

Sermon Title: **What Do You Expect?**

Bible: Psalm 72:1-7, 10-14 & Matthew 2:1-12

Where & When: Epiphany Sunday at Gilroy UMC on Jan. 5, 2020

Audience: about 35 English-speaking Church Members

Opening Prayer

Gracious God, when the baby Jesus was born, the shepherds were there. The wise men were there. And they offered gifts to the baby Jesus, because he is the king. Please lead us to the king, like the shepherds and the wise men. Please be with my lips in your love and grace. In Jesus' name. Amen.

1. Happy New Year?

Happy New Year!!! Wow, it is already 2020. Happy New Year... Most of us like new things, because they make us happy. New shoes? New clothes? New car? New house? Do these new things give you happiness? But I wonder if the new things really make us happy. How about new smartphones? New laptop? Do these new technologies make you happy? How about new friends? New members? New church? New pastor? Sometimes, new means change, and it can bring hope and joy. But, sometimes, new means challenging, and this can make us uncomfortable.

2. Wise Men from the East Vs. Chief Priests and Scribes in Jerusalem

The wise men followed the star! The wise men traveled from the East to Jerusalem, and to Bethlehem. They were foreigners. All would be new to them: the food, the weather, the people,

the culture, and the language. They might enjoy new food and new weather. They might meet bad people, like the King Herod. Regardless of these changes, they did not forget the main reason for the journey: to worship the child, the King and the Messiah. For them, change or challenge were secondary, because the child was the one whom they were looking for. They challenged themselves. They were brave on this new journey!

On the other hand, King Herod, the chief priests, and scribes in Jerusalem had different perspectives. To them, the food, the weather, the people, the culture, and the language were familiar. Only the child was new to them. Instead of the star, the priests and scribes had the scriptures. With the scripture, they guided the wise men to where the birth of the Messiah was: Bethlehem. Priests and scribes had more clear evidence about the coming of the Messiah. However, somehow, they did not join the journey to find the child. They might not want to challenge themselves. They might want to stay where they were. Unfortunately, later, King Herod wanted to change the child, even killing many children.

3. New or Old Gilroy?

I am a one and a half-year-old Gilroy-an. I have met many Gilroy-ans here and there, but there are more Gilroy-ans whom I have not met yet. Gilroy is still new to me. How about you? Is Gilroy New or Old to you? Gilroy was officially incorporated by the state on March 12, 1870. This chart shows how Gilroy has changed in population.

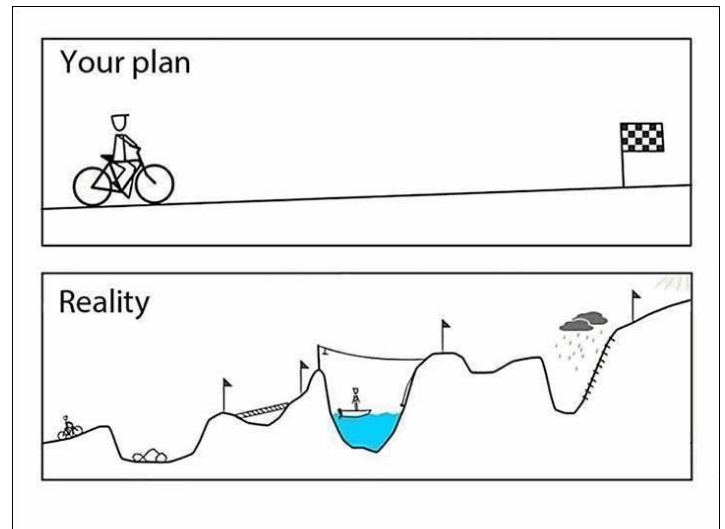
Census	1870	1910	1930	1950	1960	1970	1980	1990	2000	2010	2018
Pop.	1,625	2,437	3,502	4,951	7,438	12,684	21,641	31,487	41,464	48,821	58,756

Our church was established in 1853. According to this record, our church has a longer history than the city of Gilroy. Probably, at that time, there were about 1,000 people, and our Gilroy church members could know all of the Gilroy-ans. I guess that all of the Gilroy-ans might have known the Methodist Church, even if they did not go to church. As you can see on this chart, Gilroy is growing and changing every year. When I moved to Gilroy in 2018, I saw many new houses had been built near my apartment. When I drove by these new houses, I saw that most of these new houses were decorated with beautiful Christmas lights. I still see many new houses and new buildings being built. I assume that in 2020, Gilroy has a population of more than 60,000 people. I think there are now more Gilroy-ans whom we do not know than there are Gilroy-ans whom we do know. This means that many Gilroy-ans might not know about our church yet. As Gilroy is changing every year, the 2020 Gilroy can be new to us.

4. The Homeless Ministry and VBS in 2020

On July 1st, 2018, as a new pastor, I came to Gilroy. Two months later, I shared this Youtube video: <https://youtu.be/XQGnK-LWjk8> I am not a new pastor anymore. However, I still have the same vision and the same passion. Personally, I want to come back to this awesome church in 2053, for our 200th anniversary, as a retired pastor. Like the wise men followed the star, I follow my vision. To serve this church, I am not afraid of challenging myself. This vision makes me brave, and able to enjoy new things. For 2020, our lay leadership team set up two goals: expanding the homeless ministry and adding one new ministry, which is Vacation Bible School. In many cases, the reality is different from our plan. Our church has a long history of

feeding the homeless at the Armory. Because of the “new” policy to require food preparation in a commercial kitchen, it might not be easy to continue feeding the homeless in 2020. But I believe that our church will find out a way to feed the homeless. Maybe, this requires us to change ourselves. Our love



and passion toward the homeless is bigger than our challenges. So, we will find the way.

In 2020, the church plans to have Vacation Bible School in June. We do not have any Sunday school teachers, and we do not have any children. But I see the gifts that we do have. We have some active and retired teachers. When we do our Backpack Project and Christmas Toy Gift Project, I see our sincere love for the children. When we did our first church Trunk or Treat, we enjoyed ourselves with the many children who came to the church. I do not know how long it took for the wise men to deliver the gifts to the baby Jesus. But they made it, when they followed the star. I do not know how long it takes for us to deliver our love and our gifts to the children in Gilroy. But when we follow our vision, we will make it. So, I am looking forward to doing our 2020 Vacation Bible School.

5. What Do You Expect in 2020?

Trying new things or facing the new situation is challenging, and not comfortable. The wise men were not afraid of new things or new situations. They were brave enough to follow the star.

At the end, with joy, they saw the child. Like the wise men, we have one reason for our faith journey: our God. God established this church, and God still loves this church. Thanks to God, we can challenge ourselves, and change ourselves. 2020 is a new year. We will experience many new things. We might discover our new meanings or new identities. And it will be a happy new year!

Closing Prayer

Gracious God, we remember the wise men, their journey, and their courage. As they followed the star, we follow our vision. You alone is what we are looking for. As the wise men saw the child at the end, please guide us to see you alone. In Jesus' name. Amen.

Questions:

1. Do you have any New Year's resolutions?
2. What makes you challenge or change yourself?
3. What vision do you have for this church?