

## Jesus Ascends Into Our Hearts

*John 17:6-13*

Who here likes to go on vacation? Ah yes [sigh], vacation. Some time away, with none of the usual demands in our life. We all dream of getting away from it all and just dealing with the good things in life, leaving the bad stuff behind and just living and enjoying the good stuff. [Sigh]. Vacation...

For just a moment, let's all close our eyes and imagine being on vacation, getting away from it all. Dream of where you want to go—who you want to go with. Isn't this daydream wonderful?

If we ask folks in the rest of the world to daydream about **their** vacation, where do you suppose they daydream about? That's right. Maui. But we live here. We live in everyone else's daydream of paradise. But where do **you** day-dream about? Where do you daydream about getting away from it all? [brainstorm with congregation].

Let us pray together: E pule kākou. "Dear God of everyday, we wonder where Jesus day-dreamed of going on vacation. Where did Jesus want to go to get away from it all? Be with us as we ponder Jesus ascending to you, and these things he taught the disciples before he left on eternal vacation. Amen."

In our passage today Jesus talks to the disciples about being **in** the world but not **of** the world. What do you suppose this means? Again and again, as John tends to do, he has Jesus say that we are **in** the world, but that we do not **belong** to the world. Have you even been somewhere that you did not belong? There is a disconnect when we do not belong somewhere, a fundamental problem with being in a place where we don't completely fit. Jesus was on earth with us, but throughout the story of Jesus being on earth, there is always this strange feeling like Jesus was here, but somehow didn't completely belong here. Jesus saw through all the hypocrisy, the lies, the half-truths and just plain lies that we tell each other all the time. Jesus knew much of what we think about the world is just wrong. We think **things** will make us happy. They do not. We think power will make us feel safe. It does not; we all eventually die. We think fame and fortune will protect us from loneliness and sadness. They do not. The only thing that protects us from sadness and despair is relationships. Our happiness comes from **relationships** with God and with each other—not fame and fortune and riches. Human beings have always sought the wrong things for satisfaction and success. We define riches by the size of our bank account rather than the size of the love in our hearts.

Our passage today is a prayer from Jesus to God about the church—about US. Jesus reminds us that we belong to God—NOT the world. We belong to the source of eternal aloha, not fame and fortune and human greed.

And our passage reinforces another truth. When we follow Jesus, our path does not immediately become effortless. We do not immediately become rich or famous or a movie star. We become instead, children of God. We belong to God, but for a while, we stay on this earth. We are promised love and glory with Jesus, but for now, we stay here, in our little hale, our small room. We still have to do laundry, and buy groceries and bury our dead and watch our kids and grandkids make mistakes and break our hearts. But we all know there will come a glorious vacation someday, and we will head off on a magnificent cruise where there are no more tears, no more

pain, no more sorrow. The scriptures promise us this vacation. The question is, when will it come? When can we get our ticket? When can we board this ultra-first-class cruise with Jesus and sail off on this eternal vacation that never ends?

As the risen Jesus prepares here to leave the disciples in our passage, they are wondering these same things. OK Jesus, when does vacation start? Where are **we** going? Will our cabin have a huge king-size bed, will the buffets have never-ending lobster and the best-ever sashimi? And most of all, will all the people I dislike NOT be invited so I don't have to deal with them on my eternal vacation?

Instead of telling the disciples about their elegant staterooms and beautiful all-night buffets, Jesus describes a very different place. Where did Jesus say we were going on this ultimate vacation? The answer might disappoint you until we think deeply about what Jesus is saying.

Listen to what Jesus says in verse 15 right after our passage, "I am not asking that you take them out of the world"—Jesus here is talking about US as believers—:but I ask you to protect them from the evil one. They do not belong to the world, just as I do not belong to the world. Sanctify them in the truth. Your word is truth. As you have sent me into the World, so I have sent them into the world." There you have it. Our vacation with Jesus is not in heaven somewhere else, brothers and sisters. Our vacation with Jesus is ... HERE.

You see, when we daydream about the perfect vacation we think about a place where things are perfect. We think physical perfection is the answer, but really, spiritual perfection is the real dream-world. And what would a place with spiritual perfection be like? Folks—I hate to break it to you, but that place would be right here where you live, a place filled to the top with eternal aloha, gracious pono, and mana that comes from the heart and souls of loving people. That real dream-world or ultimate cruise is right here [pound chest]. The world dreams of the perfect vacation as being right here on Maui, and we live here. Now all we need to do is claim it, live it and walk with Jesus is unconditional aloha love.

Next week is Pentecost. This week we are celebrating Jesus' Ascension back to God. But our passage reminds us that Jesus – and US—still live right here in the world. We are in the world—we do not belong to the world because we belong to God. Jesus did not go home to heaven. Jesus went home to be with us—each of us—ascending into our **hearts** to help us be in the world even as we do not belong to the world. God could have swept us away out of the world when we decided to follow Jesus, but instead, God leaves us in the world. God could have taken us on the ultimate vacation to Maui, but instead, God leaves us here on Maui, and gives us a ticket to a very different kind of vacation—a vacation of the soul and heart. A vacation where we are in the world but do not belong to the world. A vacation where the ticket is love. A vacation where we are reminded that we are to help others along the way, to feed the hungry, clothe the naked, release the captives, and heal the blind. All on a glorious vacation of love that happens not in some heaven out there, but right here in Lahaina, right here in Waiola, right here in your heart. So I will see you at the buffet of eternal love that is served here everyday. I will see you up on deck of this wonderful cruise ship called Waiola, and all together, we will be on a vacation with Jesus, right here as our Captain, forever, in love. Amen.