

Sermon Title: **“Some Stories about Hymns”**

Bible: **Psalm 149**

Where & When: at Gilroy UMC on Sunday, September 6, 2020

Audience: about 25 YouTube Live-streaming viewers

Opening Prayer

Gracious God, thank you so much for this time to remind us of your love and grace. You gave us not only the Bible, but also hymns and praises. Yes, Lord, we are ‘a singing people.’ Please be with my lips in your love and grace. In Jesus’ name. Amen.

1. “A Singing People”

Today’s Psalm reading came from the lectionary for the fourteenth Sunday after Pentecost. Psalms are a collection of prayers and songs. The title, “Psalms,” comes from a Greek term, which means ‘song.’ The Hebrew title is “Tehillim,” which means ‘hymns’ or ‘songs of praise.’ Psalm 149 is a hymn of praise for God’s salvation. It is a call for the congregation to praise the Lord. “Praise the Lord! Sing to the Lord a new song!”

During the COVID-19 time, we cannot sing together. From our beginning, we, the Methodists, have been “a singing people.” Not to sing together is a big challenge to many congregations. Even during YouTube live-streaming worship, I should not sing with my voice. Even though I wear a mask, I should not sing. But my love to sing makes my body move, or sometimes makes me dance. I really miss your voices. We really miss singing together! I know that I am not a good singer. But during this time, I realized that I am so hungry to sing together with all of you. How about you?

2. “Amazing Grace”

Probably, “Amazing Grace” is the most famous song, not only in the States, but also in other countries. Even from when I was in Sunday School, I knew this song. But I did not know its behind story. According to the United Methodist Hymnal, John Newton wrote the lyrics in 1779. Can you imagine what it looked like in the 18th century? John Newton was born in 1725 in London. John Newton worked on slave ships for several years, and he was the captain of some slave ships. After he experienced a spiritual conversion, he became an English Anglican priest, and an abolitionist. After I knew this history, the lyrics were more powerful. “I once was lost, but now am found; was blind, but now I see.” John died in December, 1807. The British Empire’s abolition of the African slave trade was approved in Parliament in March of the same year. In other words, before he died, he was able to see his dream of slavery being abolished come to fruition! Now that you know a little about the life of John Newton, how does “Amazing Grace” sound to you?

3. “Jesus Loves Me”

What is your favorite hymn? When you are lonely, when you are exhausted, when you need God’s encouragement, what hymn gives you comfort, peace, or strength? My favorite hymn is “Jesus Loves Me.” To me, it is kind of a fountain of God’s love and grace. I learned this song when I was in Sunday school. It was a joy and it was fun. Even though I became a pastor, I still love this song. That’s because it reminds me of God’s love. It reminds me of my identity as a child of God. Before being a pastor of the United Methodist Church, before being a servant of God, and before being the disciple of Jesus Christ, I am a child of God. I am loved by God.

Jesus loves me, even though I am little, even though I am weak. So this song is my living water, an unending and overflowing fountain for my life. How about you? What hymn do you love?

4. What is your favorite hymn?

During this difficult time, I hope that you have something that reminds you of God's love and grace. It could be a Bible passage, maybe like Psalm 23. It could be the Lord's prayer. It could be this YouTube worship. It could be a time of joys and concerns. How about a hymn? What hymn reminds you of God's love and grace? It is okay not to be a good singer. Just be yourself. What we need is our own voices. How about singing your favorite hymn with your voice?

When we sing to the Lord, God and we will rejoice together!

Closing Prayer

Gracious God, during this time, please remind us of your love and grace. When we sing, when we listen, when we pray, please pour out your love and grace upon us. You are our strength and our joy! In the name of Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.