

The Rev. Giovan King

St. Christopher's Episcopal Church

For the most part, this service is the same as Helen's husband, David, whose funeral I remember well, because it was my second service, at the end of my first year at St. Christopher's, in 2011. And, David was my first pastoral visit. My first time visiting David was at Castle Hospital.

I had come here from Los Angeles. And so, when I got the call, in the office, that David was in Castle Hospital, I asked the folks in our office the address of Castle Hospital. So often you drive right past where you're headed in Los Angeles, and I didn't want to do that on my way to a hospital. People looked at me as if I were crazy to be asking the address of Castle Hospital. And I must admit that, after dozens and dozens of Castle visits, I certainly know how to get there – quickly even - yet I still do not know the address.

Back in 2011, David went home after that Castle stint, in which I visited him, and so then I was able to visit him and Helen at their home. And I was with Helen, and David, again at Castle Hospital as David passed. You know, sometimes you need to give your loved one permission to die. And, Helen seemed to know just how to do that. Helen was so gentle and loving with him, it was amazing!

I truly think that if I could choose my nurse in a hospital, I'd choose Helen. David was lucky to get her, when they met. I don't think he had a choice. And, if I could choose my mom, other than my own mom (who passed away in June), I'd choose Helen.

You know, last Sunday's Old Testament reading was from the book of Esther. Esther was a strong woman, a Queen even. I told someone that Sunday's passage made me think of Helen. A relatively new member, who didn't know Helen, asked, "Was she royal, like Queen Esther?" (Because, of course we do have royalty here in Hawaii.) That's not what really reminded me of Helen, though she was always filled with dignity and strength.

Helen was a very regular member of our Bible study group, and we've studied the Book of Esther twice since I've been here. Queen Esther's husband was Ahasuerus, also known in history books as King Xerxes. Who would guess a king's Biblical name would be harder than his other name, which contains two "x"s? Anyway, in our Bible study, when we read from Esther, every time someone got to the King's name, I'd say, "Let's just call him King A." And I'll always remember Helen reading scripture from Esther, and calling Queen Esther's husband King A.

At this point, I'd like to turn to today's Gospel, the 14<sup>th</sup> chapter of John, verses 1-6. "What God creates God loves, and loves everlastingly." I know these words do not take away the grief over the loss of Helen, particularly for – Michael, Allison, Curtis, their spouses, and the grandchildren, brothers, sisters, cousins.

Jesus promises to prepare a place for you and to be with you in that place, when you pass from this life. I imagine many of you would have wanted to keep Helen longer. I know I would have. But, Helen was tired, as you know. Still, she was saying, "I know the way. I have decided to go that way."

Helen knew what the disciple Thomas and we do not. She knew the way, and she was okay with that. And I believe she went out of her way to love and assure all of us, her family especially, that this was the way for her.

Today, also, we have said together the words of Psalm 23 - we "walk through the valley of the shadow of death." The last day I was with Helen and her family, we said the 23<sup>rd</sup> Psalm, and when we were done, Helen looked over at Allison and said, "yes, I want that at my funeral."

So, the shadow of death is our reality today. But there is another reality, a greater reality. What is the one thing necessary for a shadow to exist? Light. There can be no shadow without light.

And the darker the shadow, the brighter the light. Check it out sometime, by going outside during one of Hawaii's glorious full moons. Even when we don't see it, the light accompanies us through the valley.

That sharp light was there the day Helen was born, the day David fell in love with her, the day David passed, and also the day Helen passed. The shadow is not the ultimate reality. It is, rather, proof that the light is also here.

Some call that light God or Jesus. Others might speak of it as the Divine, the Holy, the Mystery. Others understand it as the power of resurrection. For many of us, it is all of that and more.

John's gospel refers to eternal life as a present reality that begins when Christ dwells in us and we live in him. Eternal life isn't just something that happens to us after this earthly life, up in some heavenly realm.

It is something that begins in love for one another as Christ has taught us to love. For Helen, I'll bet it always came naturally - and still does. We see Christ's love from the love that Helen has shared with her family, and with her St Christopher's ohana.

Helen was one of God's quiet angels, humbly going about a ministry of love and service, just as if she were born to do that. And she probably was. Helen was born to help us see love, and service, and to see it more clearly.

Helen: Well done, good and faithful servant. Amen.