

Sermon Notes for February 19, 2012
Church of the Crossroads, Honolulu, Hawai'i
Scripture: 1 Corinthians 9:16-23
Sermon Title: "Stepping Off A Cliff"
Rev. Kyle Ann Lovett

"When you come to the edge of all the light you know, and are about to step off into the darkness of the unknown, faith is knowing one of two things will happen: There will be something solid to stand on or you will be taught how to fly."

~Barbara J. Winter

'He Akua Hemolele,' God is Good
'Ke Akua no kakou,' God is our God.

Some stories come up every year - Doubting Thomas & Transfiguration

We heard at Lucille Anderson's Celebration of Life yesterday about how she and a few other brave souls met for years at 9am on Sunday to read books. One of those books was Hans Küng's "The Death of God."

Also yesterday, a new Diana Butler Bass article was published on www.huffingtonpost.com: **The End of Church.**

Large numbers of Americans are hankering for experiential faith whereby they can connect with God, the divine, or wonder as well as with their neighbors and that lead to a more profound sense of meaning in the world.¹

Her new book, "Christianity After Religion: The End of Church and the Birth of a New Spiritual Awakening" was published last week on St. Valentine's Day.

The Gospel

Today we have the convergence of one of those supernatural, wild tales that sounds like a sci-fi flick or a post-modern montage of images, in prose.

¹ http://www.huffingtonpost.com/diana-butler-bass/the-end-of-church_b_1284954.html

It's not on the surface what those large numbers of Americans are looking for... or probably what we are looking for.

There's an arduous trek up a mountain; a tightly knit company of friends on a "mission" together; the appearance of other-worldly figures in dazzling light; the transformation of the hero into an equally dazzling figure; a command from a powerful voice from another dimension; a determined descent to battle those other powers back home.²

trans·fig·u·ra·tion - definitions:

- A complete change of form or appearance into a more beautiful or spiritual state.
- A change that glorifies or exalts.
- A marked change in form or appearance; a metamorphosis.

Synonyms: transformation - metamorphosis

Putting It Into Practice

Butler Bass huffpo post

Seasons of the church year = scaffolding for experiential opportunities

Connect to your passion, not fill a puka

The Good News

Transformation ~ Light ~ Mountaintop Experiences

Face aglow from being in God's presence: Moses

Some mountain-climbing experience required!

Amen.

² Sarah Henrich, Professor of New Testament, Luther Seminary, St. Paul, MN , on Working Preacher at http://www.workingpreacher.org/preaching.aspx?lect_date=2/19/2012

A Lectionary Poem: Transfiguration Sunday

Posted on [February 17, 2012](#) by David R. Henson

A Poem for Sundays

there is a place beyond belief,
where faith is true
and false this promised land
I incarnate god and god
incarnates me, and together
with the incarnations of humanity,
we seek to find, create to destroy,
this Jehovah, this God, this
Christ.

in the land of milk and honey, curdled
sweet. a river of creeds runs over rocks
drowning, quenching deserted throats.
the wrath of god entombed in
its violent weight
the love of god kneeling before
the indignity of humanity.
i black the eye of Christ Jesus splits my lip.

on the mountaintop, we see god, and scream
transfiguration! in faithful fury
revelation bows to doubt.
there is a place beyond belief,
where my faith is true,
and false —a fiction
where in the Judas kiss I atone
for sins I have not committed.

For Further Reflection...

Christianity After Religion: The End of Church and the Birth of a New Spiritual Awakening by [Diana Butler Bass](#)

The data is clear: religious affiliation is plummeting across the breadth of Christian denominations. And yet interest in "spirituality" is on the rise. So what is behind the sea change in American religion? With the same comprehensive research and insider reporting that made *Christianity for the Rest of Us* an indispensable guide to cultivating thriving churches, Diana Butler Bass offers a fresh interpretation of the "spiritual but not religious" trend.

Bass—who has spent her career teaching the history, culture, and politics of religion, and engaging church communities across the nation—brings forth her deep knowledge of the latest national studies and polls, along with her own groundbreaking analysis, as she seeks to fully comprehend the decline in Christian attendance and affiliation that started decades ago—and has increased exponentially in recent years.

Some contend that we're undergoing yet another evangelical revival; others suggest that Christian belief and practice is eroding entirely as traditional forms of faith are replaced by new ethical, and areligious, choices. But Bass argues compellingly that we are, instead, at a critical stage in a completely new spiritual awakening, a vast interreligious progression toward individual and cultural transformation, and a wholly new kind of postreligious faith.

Offering direction and hope to individuals and churches, *Christianity After Religion* is Bass's call to approach faith with a newfound freedom that is both life-giving and service driven. And it is a hope-filled plea to see and participate in creating a fresh, vital, contemporary way of faith that stays true to the real message of Jesus.

<http://www.amazon.com/Christianity-After-Religion-Spiritual-Awakening/dp/0062003739>

God's Grandeur

Gerard Manley Hopkins

THE WORLD is charged with the grandeur of God.

It will flame out, like shining from shook foil;

It gathers to a greatness, like the ooze of oil

Crushed. Why do men then now not reckon his rod?

Generations have trod, have trod, have trod;

And all is seared with trade; bleared, smeared with toil;

And wears man's smudge and shares man's smell:

the soil Is bare now, nor can foot feel, being shod.

And for all this, nature is never spent;

There lives the dearest freshness deep down things;

And though the last lights off the black West went

Oh, morning, at the brown brink eastward, springs--

Because the Holy Ghost over the bent

World broods with warm breast and with ah! bright wings.

Prayer in anticipation of Mardi Gras

Amused God, believing we have to be serious all the time, we miss out on the joy of your creation. Choosing to feast on the pain of the world, we skip the picnics you offer us each day. Clinging to the despair which is our best friend, we ignore the opportunity to be amused by the world around us. May this day remind us to open ourselves to the startling, and upside-down ways in which you work. Fill us with your laughter; fill us with your healing joy; fill us with the love poured into us through Jesus Christ who came that we might have life and have it abundantly. Amen.

A Prayer for Mardi Gras from the Coral Gables Congregational Church