

WAIPAHU UCC

'Ohana Weekly Roundup

June 28, 2020



Aloha Family and Friends,

We wrapped up our second service back this past Sunday. It's certainly a learning process as we figure out what works and doesn't within the constraints we are currently facing. I thank God that we have been given the opportunity to do this. I also want to thank everyone who has been pitching

in to make the new format work. Our deacons and ushers have taken on a lot of extra responsibility with this new format. Jackie and Alika have worked really hard to make worship something special, both in the past few months online and now doing performances both online and live on Sundays. We couldn't have done it without them. I also want to thank all of you that have decided to stay home for now. You are making a sacrifice as well, and we appreciate that.

Our office is reopening on July 1st. If you want to drop by and say hi, we would love to see you, but please remember to bring your mask and call ahead of time so that we don't have a bunch of people all coming at once. We don't want to over crowd our little office! We also have David's Den and the breezeway where we can meet fairly safely.

In July we are also beginning to open up our facilities to users who can abide by our COVID safety documentation. If you have been participating in any of those activities, get in touch with your coordinator to see if you will be able to meet again soon. As we have said before, we are taking things slowly. This pandemic is not close to being over, so while we are excited that we are able to resume a few of our normal activities, please don't think that everything is back to normal. We still need to maintain precautions, and if we do so, we can enjoy this expanded fellowship.

It's difficult to be separate, but we are united in Christ. I know that we have been missing each other, and even our reopened services haven't allowed for much fellowship time. You have all been very well disciplined but I know it is difficult. These things can seem trivial in the context of everything else going on in the world, but the feelings of loneliness can start to build up. We have been praying for all of you. Send those prayer requests in so we know what to pray for, and reach out if you just need to talk. God bless you on this day!

-Pastor Makana

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waipahuucc is now on instagram



WaipahuUCC



VIRTUAL CHURCH

LIVE Cast Sunday's at 9:30 am on our Facebook or Youtube page. Get there early Sunday with your 'ohana to worship with us! Can't make it? Catch the broadcast later in the day.

DIRECTORY: Send in a photo of yourself if you haven't already to the church office for our new directory. Mahalo.

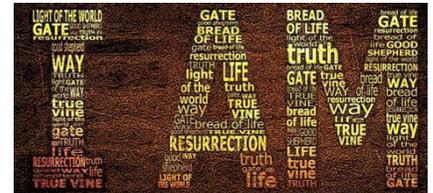


“The Resurrection & the Life”

Reading: John 11: 17-27

On his arrival, Jesus found that Lazarus had already been in the tomb for four days. Now Bethany was less than two miles from Jerusalem, and many Jews had come to Martha and Mary to comfort them in the loss of their brother. When Martha heard that Jesus was coming, she went out to meet him, but Mary stayed at home. “Lord,” Martha said to Jesus, “if you had been here, my brother would not have died. But I know that even now God will give you whatever you ask.” Jesus said to her, “Your brother will rise again.” Martha answered, “I know he will rise again in the resurrection at the last day.” Jesus said to her, “I am the resurrection and the life. The one who believes in me will live, even though they die; and whoever lives by believing in me will never die. Do you believe this?” “Yes, Lord,” she replied, “I believe that you are the Messiah, the Son of God, who is to come into the world.”

The “I AM” statement we are looking at today is a little bit different than the ones that Jesus had made earlier in the book of John. Jesus said things to his followers like “I AM the gate”, “I AM the shepherd”, “I AM the light” or “I AM the bread of life” and all these things were kind of figurative, nobody thought that Jesus was actually a loaf of bread or a gate. But in today’s passage we have Jesus saying, “I AM the resurrection and the life” and He isn’t speaking figuratively only, but also literally this time. As the Son of God,



and person of the Trinity, He was there before time began, He was the word that brought light and life into the world; the ha, the breath that animated Adam. *“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made. In him was life; and the life was the light of men.”* That is the life that is present here and now when Jesus says, “I AM the resurrection” to Martha. Not I’m going to be the resurrection one day, I was the resurrection way back when; no, he tells her “I AM the resurrection” right now. This is the present reality we are called to live in as a Christian. And when we live in that reality, when we live that life, it transforms everything; the way we see the world. This is the truth that reworks reality. In that space, you are able to live beyond the regrets, beyond your short comings, beyond the compromises. Sometimes as people we get trapped in other ways of thinking. We can get stuck in regret, stuck in heartache. But the offering that Jesus makes, that offering of resurrection, transforms believers.

Now back in Jesus’ day there were people that denied the resurrection. There were Jews like the Sadducees who believed in God but did not believe that the resurrection would happen and that shaped their lives and their ways of thinking. That led them to actions, like collaborating with their Roman oppressors, selling out their fellow citizens, in hopes of gaining a slightly more comfortable life in the here and now. They sold out the hope of their nation’s future because they believed that this life was all there was. Other Jews, like the Pharisees, and Martha in this passage, believed in the resurrection coming at the end of time, but did not see it as something that could give them hope for the present day. For them, things would work out in the end, they believed they would be resurrected on the last day, but until then, the prince of this world had all the power. They might not give in to their oppressors, but like Martha in this passage, they still felt a little hopeless in the face of life’s hardships. How often are we so much like her? Martha, says to Jesus, “I know Lazarus will be raised on that last day”, but if only you had come a bit sooner you would have been able to help him right here and now. If only, if only, we get bound in these chains of if only. We often believe that Jesus has power, but not that he will use it or can use it for us in our situation. Our minds are often constrained in what we think Jesus can do. Martha knows Lazarus will be raised again, on the last day, but thinks that until then Jesus can do nothing more. If only you had been there sooner you could have healed him Martha says. She has constrained Jesus in her thinking, and in doing so, she has constrained her life and the lives of those around her.

We can get trapped in ‘If Only’ thinking ourselves. I remember an exam I took in high school physics, I got down to the last question but couldn’t quite get it. I had to guess either A or B. Of course I guessed wrong, and because of that I got a B instead of an A on the test, which brought down my grade for the class. If only I had guessed A instead, then maybe I would have gotten into the honor role and received that college scholarship and then I would have been able to use that money to pay off my school loans sooner. If I had gotten those school loans paid off sooner I would have had enough for a down payment on a house sooner. I could have been rich, or more prepared for this pandemic, if only I had guessed A instead. It sounds ridiculous, but a lot of our thinking is being constrained by ‘if only’ right now. If only things were back to normal, if only we could meet together in person right now, if only everyone was available to help again. Sounds a bit like Martha, right? If only you had come sooner Jesus, then things would be better. Of course, Jesus makes it work regardless, the timing just serves to demonstrate how powerful and how good God is. I offer today, what if Jesus is here demonstrating his power in our situations too? What if Jesus doesn’t need the things we think are so important? What if we believed He could give life and restore life no matter what? The grave couldn’t hold Jesus down. He could not be constrained. He has never been limited, because of that, our lives aren’t either. In that resurrection faith we have power, power to stand up to oppression no matter the form, power to live our lives unconstrained by the chains that

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bind us. Fears that we can't escape some future fate disappear because Jesus says that the future is here. The resurrection that will be is here right now, because Jesus, is here right now.

Martha hears Jesus' words and her 'If only..' becomes 'If Jesus...'. If Jesus is the Messiah, if Jesus is who he says he is, why couldn't he raise Lazarus from the dead? She believes and lives are changed. If Jesus is who He says he is, why couldn't He still unite us and grow us as a church while dispersed under quarantine? Why couldn't He provide us with strategies to sustain our work during the time of COVID? Why couldn't He give us the strength to not just get through this but overcome this? Why couldn't He help you start a new life that honors him? Jesus is the resurrection, so nothing is hopeless. Jesus is the resurrection, so we have no fear of death of any kind. Yes, things are different, we have lost a lot in the past few months and life isn't the same. But Lazarus was raised from the dead. How much more are we raised too?



Lazarus returned to the joy of his family, but also to more work to be done, more life to be lived. We must seek that new life as well. To follow Christ means to both be dead to yourself and your self-serving ways, but it also means that you are made alive in Him. We have a new life that we need to live. If you have a big ego to begin with, a strong sense of self, it might be hard to let that die. You want to be in control, and letting that part of you die can be hard. Some of us are more modest in nature. If you don't think much of yourself to begin with, letting that die isn't quite that hard. If you don't believe that you are capable of much to begin with, dying to yourself isn't that big of a step. For the naturally humble, it's the truth of our resurrection that is more difficult to embrace. In baptism, the old self is put to death just as surely as you pass into the water, and the new self in Christ is risen just as surely as you are lifted up. You don't stay under, you must come up. We don't stay dead, rather we are called to do the work of Christ. No matter how humble our beginnings, we should be proud of who we are in Christ; who has called us to do great things and has equipped us to do them. You can do all things because of the resurrection. You can answer that call to pray for the sick and hurting, to mentor the young in their faith, to be a part of the miracle in the lives of others because of that new life of the resurrection.

It doesn't take perfection. Your faith doesn't have to be flawless. Martha was uncertain, she seems incredulous at times. "Are you sure you want to go in there Jesus? He's been dead for 4 days?" Yet by verse 40 in this chapter, Jesus responds to her in the midst of her anxiety and doubts with "did I not tell you that if you believe, you will see the glory of God?" And the next thing she sees is her brother brought back to life. If you believe. Not if you never doubt, not if you never have questions, just if you believe. That belief was enough, and like many other times in the gospels, we see that the faith of one person is instrumental in the healing of another. Martha believes and her brother Lazarus is raised from the dead. People will be healed through your belief as well. We too will change the world when we live the truth of the resurrection. Not compromising to the world's standards, but instead raising people up to Christ's. We might not feel like we can make a difference, we might feel small and limited, we may doubt, but the resurrection still gives life; your belief, like Martha's, will give life to those around you. So walk in faith, walk fearlessly, embrace new roles, the things you never thought you could do and together we will find the new life Christ promises.

