

Sermon Title: **“Living Out God’s Love”**

Bible: **Romans 12:14-21 & Matthew 16:21-26**

Where & When: at Gilroy UMC on Sunday, August 30, 2020

Audience: about 25 YouTube Live-streaming viewers

Opening Prayer

Gracious God, as you loved the world, you gave your only Son to us. As you created and loved the world, you became a human being to show us your love and your way of life in the world.

Please guide us to follow your way as Christians. Please be with my lips in your love and grace.

In Jesus’ name. Amen.

1. Another Learning from Summer Academy

Last Sunday, I shared what I have learned from attending the virtual Summer Academy. The Summer Academy is part of the continuing education required of me as a candidate for the ordination process in the United Methodist Church. Last Sunday, the main question that might have come to mind was, “How does God make a relationship with us?” Is God outside? Is God everywhere? How and why does God become a human being? Today, I would like to share another idea about how to live as Christians.

2. Today’s Scripture Reading from the Lectionary

Today’s Scripture came from the lectionary. How do you feel when you read today’s scripture reading? Some of them more easily make sense to us than others. “Rejoice with those who rejoice, weep with those who weep.” But some of them sound difficult. “Bless those who persecute you.” “If your enemies are hungry, feed them.” “Overcome evil with good.” “Deny [yourself] and take up [your] cross and follow Jesus.” How do these sound to you? Do you still want to follow Jesus?

3. Three Views of Mission

According to the keynote speaker at the Summer Academy, Dr. Carmichael Peters, there are three views of mission. First, the mission is to impose religion on society. Second, the mission is for private spiritual enrichment. Third, the mission is to live out religion in society. In our Christian history, and our current diversity of Christianity, I believe that we can see all of these three perspectives. Among these three, what view of mission do you have? What view is close to today's scripture reading?

In our history of Christianity, crusades could be one of the examples for the first view. In the time of colonialism, many churches were used to support colonialism, as they believed that to conquer others' territories was their mission. If we follow the second view, we might need to go somewhere else, like a mountain or a monastery. Of course, we need our own time for our spirituality, but it is not all. We know that even Jesus had his own time to pray, but Jesus lived with his disciples. Jesus with his disciples fed the five thousand. Jesus even suffered on the cross.

4. Live Out God's Love

The mission of the United Methodist Church is to make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world. It is just like the third view of the mission. As disciples of Jesus Christ, we live out God's love. But we need to be careful not to see our religion as THE religion. We are not perfect. We can make mistakes. We can be wrong. I hope to see us not as THE religion, but A religion, to work with different people to make our community better. Of course, this church is my church, and our church. God is my God and our God. I welcome everyone, and want to invite everyone to God's love and grace, but I also respect other religions

and faiths. If we regard our religion as THE religion, we might be in danger of going to the first view of imposing religion on society. We might need to admit our weaknesses and vulnerability, or even deny ourselves.

Can you distinguish the mission and the social work? Can you tell the difference between the church and other non-profit organizations? For example, we feed the homeless, and anyone can feed the homeless. Then, what makes us the church? To us, feeding the homeless is the outward sign of an inward grace. God's grace and love is the center and the beginning. I hope that our mission would be what we want to do, not what we have to do, because of God's grace and love. God's grace is overflowing, not staying within us. God's love spreads out toward others, through us, not only within us. God's love and grace invites us to share, not commands us to do. If we do not receive, it is okay not to give. When we receive God's love, we can give God's love. To me, God's love is God's incarnation or self-denial. God decided to be a human being, to be with us, while denying Godself. If we do not see God's self-denial, it is okay not to deny ourselves. There will be a time of joyful obedience, to see God's self-denial and to live out God's love. God's love and grace is an invitation, not an order. Therefore, please fully receive God's love and grace during this time. God loves us, and we matter to God. When we are ready, we can follow Jesus.

Closing Prayer

Gracious God, thank you so much for loving us as your children. Your love is upon us. Your grace is overflowing through us. Please keep pouring out your love and grace upon us. In the name of Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.