

Sermon Title: **“It’s OK not to be OK”**

Bible: **1 Kings 19:1-10**

Where & When: at Gilroy UMC on World Communion Sunday, October 18, 2020

Audience: about 25 YouTube Live-streaming viewers

Opening Prayer

Almighty God, during this challenging time, I look at you. I seek your face and your presence. O, Lord, you are the light! You are the hope. Please open our eyes to see you. Please open our ears to listen to you. Please open our hearts to receive you. During this time, please be with my lips in your grace and love. In Jesus’ name. Amen.

1. How are you doing during this challenging time?

We started our YouTube live-streaming worship on Sunday, March 15th. It has been more than 6 months. Today is the 32nd YouTube Worship! Yeah, 32 weeks! We have not had in-person church gatherings like small groups, women’s and men’s breakfast, coffee time, and worship. How have you been for 32 weeks? Are you okay? Even though we should follow the social distancing protocol, we need to live forward. We need to get our hair cut. We need to go grocery shopping. We need to cook and eat. We need to see doctors. We need to take care of our families and friends. And we need to take care of ourselves. Are you okay?

2. We are OK?

We, as a church, are okay. After starting our YouTube live-streaming worship on March 15th, there have been many improvements with the help of our praise team and audio/video team. At first, there was only one computer. Now we have four computers, two smart phones, one tablet,

and one TV screen. The audio and video qualities are improved as well. We have bright lights and virtual slides. With four and five mics, we can hear the sounds of piano, drum, and guitar, and the beautiful voices of our praise team. I am not sure how many of you watched YouTube before COVID-19. But now, many of our congregation know how to watch YouTube worship, and do live-chat. Our worship team, praise team, audio/video team, and our congregation have created this wonderful experience of YouTube live-streaming worship! Many of you join not only YouTube Worship, but also Zoom meetings. To download and install the zoom application requires a little more patience and courage. More than half of our congregation has made it! We did Zoom Fellowship, Zoom Serendipity, Zoom Armchair Theologians, and many zoom meetings. Furthermore, our lay leaders and relaunching team have tried to reach out to those who cannot access YouTube worship. We hope that emails, texts, phone calls, mailing the bulletin, sending the weekly memo, and the sermons are helpful for us to stay connected safely. The relaunching team helped the Music Academy to reopen during this time, and the team also plans to start up OUTDOOR Serendipity Bible Study. The team made our own social distancing protocol plan, based on the guidelines of the Santa Clara County Public Health authorities. The team provided training for volunteers and staff. We are almost there to have OUTDOOR Serendipity, probably once or twice a month. There are a couple of steps to be done, and we are on the way. There are many challenges. We will get through them together. So, I can say that our church is okay. But how about you? How about each of you?

3. We are not OK?

I learned that some of you have a hard time being isolated. Especially at this time, it is not easy to see doctors as well as friends. How about you? It might be an experience of trauma.

According to Dr. Kim Wagner, trauma is an internal blow or wounding of the mind (and spirit/self) that occurs when an experience or event cannot be fully understood in the moment or assimilated into pre-conceived frameworks of understanding. Many people say that this is a new normal. We do not know many things. We are just vulnerable to this uncertainty. We are still in this COVID-19 reality. Are you okay? These days, whenever I have time, I have tried to take many zoom classes like clergy self-care. I thought that I am okay, and our church is okay. But I see it is not okay in my mind. I assume that many of you are not okay sometimes. How long do we need to live like this? There are many expectations about the vaccine and treatments. Some Korean health care experts say that even though the vaccine may be popular next Spring or next year, it is not the end until the treatment is invented. That's because the vaccine does not guarantee 100% protection. They say that to have an affordable treatment might take two or three years.

4. "It is enough!"

Two or three years? Then, I dare to say to God, like Elijah, "It is enough!" Elijah did many great miracles and victory, before today's scripture reading. He was a great prophet and a man of miracles. But after much success, he said to God, "It is enough!" He might be exhausted even after miracles. He might be lonely to do God's work by himself. God sent an angel and food. But it was not what he wanted.

In many cases when I face challenges, my question is “How?” not “Why?” But this time, rather than questioning “How?” my answer is “It is enough!” I dare to complain to God, “O, Lord, I am not okay! I know that we have done many things successfully: YouTube Worships, Zoom Meetings, Relaunching Team, Helping Others, but two or three years more? It is enough!”

After today’s scripture reading, Elijah met God not in the wind, not in the earthquake, not in the fire, but in a silence. I hope that I meet God in this difficult time. I hope for us to meet God, like Elijah. But we might not be there yet. We might be in the similar situation of 1 Kings 19:1-10. Not after verse 10 yet. When I came to God with a broken heart, and exhausted mind and body, somehow God fed me. Somehow God touched my soul. I thought that it could not be good to God, for me to express my complaints. But God is listening to even my vulnerability. It is okay not to be okay. That’s because God embraces all of us, even our sorrows, our loneliness, our mental and physical exhaustion. Let us come to the Lord as you are. It is okay not to be okay. God’s love and grace is greater than who we are, what we are, and how we are. God is embracing us, especially during this time, as we are God’s loved ones.

Closing Prayer

Merciful God, we are vulnerable during this time. We are not okay. In this time of unknown, O Lord, please touch our souls and minds. We come to you with our broken hearts and exhausted minds. Please guide us to see you during this time. In Jesus’ name. Amen.