

When I hear Kui Lee’s “I’ll Remember You,” I’m reminded of those who “*hanaied*” me nearly fifty years ago and were responsible for demonstrating *aloha* through inclusion. These folks were members of *Kokokahi* Church in *Kane’ohe* on *O’ahu*. They lived in *Keapuka*, across *Kapunahala* where the church property was—was, as in then, not now. My *hanai ‘ohana* took me to the Big Island for part of the summer, then sent me back to Honolulu to pick up their Ford station wagon from the barge. *A’ole pilikia*, except for the flat rear tire and the heavy load of *hapu’u* logs (possibly taken illegally). “I’ll Remember You,” brings tears to my eyes as I recall those long *make* who blessed me with a greater sense of life.

*Kokokahi* Church was brought into being by Olin & Betsy Pendleton in 1962 as an intentionally diverse faith community rooted in the notion that we all are of the same blood, as Paul writes in Acts 17 (KJV). So it was that Japanese, Hawaiian, Filipino, Chinese, *haole*, and all kinds of blends joined together for worship and mission. This faith community proved foundational to my worldview ever since.

Luke, in relating teachings of the itinerate preacher, Jesus, reminds us of the need to be alert to opportunities AND be equipped to respond to them. If someone says, “Hey, let’s go surf,” you better have your board ready. When someone invites you to go on an immersion trip to Mindanao, it certainly helps to have a valid passport. When someone calls and suggests ho’okani pila/making music, your ukulele must be nearby. And when the congregation invites you to help a neighbor, or *Na Kia’i* needs *kokua* in the graveyard, better you have your work clothes on. Of course Jesus used these exact examples in order to get his listeners to look toward the opportunity ahead--with hope and conviction as resources. We are to have resources ready for the task.

The warning about being unprepared reminds us of our tendency to be complacent, to be devoid of hope, to have given up on God’s alternative initiative. A contemporary Jesus scholar has termed the ministry of Jesus as Jesus’ Program—the “kindom” agenda lived out in simplicity and service and sacrifice. Notice I said “kindom;” I didn’t mean “kingdom.” Kingdom implies a hierarchy with one boss and many subjects. Kindom, on the other hand, implies our being “kin” with one another; it implies equality and it lacks a hierarchy. We are kin in the church. We are kin around the table. We are kin who offer to teach one another in the responsibilities of “being church” rather than one person taking on so much and

others never learning. We are kin who laugh and cry together. We are kin who, when we say “Jesus” are also saying “justice.” We are kin who look to our Brother Jesus with anticipation. We are kin who are ready for action, equipped with compassion, trust, cooperation, hope and humor.

Another lectionary reading today is from Isaiah 1. Writing before the Babylonian Exile, the prophet calls to mind the mythical cities of Sodom and Gomorrah and their lack of hospitality, their smug arrogance, their lack of generosity. Isaiah, speaking for God and Goodness, provides an opportunity in verses 16 & 17:

*Wash yourselves; make yourselves clean; remove the evil of your doings from before my eyes; cease to do evil, learn to do good; seek justice, rescue the oppressed, defend the orphan, plead for the widow.*

We do these things when we are kin, hopefully; we do them when we honor the fact of being of one blood, ideally; we do what is *pono*/righteous because we can, because we must.

And so it is when we come to the Table of Sacrifice and Service; we come as ready participants in the Jesus Program; we come to remember AND look ahead; we come as those in a long line of responders, mindful of that Cloud of Witnesses across all lands and ages whose legacy we seek to understand and to whose *aloha* we are indebted.

While *Kokokahi* Church exists mostly as a mode of mission to community development in Indonesia and the Philippines, and is no longer the faith community that took me in and improved both my *kuana*/attitude and my *mana'o*/understanding or wisdom, I’m forever grateful that I was ready and able to respond to the opportunity to be kin with them through the *aloha* of *kokokahi*.

Salamat sa Diyos/ *Mahalo ke Akua*