

Sermon Title: **Forgiveness - with the movie, Secret Sunshine (2010)**

Bible: Romans 5:6-8, Matthew 6:12, and Matthew 18:23-35

Where & When: Sunday Service at Gilroy UMC on August 25th, 2019

Audience: about 33 English-speaking Church Members

Opening Prayer

Gracious God, your love and grace is always before us and for us. As you love us first and wholly, we want to love ourselves. We want to love others as you love us. Please be with us here and now, and be with my lips, according to your love and grace. In Jesus' name. Amen.

1. The Movie, Secret Sunshine (2010)

This summer, we had three movie nights. The third and the last movie we watched was “Secret Sunshine” (2010). Even though it is a Korean Movie, and even though we had a technical problem, 21 people patiently waited and watched the movie together. When I was a mid-twenties, I watched this movie for the first time. It was not what I expected, but it gave me many questions about Christianity, forgiveness, and repentance.

2. Forgiveness in the States

Our life and history is not that simple, rather it is complicated and twisted. Sometimes, repentance and forgiveness are neither simple nor easy. I still remember one particular worship service at a past California-Nevada Annual Conference. It was a service of repentance and forgiveness for the treatment of Native Americans. The pastors and lay members at the annual conference service confessed our sins against Native Americans. What happened in the past was

not my fault. But we, Native Americans and immigrants, are not okay. Now it is my issue as well. I confessed our sins together with the others. The preacher was a Native American pastor. He was thankful that the repentance of the Cal-Nev Annual Conference was not just lip service. Our Conference engages in Native American Ministry and holds a Native American Sunday every year to support them. In my research, in the United Methodist Church, there are more than 20,000 Native American people and 157 Native American congregations.

The Native American pastor ended his sermon with the connection between Christianity and Native Americans' spirituality through our common belief in Creator God. We cannot go back and begin again before our sins that were committed against Native Americans. But, we can stop our sins and make a turning point to support them. We are all children of Creator God.

When did the United Methodist Church begin? The Methodist movements started in the 18th century with our founder, John Wesley. But when did the United Methodist Church officially begin? It was in 1968, a little over 50 years ago, when Black Methodists and White Methodists were united, and have worshipped and worked together ever since. John Wesley was against slavery. In 1758, he baptized two African-American slaves. It took more than 200 years to break the color barrier in the Wesleyan tradition. Sometimes, we still see racial discrimination. Where was our confession of sins? Where was our repentance?

3. God's Grace & Forgiveness

We are not perfect. We are all weak. We cannot help but make mistakes, tell lies, and have faults. Nevertheless, God decides to love us. While we were still sinners, God loved us first, because we are all God's children. God created each of us, and God pours out God's love and grace. In my interpretation of Romans 5:8, God already forgives us first, and waits for us. Please pay attention to the order of forgiveness. Usually, in our society, after someone makes an apology, we accept that apology, and then forgive them. However, in God's love and grace, God already forgives us first, and then, waits for us. This is how I experience how God's love and grace is unconditional. In the Wesleyan tradition, there are three graces, even though the grace of God is undivided; Prevenient Grace, Justifying Grace, and Sanctifying Grace. Through prevenient grace, God looks for us first, invites us, and welcomes us into a relationship with God. I cannot understand all of the mystery of God's prevenient grace. But I think that God loves us and works for us, before we know God. And I believe that God still loves us and works for us, even though we do not know God wholly. God is love, and God's grace is unconditional.

4. Forgiveness & God's Patience

The second scripture reading is from the Lord's prayer, "Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us." But as we read, in many translations, it is "Forgive us our **debts**, as we also have forgiven our **debtors**." Isn't it interesting to forgive debts and debtors, rather than trespasses or sins? The third scripture reading, the parable of the

unforgiving servant, comes to me, very powerfully. Here is my interpretation. My debts are ten thousand talents. As one talent is more than fifteen years' wages of one laborer, my debt is more than one hundred fifty thousand years' wages. I cannot pay it back, even if I work every day in our whole human history. Because God's love to me is bigger than this debt, God forgives me. However, the wicked Hwapyoung sometimes cannot forgive my debtors. A hundred denarii is one hundred days' wages of one laborer. 150,000 years versus 100 days? This is very simple and easy math, but my calculation is wrong and bad. Oh, poor Hwapyoung! What made me not choose forgiveness? God already forgives me and loves me first. 150,000 years is a long time, but to God it is nothing. God's grace is unlimited. God still waits for me. Oh poor Hwapyoung! Even though God's grace is unconditional, I cannot free myself from conditional love or a conditional system. Why don't I love others as God loves me? Probably, that's why I should pray with the condition; "Forgive us our debts, **as** we also have forgiven our debtors." The love that I receive from God is always bigger than the love that I give to others.

We are not God. We are humans. But to God, we are more important than anything else. We are more important than even Godself. God shows God's love through Jesus Christ on the cross and the resurrection. God already forgives us. God already and still loves us. There is no condition for God's love and grace. Like we enjoy the sunshine, let us accept God's grace freely.

5. Closing Prayer

Gracious God, You forgive us and love us first. Even though we live in a world that puts many conditions on us, the world of condition, your love and grace is unconditional. We are so thankful for your love and grace. Please lead us to forgive ourselves and others more and more. Please use us for your kingdom, the world of unconditional love and grace. In Jesus' name. Amen.

Possible Qs.

1. How do you understand the idea of "Forgiveness"?
2. What or Whom makes it hard for you to forgive?