

Sermon Title: “..., so that they may be one, as we are one”

Bible: **John 17:1-11**

Where & When: at Gilroy UMC on Sunday, May 24, 2020

Audience: about 25 YouTube Live-streaming viewers

Opening Prayer

Oh Jesus, you became a human being to be with us. You were on the cross to suffer with us. Even after the resurrection, you wanted to be with us. We remember your prayer before the cross. Your love is always with us. Please guide us to open our eyes. Please be with my lips in your love and grace. In Jesus' name. Amen.

1. Jesus Prays for His Disciples

Today is the seventh Sunday of Easter. According to the lectionary, the Gospel reading is John 17:1-11, which is often called a “high-priestly prayer.” Jesus knew that his time was coming. He prayed for his disciples, before his death on the cross. This is like making his own written will. I know that some members of our congregation have made a will for their children, families, and friends. When or if you make a will, what do you want to say?

It was very difficult to follow Jesus in the Gospel of John. Many times, to become Jesus' disciples meant being in danger of excommunication, which was expressed as being “put out of the synagogues” in John. This expression appears three times in the Gospel of John. In the story of a man born blind who receives sight, even his parents were afraid of the danger of excommunication (John 9:22). Although Jesus had performed so many miracles, many people still did not believe in Jesus, because they had a fear of excommunication (John 12:42). Furthermore, to believe in Jesus could mean death, because believers were killed by those who thought that by killing them, they are offering worship to God (John 16:2).

In the Gospel of John, the world hates not only Jesus but also the believers. As Jesus died on the cross, the believers could die, because of their faith. To follow Jesus was not a joyful choice,

but a fearful decision. In this threatening context, Jesus prayed for his disciples. When Jesus was with the disciples, Jesus protected them and guarded them. But Jesus would not be able to be with his disciples anymore. And then, Jesus prayed for the frightened disciples, “Holy Father, protect them...” “Holy Father, protect them...so that they may be one, as we are one.” (John 17:11) The purpose of God’s protection is the unity of the believers. When there is a threat from outside, it challenges the unity of the faith community. In the story of a blind man, even his parents could be the side of his own son. Sadly, even family members might be unable to love or care about each other. So, Jesus asked God to protect them, in order for his disciples to be one.

2. As we are one

God wants us to be one, even if there is a challenge. But we should remember that oneness is not sameness. As Father and Son are different, we should be and will be different. Our faith journeys are different. Our thoughts and ideas are different. What God wants is not the sameness. But what God wants is oneness. God loves Jesus. Jesus loves God. God and Jesus are in a mutual loving relationship. What God wants is for us to love one another. Our founder, John Wesley, said this, “Though we cannot think alike, may we not love alike? May we not be of one heart, though we are not of one opinion?” Even though we cannot have one thought or one opinion, we can love each other with one heart, just as God and Jesus are one.

3. Curry Brothers’ Parents & A Korean Mom of Two Sons

In this COVID-19 season, we miss many things. One of them could be a sport. There are the Curry brothers in the NBA. Steph Curry and Seth Curry are on different teams. If you were their

mom or dad, which team or which son would you root for? What they do is to flip a coin. Then, mom roots for one son, and dad roots for the other son. Very wise, and it should be fun. This is kind of a pleasant worry. It is not a life-threatening situation.

Among many old traditional Korean stories, there is a mom who has two sons. One son sells umbrellas. The other son sells fans. The mom worries about both of her sons. When it rains, the son who sells the fans cannot make money. When it is hot, the son who sells the umbrellas cannot make money. Regardless of the weather, the mom worries about her sons. Then, a wise friend comes to the mom, and tells her to change her mind. When it is hot, the son who sells the fans can make money. When it is raining, the son who sells the umbrellas can make money. In this way, the mom can be happy whenever it is hot or it is rainy. It has a happy ending. But, sometimes, our life is more complicated than this story.

4. Decision-Making in this Crisis is Hard

In this Covid-19 time, all people in the world have suffered in this difficult situation together. Some people have lost their loved ones, and some people have lost their jobs. We miss our in-person worship and relationships. And we really care about each others' healthy lives. We want to go out freely and meet each other face-to-face, not screen-to-screen. Some of us need to work to support ourselves and our families, and for others. We also need to be healthy and save lives.

At this time, making decisions is hard. I wish that it would be like choosing my Halloween costume from being superman, batman, or spider man. But it never looks like that. In this time, the weight of the decision-making must be very heavy. Many people and many leaders are

making decisions. Since last Friday, Santa Clara County is the last Bay Area county to enter Phase 2 of the reopening plan during this crisis. Following the guidelines of Phase 2, small businesses and stores are reopened. Our church still suspends any in-person church activities including in-person worship. We are still the church, even though we have closed our church facilities. Thankfully, we have this YouTube live-streaming worship, smart devices, phones, and post office services. We as a church donated our offering to those in need. In this year, or until the vaccine is invented, not only our Bishop and Superintendents, but we also -- our church lay leaders, our church members, and I, as a pastor - will make unavoidable decisions, like when to reopen, how to reopen, etc. Those decisions cannot be fun or easy, because we are in this unique and uncertain crisis. Even if we have different thoughts and opinions, we might need to make decisions, hard decisions as a church. But please remember that Jesus asked the Holy Father to protect us, in order to be one as God and Jesus are one. We are all God's disciples in God's protection and Jesus' love. God loves all of us, and protects all of us. In God's love and protection, there is no exception. As one body of Christ, in the process of decision-making, in this unknown crisis, let us love one another more and more.

Closing Prayer

Merciful God, we are so weak, and we are so vulnerable. Please be with us at this time. We need your wisdom, your guidance. Above all, we need your love upon all of us. Teach us to love one another even in this time. In Jesus' name. Amen.

Questions.

1. How can we be one, yet not the same?
2. What is important when you make a hard decision?