

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

Bible: Exodus 13:17-22 and Luke 10:25-37

Where & When: Sunday Service at Gilroy UMC on September 1st, 2019

Audience: about 33 English-speaking Church Members

Opening Prayer

Gracious God, even though we cannot see you, you are with us. Even though sometimes we cannot understand you, you are with us. Your presence is what we are looking for. Please lead us into your presence. With your love and grace, please cover my lips. In Jesus' name. Amen.

1. The Male Character in The Movie, Secret Sunshine (2010)

At our last movie night, we watched the movie "Secret Sunshine." For those who did not watch this movie yet, there are two leading characters. To make a long story short, the female leading character experienced a couple of tragedies in her life. She literally cried out with sadness and anger. The male leading character was there. His presence was impressive to me. He was not a pastor. He might not be a good Christian. He might not understand how she felt in the tragedy. However, he was always there, when she could not hide her anger and sorrow anymore. He was the best friend in her faith journey. Somehow, this reminds me to think of the presence of God with us.

2. God's Presence in Exodus 13

In the first Scripture we read, God is always with the Israelites. Moses led Israel's people out from Egypt. It was not a shortcut. It was a 40-year journey in the wilderness. There were neither houses nor apartments. There was not enough water and food. However, they were not alone.

With the pillar of fire by night, with the pillar of cloud by day, God guided them and traveled together with them. Although it took 40 years, God is good, right? Or God could have been better, right, if God had guided them to a shortcut?

3. How Do I think of God's Presence?

How do you think of God's presence in your life? Is God always with you? Does God know what you feel and what you think, even bad thoughts in your mind? Does God know everything? Does God do everything? When I was a kid, my image of God was like a security camera. It felt like God was watching me 24/7. Because we are humans, it is natural to forget something and lose something. I want to remember the joyful and fun moments only. But, the security camera records and saves everything, good and bad. It can catch the funny or mysterious moments, but it can also catch the moments of anger, embarrassment, despair, and failures. Like the security camera, does God record all of what I do and all of what I think?

I know that my mom and dad love me. And now I see what I was not able to see when I was a child. When I played on the playground, my mom did not need to play with me. My mom's watching was enough. It is totally okay for my dad to be busy with his own work, because I am not a baby anymore. My parents still love me. But they do not watch me anymore, like a security camera or like when I was on the playground. They know that I will be able to live my life by myself. Of course, they worry about me, because they cannot imagine what my life is

like in a foreign country. They pray for me every day. But I cannot hug them. I cannot eat together with them. But I still feel the presence of my parents.

4. God's Presence in Revelation 3:20

My image of God is no longer like a security camera. In Revelation 3:20, it says "Here I am! I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in and eat with that person, and they with me." God is powerful enough to break the door down or even to come through the closed door. God could use all of the power and knowledge to force me to open. But, what God does is to stand at the door and knock. My God respects me. My God is very gentle. God treats me, not as a child, but as an adult. That's why I open my mind and welcome God: "God, you are my Lord." God eats with me and I eat with him. I really enjoy my faith journey with my friend, God.

I believe that God knows everything, and God can do everything. But I believe that God is love beyond God's power and knowledge. God can change God's mind, because God loves me. God can decide not to know, because God respects me. God can decide not to do, because God wants to wait for me.

5. Our Presence in the parable of the Good Samaritan

How about our presence in this world? The second Scripture passage is the parable of the Good Samaritan. One man needs help. Both a priest and a Levite just passed by without helping him. But a Samaritan helped him. I would like to see more about how the good Samaritan

helped. The good Samaritan had compassion and helped the man. But what he did was not an endless help. He did not stay with the man the next day. He might have something to do or have his own life. What he did the next day was to ask the innkeeper to take care of him. In other words, he did what he could do first, and then asked for help, and did what he needed to do.

I do not know how this sentence sounds to you: thankfully, I am just a human. I am not perfect. I make mistakes and errors. I am not a superhero. I am so thankful that I am in the grace and love of God. Furthermore, I want to love others as myself, and to be a good neighbor. But I have my own life. Who should take care of my life? I should. But this does not mean that I would not care about others. God calls us to love others. But God calls others, too. God has many good Samaritans for God's Kingdom. When we need to take care of ourselves, let us take care of ourselves. It is okay. Actually, it can be what God wants us to do. But please do not pass up the opportunity for us to help others with our presence.

Closing Prayer

Gracious God, thank you so much for your presence. You watch us and you trust us. You respect us, and wait for us. As you love us, we love ourselves and take care of ourselves. But, when you need our presence for your kingdom, please use us. We know that you are always with us. In Jesus' name. Amen.

Possible Qs.

1. Can you describe your image of God's presence?
2. How can we love others as ourselves?