Nu’uanu Congregational Church

July 26, 2020

EIGHTTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

*“Lilies and Sparrows”* Jeannie D. Thompson

 By now, I think we are all getting used to our lives being re-shaped by unusual circumstances. I pray that all members of our church are somewhere safe and dry with your loved ones. Indeed, I pray this for all God’s beloved creatures—this latest disruption will affect all aspects and inhabitants of our island home.

 Despite the number of times we have had to remake our plans during these past few months, I know that it does not really get easier. I would not be surprised if most of us are exasperated and wondering, “What next?!”

 One of the things I hope you have noticed about Scripture is that it seems to know that our life is filled with all sorts of challenges. Which is to say that God knows how difficult life can be; how changeable and unpredictable even a day in our lives can be.

 Sometimes, when the challenges come thick and fast, they have these last few months, it is easy to give into despair and to feel hopelessness. What I hope you will remember, when those thoughts come, is that this kind of distress comes from feeling that we have lost control of our lives.

 It is in those moments, Scripture tells us, that God’s Holy Spirit longs to draw especially close to us, longs to calm our minds, longs to strengthen our hearts. What the Spirit longs to say to us is: “I see you.”

 Indeed, the Spirit sees each of us and will not look away, but will continue to pour out the power we will need to continue on in faith and in hope.

 And one of the ways I know this to be true is in the very video you are watching. This comes to you out of the caring and concern of many people in our church. I would like to name them all but that is always a little embarrassing for them. Luckily, I think you know who they are.

 What is more, they came to know and are moved by the same Holy Spirit that has lived and worked in this congregation for all of life of this church. The generations of Nu’uanu Congregational Church have made a place—indeed a home—for God’s Holy Spirit, and you have taught all of the generations throughout the years to do the same, and there is every indication that the Spirit will continue to be at home with us.

 Praise God.

 I would like to conclude our short time together today with a reading from the Gospel of Matthew from chapter 6—its from the Sermon on the Mount, and in it Jesus was calling upon those who would follow him to make a decision about what was going to be important in their lives: God or the accumulation of wealth.

 That is a very important message, however, I believe we can also hear Jesus’ description of how God cares for us in this context, too. We can hear it as words of assurance that no matter what the circumstances, *God’s eye is on the sparrow, and I know God watches, me (and you!).*

 So, hear the words of the Lord:

Matthew 6:24-34

*24‘No one can serve two masters; for a slave will either hate the one and love the other, or be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and wealth.*

*25‘Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink, or about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothing? 26Look at the birds of the air; they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they? 27And can any of you by worrying add a single hour to your span of life? 28And why do you worry about clothing? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they neither toil nor spin, 29yet I tell you, even Solomon in all his glory was not clothed like one of these. 30But if God so clothes the grass of the field, which is alive today and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, will he not much more clothe you—you of little faith? 31Therefore do not worry, saying, “What will we eat?” or “What will we drink?” or “What will we wear?” 32For it is the Gentiles who strive for all these things; and indeed your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things. 33But strive first for the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.*

*34‘So do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will bring worries of its own. Today’s trouble is enough for today.*

 Let us pray,

Life-giving God, we give you thanks and praise for your abundant grace. In days of old, you parted the waters with a mighty hand so that your people could cross safely and escape their pursuers. The waters not only parted in the Red Sea with Moses, but the Jordan with Joshua.

We remember these mighty acts, and so, in the same way, O God, grant safe passage to all who need it today—passage through the turmoil of these time and this storm, and also through: illness, grief and despair; passage through poverty and oppression; passage, perhaps, through toils and snares of our own devising.

Where chaos swirls around us like mighty waters, lead us by your Spirit.

Forgive the times we do not trust you, when we demand miracles on our own and our own timetable. We pray for the courage and faith to speak out for those in need of compassion and concern. We pray also for the words bear witness to your life-changing gospel in a world hungry for good news. Help us to claim the reality of your love and mercy, in our lives and for this world. We pray in the name of Jesus, the risen Christ. Amen.