.



Attendance

Wednesday, Sept. 3	37
Sunday, Sept. 7	152
Wednesday, Sept. 10	16
Sunday, Sept. 14	167
Wednesday, Sept. 17	25
Sunday, Sept. 21	185
Wednesday, Sept. 24	28
Sunday, Sept. 28	231



Children in classrooms A and B sing *Jesus Loves Me* during the offertory. Two other boys to accompany them with the tambourine suddenly got ‘shy’ and sat in the pews!

Relax!

Bad things are going to happen.
Your tomatoes will grow a fungus
and your cat will get run over.

Someone will leave the bag
with the ice cream
melting in the car and throw
your blue cashmere sweater in the dryer.

The other cat—the one
you never really liked—
will contract a disease
that requires you to pry open
its feverish mouth
every four hours for a month.

Your parents will die.

No matter how many vitamins you take,
how much Pilates, you'll lose your keys,
your hair and your memory.

If your daughter doesn't plug her heart
into every live socket she passes,
you'll come home and

find your son has emptied
your refrigerator, dragged it to the curb,
and called the used appliance store
for a pick up—drug money.

There's a Buddhist story of
a woman chased by a tiger.

When she comes to a cliff,
she sees a sturdy vine
and climbs halfway down.

But there is also a tiger below.

And two mice—

one white, one black—scurry out
and begin to gnaw at the vine.

At this point she notices a wild strawberry
growing from a crevice.

She looks up, down, at the mice.

Then she eats the strawberry.

So here's the view, the breeze,
the pulse in your throat.

Your wallet will be stolen, you'll get fat,
slip on the bathroom tiles of a foreign hotel
and crack your hip. You'll be lonely.

Oh taste how sweet and tart
the red juice is, how the tiny seeds
crunch between your teeth.

—Ellen Bass



What's a Nice Lutheran ...

doing in a place like this? So asked Father William Kunisch at the September 6th funeral mass for **Carl Crosier**, our Parish Administrator **Kathy Crosier's** husband of 37 years, which was held at neighboring St. Theresa's Co-Cathedral. Father William explained that Carl was baptized into the Lutheran Church one month after his birth in 1945, and spent his entire life serving through music, including 38 years as Cantor (Director of Music) at the Lutheran Church of Honolulu.

In February of this year when he was diagnosed with pancreatic cancer, Carl expressed the desire to become Catholic, having had an attraction to the Mass, the prayer and the rituals since childhood. He had been worshipping at St. Theresa's ever since his retirement from the Lutheran Church of Honolulu in 2011.

In July, as he was facing his second surgery, Father William anointed Carl's head with oil in his hospital room at Straub, with **Father David Gierlach**, wife Kathy, and a few friends looking on. With joy he received the Sacraments of Confirmation and the Holy Eucharist. Afterwards his forehead glistened with chrism and the Eucharist had given him food for the journey.

Carl's funeral mass was perhaps his last gift to the community of Honolulu, and he was involved in planning every single detail. The complete Latin mass was sung by a women's chant choir, which some people said they had not heard in more than forty years. Others described the service music as "achingly beautiful," as the ancient chants echoed off the reverberant walls of the cathedral.

If you would like to hear some of the music sung at the service, you can go to Kathy's blog at <http://insanity.blogs.lchwelcome.org/2014/09/08/requiem/>. More than a dozen members of St. E's were in attendance at the service.