

Sermon Title: **Stewardship Campaign #2 - My Stewardship Story during COVID-19**

Bible: **Philippians 4:10-20**

Where & When: at Gilroy UMC on Sunday, November 8, 2020

Audience: about 25 YouTube Live-streaming viewers

### **Opening Prayer**

Gracious God, thank you so much for your protection, healing, and sustaining presence. Thank you so much for your generosity during this challenging time. Please be with us and guide us to follow your generosity. In this time, please be with my lips in your love and grace. In Jesus' name. Amen.

### **1. For 2021 Stewardship Campaign**

Today's message is prepared for the Stewardship Campaign. We have started the 2021 Stewardship Campaign as of the last Sunday of October. At that time, I shared our church finances for 2020. As God is generous, our church is generous. God's love and grace is overflowing through us to our community, Gilroy and California. How awesome we are!! This pastor has an awesome church! As a pastor who has an awesome church, today, I plan to share my own personal stewardship story during COVID-19.

### **2. Paul's Letter: Philippians**

Today's scripture reading came from Paul's letter to the Philippians. I believe that many of you are familiar with Philippians 4:13, "I can do all things through him who strengthens me." This verse gives us the strength of faith. When we read not only one verse, but also the background of the verse, it gives us a little different meaning. All things might mean the secret

of being well-fed and of going hungry, of having plenty, and of being in need. Regardless of the situation, Paul knew how to be satisfied, how to be content with whatever he had. Paul was a missionary. Sometimes, he received many offerings from many churches. So, he was paid in full and had more than enough. But sometimes, he might not have any churches to support his missionary work. He might go hungry. Probably, because of this situation, Paul was both a tent-maker and a missionary. Through all situations, Paul learned how to be content with whatever he had. How about you during this COVID-19?

### **3. Giving Tithe as Spiritual Discipline**

Even during COVID-19, our church finance is more than okay. Our church made 100% tithe payments, also known as apportionment, to our Cal-Nev Annual Conference in 2019. And I believe that the church will also make 100% tithe payments in 2020! We helped many people during this time, and we are still thinking of how to help others more, especially through St. Joseph's Family Center. God's generosity is overflowing through us to those who are in need, and our community. But how about you?

Based on my Korean-Christian DNA, my goal is tithe! Giving 10% first from my income to God is my genetic goal. I try to do my tithe, because I believe that it is for my own spiritual discipline. Money is important, but I do not want to be a slave to money, but rather I want to have freedom from money, and to be a servant to God. So, in 2019, I almost made it. In my calculation, I made 93% tithe from my income. However, I miscalculated the expense of my immigration process, and I had to learn about American taxes for pastors. Like Paul, I was in need. Thankfully, the church supported my immigration process financially. Like Paul

described, the immigration bonus gift was a fragrant offering. I am still thankful and joyful for this fragrant offering.

Our pledge form has this sentence, “I understand that my commitment may be increased or decreased as circumstances change.” At the beginning of this year near the tax day, Mihyun and I had a family meeting. For the 2020 pledge form, our goal was to tithe 10% of our income first. But we decided to reduce the percentage as a half, because we needed to think of taxes. When COVID-19 started globally, we decided to reduce our offering, and send some money to our families in Korea. My father-in-law is an airport shuttle driver at the Incheon International Airport. Because of COVID-19, many international airlines cancelled flights, and travel was very limited. So, Mihyun and I saved some money, and sent it as a gift during Korean Thanksgiving day. I hope that it would be a fragrant gift for my parents-in-law.

#### **4. Giving for My Faith Community**

I need to take care of myself, and my family. And I am a part of this faith community. Being a part of this faith community is a privilege. There are many ways to support this faith community. Giving is one of many. Did you vote? Voting is one of many privileges. Because I am not an American citizen yet, I cannot vote. I do not have this privilege yet. Because I pay taxes in the States, I thought that I could receive the stimulus check from the government. But I cannot receive it. That’s because I am in between, even though I pay taxes. But for giving to the church, I do not want to be in between. I want to be in. As a part of this faith community, I would like to support this church financially as well. Giving is my privilege for this awesome church. Even though I cannot make the whole tithe, I do not want to stop my giving to the

church. I read this sentence one more time, “I understand that my commitment may be increased or decreased as circumstances change.” For now, as circumstances changed, I needed to decrease my offering, but when circumstances change, I want to increase my offering up to the tithe!

#### **4. Pledge Form for 2021!**

Last week, for the first time, I mailed the pledge forms to all of the church members. We have 70 church members, and I mailed 46 pledge forms. In 2017, the church received 5 pledges, in 2018, 12 pledges, in 2019, 20 pledges, in 2020, 20 pledges. I know that many of you have difficulty in many ways during this time. But I hope that the church receives more pledges for 2021. That’s because we are all together to get through this. As I shared, it is totally fine to decrease your offerings. We need to take care of ourselves, and our families first! But as a part of this faith community, I hope to see more pledge forms. Because we are not alone for this faith community. Every penny, and every dollar matters. Every pledge form matters. We will count all of our pledge forms. Let us build up our church together.

#### **Closing Prayer**

Gracious God, thank you so much for your generosity. Thank you so much for your protection. Even during this time, please guide us to be your faith community, and to be your church. And please lead us to learn your generous and sustaining presence. In Jesus’ name. Amen.