

Sermon Title: **Good Soil**

Bible : Joel 2:28-29, Mark 4:2-9

Where & When: Sunday Worship at Gilroy UMC on July 22nd, 2018

Audience: about 30 English Speaking Church members

Opening Prayer

Let us pray! Amazing God, we are here for your mystery!

Even though we do not understand, we want to listen and follow you.

We are ready for your mystery.

Please lead us to your presence. Amen!

1. Revisiting Last Sermon

Let me remind you of my last sermon.

How old is Gilroy United Methodist Church this year? 165 years old.

And I share my hope and prayer.

My hope is that as a retired pastor, I want to be invited to this church in order to celebrate the Church's Birthday--at what age? For the 200th year Birthday, which will be in the year 2053.

Let me do the simple math. 200 minus 165 is...what is it? 35.

So, there are 35 years ahead of us.

2. Challenges - Path and Bird, Rocky Ground, Thorns

Thirty-five years ahead of us. Then, I start to ask many questions of myself;

What do we need to do this month? What do we need to do this year? What do we need to do for the next 5 years? What challenges do we have? What can we change now?

While preparing the last sermon (not this sermon), I started to reflect on the parable of the sower and the seeds. Jesus explains the meaning of this parable to his twelve disciples. But I dare to interpret this parable by myself, for the Gilroy United Methodist Church.

Where is the path? In my interpretation, the path means the parts of the ministry in which we need to change direction. Seed on the path is only for the birds, not for growing fruit. What ministry do we need to consider changing the direction of? Maybe it will be a painful and difficult decision, but we need to do it to bear more fruit.

Where is the rocky ground? This means to me, short-term, and big, visible ministry, not long-term ministry, which is sometimes hard to see. We need wisdom to tell what short-term ministry is and what long-term ministry is. Yes, we need to remove the rocks. This is important. But we should not spend all of our energy on short-term ministry. We need to spend our energy on long-term and sometimes not visible ministry.

What are the thorns? Taking out thorns is not easy. It hurts sometimes. But if we do not take out the thorns, in the end they will choke us. We might hurt our fingers, but we can save our life and bear fruit. What ministry do we have that no one wants to touch, because of the risk of a bloody finger?

This was my reflection. I tried writing down the names of these ministries.

3. Aha Moment - Good Soil

You know what! I already made a mistake. Sorry. I am really sorry about this. My mistake was only looking for something to change and fix, not looking for something to nourish.

Let me explain more. I composed a couple of questions for our get-to-know-the-pastor church dinner gatherings: “What are the obstacles/challenges that prevent you from attending church regularly?” “How can we change that?” I just focused on the path and birds, rocky ground, and thorns--what we need to change or fix. After the first dinner gathering, I realized that I was missing one, the most important one. What did I miss in the parable of the sower? I missed the good soil. Good soil tells me, “HwaPyoung, I am here for Gilroy UMC. We are the ones who yield thirty, sixty, and a hundred fold.”

When I point to you, can you answer “I know.”? Let us practice just one time (pointing to the audience). I missed the good soil. And I realized that you are the good soil. (I know). You are the good soil yielding thirty fold (pointing). Say it with confidence. You are the good soil yielding sixty fold (I know). You are the good soil yielding a hundredfold (I know). Absolutely, you are the good soil (I know). But I did not know this before. Sorry.

After my mistake, after I knew that you are the good soil, I changed the question to be “What are the strengths and gifts of Gilroy UMC?” I will look for our strengths and gifts! Please do not misunderstand this. I will take care of birds, rocks, and thorns. This is my job. But my trust is on the good soil. I will remember all the time that You are the good soil.

4. Spirit on All Flesh

I would like to close my message with Joel's scripture. A long time ago, in the times of the Old Testament, the Spirit comes to only some specific people, such as judges, prophets, kings, and priests. But in the Joel, God pours out the Spirit on all flesh; ALL FLESH; sons and daughters, young and **old**, even on male and female slaves. "Your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, and your young men shall see visions." What are your visions? What are your dreams? Please do not forget that you are the good soil (I know). You are the good soil bearing fruit! (I know) because God pours out the Spirit on you and me! (I know).

Closing Prayer

Let us pray! Amazing God. You call us good soil. Yes, we are good soil. I know we are good soil yielding thirty and sixty and a hundred fold. Pour out your spirit on us to see visions. Pour out your Spirit on us to dream dreams. Amen!!