

Sermon Title: **Looking Forward With Faith 2 - Abide in Love**

Bible: John 15:5-17

Where & When: Sunday Worship at Gilroy UMC on January 27th, 2019

Audience: about 34 English-speaking Church Members

Opening Prayer

God of Love, you love us first. And you chose us first! You do not call us servants any longer. You call us your friends. Please open our eyes to see what you see. In Jesus' name. Amen!

1. Do you have any Plants?

Do you have any plants at your house? Do you have trees or vegetables in your yard? Do you have any size garden in your yard? You cannot look at them right now, but can you describe your plants? How about the trees in your garden? What is the theme of your garden?

I would like to talk about our church, while using a metaphor of a tree. But I do not have much experience with gardening. Please educate me in how to take care of a tree. Because you know better and more than I about the trees, vegetables, and how to garden. Please forgive my lack of knowledge.

2. The Church as the Vine

Have you seen a grapevine before? What does it look like? It produces grapes, because it is a grapevine. How many different kinds of grapes do you recognize? As you read in the scripture today, the vine has many branches. Does it have flowers? Have you seen them? Can you recognize grape leaves? What else does the vine have? Does it have a head? Does it have arms? What else (shoots or canes, cordon, graft union, etc.)?

I think that we miss one important thing: the roots, because they are hidden. Have you seen the roots of the vine? What do they look like?

3. What is the Root? A Hidden, but Important Part?

The tree has fruits, flowers, leaves, branches, a trunk, and roots. All of these parts are important. Some are easy to recognize. We eat the fruits! We enjoy the beauty of the flowers. We need to clean up the fallen leaves. Sometimes, we cut the branches or the trunk. However, the roots are the least popular part, even though they are important. What do you think of the roots of this church? What ministry can be the roots?

4. The Process for Carrying out Our Mission

In the Book of Discipline, the Mission of the Church is to make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world. And it shares the five processes of how to carry out our mission.

1. Proclaim the gospel, seek, welcome and gather persons into the body of Christ;
2. Lead persons to commit their lives to God through baptism by water and the spirit and profession of faith in Jesus Christ;
3. Nurture persons in Christian living through worship, the sacraments, spiritual disciplines, and other means of grace, such as Wesley's Christian conferencing;
4. Send persons into the world to live lovingly and justly as servants of Christ by healing the sick, feeding the hungry, caring for the stranger, freeing the oppressed, being and becoming a compassionate, caring presence, and working to develop social structures that are consistent with the gospel; and
5. Continue the mission of seeking, welcoming and gathering persons into the community of the body of Christ.

Do you agree with these processes? What processes can you see in this church?

What are our strengths? What are our weaknesses?

In my opinion, number 1 and 5 are the roots, which are hard to see, but they work like the roots: Seeking, Welcoming, and Gathering Persons in to the community of

the Body of Christ. How do we seek? How can we welcome? How can we gather people? These should be our questions.

5. Abide in Love

Many churches are struggling not only to thrive, but also to survive. And I should confess that we are one of those many churches. However, I see the hope, because I feel the love in this church. I do not know how to prove our love. We will find out how to show our love. But, you know that I love you, and I know that you love me. We know that we love each other. We will love each other more and better. That's because God is Love. Let us remain in God's Love. As God loves us, let us love each other more and more. When we love, God's joy will be in us, and our joy will be complete.

Closing Prayer

God of Love! Because we are your friends, you will let us know what God is doing. You love us, and you chose us. And you appoint us to go and bear fruit! But please lead us to abide in you, abide in your love.

In Jesus' name. Amen!