

Sermon Title: **“Ask, Search, Knock”**

Bible: **Matthew 7:7-14**

Where & When: at Gilroy UMC on Epiphany Sunday, January 3, 2021

Audience: about 30 YouTube Viewers

Opening Prayer

Gracious God, you are with us. Thank you so much for your presence. Thank you for your church. Thank you for your table. Thank you for this new year. With your presence, we can welcome this new year. And we can face today. O Lord, please guide us with your wisdom and your love. During this time, please be with my lips in your love and grace. In Jesus' name.

Amen.

1. Gratitude in 2020

Happy New Year! It is very weird, but we welcome the year of 2021. The year 2020 was full of uncertainties and challenges, but I believe that we can still be thankful for 2020. I thought that it would be very challenging for our congregation to have online worship. But we made it. Many of us, for the first time, learned how to do zoom and how to watch YouTube. For those who cannot access online worship, we gave calls. We sent texts, emails, and cards to each other. I thought that it would be impossible to do our outreach. But we made it. We shared God's overflowing love in many ways. We gave school supplies and Christmas gifts. We sent our donations to those who were in need, because of COVID-19 and the wildfires. We are still helping St. Joseph's Family Center. I thought that our church finances would be difficult without online giving. But we made it our own way. We mailed our offerings to our church

consistently. I thought that the 2021 Stewardship Campaign could be a failure. But we made it. As of December 1st, the church received 24 pledges for 2021. We broke our records. For 2017, the church received 2 pledges, for 2018, 5 pledges, for 2019, 12 pledges, and for 2020, 20 pledges. Even though we all are still in a difficult situation, we support our church, our ministry, and our outreach. I really appreciate the presence of all of you. Even if we cannot meet face-to-face, I am able to feel your presence in many different ways. And I am thankful for God's overflowing grace and love upon us.

2. Three Kings' Journey

Today is Epiphany Sunday. Actually, the Epiphany is on Wednesday, January 6th, 12 days after Christmas, but many churches celebrate today, the first Sunday after January 1st, as Epiphany Sunday. Epiphany means "to appear" in classical Greek. The child Christ appeared to the wise men. In other words, Epiphany recalls the visit of the wise men, the three kings. So, it is also called Three Kings' Day.

I wonder what it looked like on the three kings' journey from the East to Bethlehem. They saw the star, and followed it from the East. I am sure that they were excited to see the Christ child, when they started their journey. And of course, their journey would be full of unknowns, uncertainties, and many challenges. I still remember my first day in the United States, at the San Francisco International Airport, when I arrived in order to study at the seminary. In 2010, I was very excited to study abroad at the seminary as I followed my star, my dream. After 8 years, in July 2018, I was called to serve this awesome church as a pastor. Eight years has a lot of stories, still bitter and sad stories. But, now, this 8 years feels like 8 months, because it is a great joy

and honor to serve the church as a pastor. Someday, I hope my 8 years feels like 8 days, or at least it can taste sweet as well as bitter.

3. Ask, Search, Knock

The three kings saw the star and followed it from the East. We cannot imagine the detailed story of their journey. Even the Bible does not have many stories between the East and Bethlehem. The Bible has a story, when the three kings asked King Herod where the child was. From this story, I can imagine their attitude for the journey. I chose today's scripture reading. Ask! Search! Knock! They even asked the King Herod, who killed many babies later. When the star had stopped, the star might not be right above the stable. They might need to search all over Bethlehem. They might need to knock on tons of doors. They even knocked, not only on the doors of the inn, but also on the doors of the stable. Who could imagine that the baby was laid in a manger at the stable? They did not give up. They asked, searched, and knocked. At the end, they saw the child.

I hope that this new year will be different from the last year. But the gate could be narrow. The road could be hard. There could be unexpected challenges. Let us not give up. Please do not be afraid to enter through the narrow gate. I hope for us to ask, search, and knock this year, like the three kings, and like today's scripture reading. We are still here at this time, as a church. Where is the star? Where is God? Where does God lead us to go? Shall we ask, search, and knock?

Closing Prayer

O Lord, we are here, as your church. We ask, search, and knock for your wisdom, and your guidance. Please lead us to you, through this new year. In Jesus' name. Amen!

