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HwaPyoung Kang

Sermon Title: True Worshipers

Bible: Isaiah 43:21, John 4:23-24

Where & When: Sunday Worship at Gilroy UMC on August 12th, 2018

Audience: about 30 English Speaking Church members

### **Opening Prayer**

Let us pray!

Vulnerable God, you became human with your love and grace.

In front of you, I am vulnerable. We are vulnerable to your presence.

Please cover us with your love and grace.

In Jesus' name. Amen!

### **1. Too Early?**

I cannot believe that it has been more than one month since I came to Gilroy. With your love, I gained weight a little bit. Now, I can get to the church without GPS. Let me see. (Looking at all church members). I can say all of your names. I can match your faces and names. NICE! HwaPyoung! Give me a High-Five!!!

Even though I know your names, a little over one month--exactly 42 days--is not enough to know you. I need more time to know you: your life, your joys and tears. Likewise, to know this church, one month--6 Sundays--is not enough. I need more time to learn this church. It is very difficult to get to know you and this church within one month. Even if I have one year--365 days, or 52 Sundays--it is not easy to know you all.

It might be too early to say this. But, what I can do is to love you. What I can decide is to love you. Actually, as you love me, I love you already. I still remember my trembling and joyful tears, when my name was called at the Annual Conference in June to be to be

appointed to Gilroy UMC: “HwaPyoung Kang.” At that moment, this church became no more “this” church. It is now my church, and yes, it is **our** church.

## **2. What Made Me Attend Every Sunday Worship**

I attend every Sunday Worship at Gilroy. When I had a meeting with the church leaders, I said I would come to every Sunday Worship. Some had questions in their minds.

“Why do you need to come every Sunday as a quarter time pastor?” But I do not want to miss this great opportunity to meet you all and to worship together. As we read in Isaiah, we are formed to give praise to the Lord. I believe that worship is one of the most important ways to love the Lord our God. Thus, Sunday Worship is my top priority.

Personally, I would like to be a great speaker, even though English is not my first language. Yes, I try to do my best. But I do not worry about this that much. That’s because you are great listeners. Great Listeners make Great Speakers. With all of you, I will come close to being a great speaker, sermon by sermon. All I need to do is prepare the sermon with all my heart, with all my soul, with all my mind, and with all my mouth and all my body.

## **3. My Three Principles for Worship: Joyful, Meaningful, Participatory**

However, preparing worship is a little different. I need you (and you need me). Worship is an act by a faith **community**, not by one individual. Long ago, in the time of the Old Testament, worship was led by priests only. Its rules were very strict and too detailed. Sometimes priests lost their lives when they broke the worship regulations. In order to worship, people had to go to one specific place, the Temple in Jerusalem.

When we read the Gospel of John, Jesus teaches us to worship in spirit and truth. What does it mean 'worshiping in spirit and truth'? To me, Jesus gave us somewhat general but important principles, not strict and detailed regulations.

Let me explain more.

What is your favorite food? Tacos? Pasta? Hamburgers? Noodles? Steak? Pancakes?

Everyone has a different favorite food. So we cannot have ONLY ONE favorite food for all. But everyone wants to have *yummy* and *healthy* food, right? We can set up some principles for food. What we need is not regulations, but principles.

For worship, I have three words; Joyful, Meaningful, Participatory.

Worship is remembering and celebrating Jesus' Resurrection. So I do not want to see that you are bored, or you are falling asleep during the worship. I want to see that we have fun! In worship, **we are joyful!!** What I want from the worship is having a meaningful message for life, or at least for one week. It can be not only from preaching, but also from praises, prayers, offering, announcements, and greetings. I want to discover

or encounter at least **one meaningful thing during worship.**

#### **4. Let Us Make Worship Together: Worship Committee**

As I said earlier, Worship is not by an individual. Not by one pastor. Worship is by a faith community--**by all of us.** To me, it is very important to worship together. This does not mean that you should sing aloud like a robot all the time, regardless of how you feel or how you are. Please join the worship as you are. But please do not be strangers in worship. You are important. I need you. God needs you.

It would be wonderful to have all of you as worship helpers. But it is not that effective.

Thankfully, we have a worship committee. I plan to have regular meetings with our worship committee. I would like to introduce our Worship Committee; Pat Johns, Janet, and Steve. **Church members**, please make them busy. If you have any feedback, positive and productive feedback, please go to one of them and share your ideas. Please do not be shy. We need you (and you need me).

**Worship Committee members**, please do not be surprised at honest and brave, or sometimes uncomfortable feedback from church members. Today's Gospel Reading of John came from the story of the Samaritan woman. Even though Jesus knew that she had had five husbands before, he asked her to call her husband. Some questions or feedback can be uncomfortable. We will see that honest, brave, and sometimes uncomfortable questions or ideas come from love for our worship, like Jesus' uncomfortable questions came from love for the Samaritan woman. So, Worship Committee members, please deliver them to the worship committee meeting. We cannot put all of your ideas into one worship. We have 52 Sundays in one year. And we have another year. Gilroy worship will be improved slowly but steadily, with all of you through our Worship Committee. Yes, we have joyful and meaningful worship together, because we are already formed to be true worshipers. Amen!

### **Closing Prayer**

Gracious God.

Thank you so much for calling us true worshipers.

We want to worship you more and better.

Please be with us and guide us to make our worship joyful and meaningful.

You alone we want to worship!

In Jesus' name. Amen!!