

Sermon Title: **Looking Forward With Faith 4 - By Ourselves**

Bible: Isaiah 49:1-7, 1 Corinthians 15:50-58

Where & When: Sunday Worship at Gilroy UMC on February 17th, 2019

Audience: about 35 English-speaking Church Members

## **Opening Prayer**

Emanuel God, you were with us in 1853, when our church was established. You are still with us in 2019, even though we face a challenge. Your love and grace is the same all the time! And we hope to look forward with faith and we want to walk together for this church and the kingdom of God. In Jesus' name. Amen!

## **1. Church's Mission & Purpose**

The mission of the church is to make disciples for the transformation of the world. In this mission, where is a pastor like me? Is the mission of the church to have a pastor? The pastor is for the church! The church is not for the pastor. The pastor is the servant for you and this faith community! As a pastor, I am your servant, not your purpose. What is the purpose of the hospital? It should provide good healthcare to those in need. Having the doctors is not the goal. Your health is the ultimate goal. However, can you imagine the hospital without doctors and nurses? The hospital needs nurses and doctors, even though they are not the ultimate goals.

Likewise, having pastors, half-time pastor, or full-time pastor is not the goal, but the church needs pastors. For the existence of the church, pastors are needed, but they are not the ultimate goals.

## **2. 4 Sermons of “Looking Forward with Faith”**

I have been sharing my three ideas of “Looking Forward with Faith - the Mission of the Church, Abide in Love, and With Servant Leaders.” Today’s sermon is the last one in the series of “Looking Forward with Faith - By Ourselves.” When I started to prepare this series of sermons, our church faced the challenge to choose either having only a half-time pastor or being closed. Our leaders made a difficult and unavoidable decision, which is to have a half-time pastor and keep doing our mission as Gilroy United Methodist Church.

As a pastor of this church, preparing the sermons for this difficult topic under this situation is challenging to me. However, as a pastor, I would like to face this challenging reality on the front lines with you. That’s because to see and do the mission, we need to survive. I believe that in 1853, God called us as Gilroy United Methodist Church. I believe in 2019, God is still calling us the church. But for now, we need to think about our survival or existence first. It is very important, because this is my church, and our church. At home, I do the dishes many times, sometimes I vacuum. Doing Laundry and taking out the garbage is my job. We call

these chores, house chores. And I would like to do church chores, which is what we need to do for now. The series of “Looking Forward with Faith” sermons is not that inspiring, but these are most important as house chores. Thank you so much for your patience in this journey and I really appreciate your love and passion for this church.

### **3. By Ourselves**

This is my last thought about these church chores. We are all the church. This building is not the church. Meetings are not the church. The money is not the church. But We ARE the church. This church should be loved and grown by Ourselves. That’s because we are the church. Maybe, we can say it like this: “[we] have labored in vain, [we] have spent [our] strength for nothing and vanity”; However, we will also confess “[our] cause is with the Lord, and [our] reward with my God.” That’s because God chose us for 166 years, and because God wants to pour out God’s Love and Grace again and again! To receive the Love and Grace, we need to *open our hands*. When we close our hands, we cannot receive or we cannot catch the opportunity. Let us open OUR hands, which means giving and receiving. God is waiting for us to open our hands for this church! What do you want to give? In the Book of Discipline, there are 7 Membership Vows. I would like to share just one example. Among them, number 6 is *to faithfully participate in*

*its ministries by their prayers, their presence, their gifts, their service, and their witness.* We can support this church with our prayers, our presence, our gifts, our service, and our witness. Can you think about one more, just one more thing, based on our own faith journey?

#### **4. Not in Vain & Victory**

It is a great joy to think about what we receive. That's because "*in the Lord our labor is not in vain.*" God will remember all of our work. And we, each other, will remember what we do. And *God gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.* I do not know exactly what the victory looks like. Probably, God's victory is beyond my knowledge. Probably, God's victory is not what I expect. But I know that God's victory will be given to us, when we open our hands. God's will be done in this church! This is my Hope. So, as a pastor of Gilroy United Methodist Church, I am already and still, steadfast, immovable, and always excelling in the work of the Lord. I am opening my hands.

#### **Closing Prayer**

The God of Hope, in the Lord our labor is not in vain. Thanks to be God, the Victory will be given to us! So, we will look forward with faith and take one more step today. In Jesus' name. Amen!