

Sermon Title: **“Remember Our Baptism”**

Bible: **Mark 1:4-11**

Where & When: at Gilroy UMC on Sunday, January 10, 2021

Audience: about 30 YouTube Viewers

Opening Prayer

Gracious God, thank you so much for your overflowing grace. You love us first; you still love us. Your love and grace is steadfast, even when our faith is not strong. We put our whole trust in your grace. During this time, please be with my lips in your love and grace. In Jesus' name. Amen.

1. United Methodist Sacraments

In the United Methodist Church, there are two sacraments: the Communion and the Baptism. Most of the United Methodist Churches celebrate the Communion once a month, the first Sunday of the month. This is what Gilroy United Methodist Church does. How about Baptism? When was the last time our congregation had a Baptism? It should be a great moment for the candidates and our congregation to celebrate together. The United Methodist Church does not RE-baptize, because we believe that God's love and grace does not change. We do not rely on our faith, but on God's grace. Our faith journey could be hard, tough, and challenging. But God's love and grace is always there for us. While we do not RE-baptize, we do reaffirm or remember our Baptism.

2. The First Two Vows of Christian Baptism

To remember our baptism, I would like to revisit our vows of Christian Baptism. I share some parts of our Methodist “Renunciation of sin and profession of faith.” These are the first two questions.

“On behalf of the whole Church, I ask you: Do you renounce the spiritual forces of wickedness, reject the evil powers of this world, and repent of your sin?” Our answer would be “I do.”

“Do you accept the freedom and power God gives you to resist evil, injustice, and oppression in whatever forms they present themselves?” And our answer still would be “I do.”

What is our current answer for these first two questions? Do we still answer with “I do?” Do we see evil, injustice, and oppression? Do we see the darkness? The Baptism is a very beautiful moment, and it is also the most powerful moment. God gives us the freedom and power to resist evil, injustice, and oppression here and now. Do we still answer with “I do?” Even though I am not an American citizen, as a 2.5 years old Korean-Gilroyan and as a pastor of Gilroy United Methodist Church, I believe that I can say that this is OUR nation and OUR country, can't I? It is like the way some of you pray for peace in OUR divided Korean peninsula. So, I do resist the violence in OUR nation's capital. That's why I signed the “United Methodist Church Clergy Statement of Solidarity” against the violence last Wednesday, on the day of Epiphany. You can see the whole article through the last weekly memo, the church Facebook page, and on the church Instagram.

3. Vows To the Congregation

Have you heard of an African proverb, “It takes a village to raise a child?” It means that the family and the entire community help each other for the child to grow in a safe and healthy environment. Likewise, in the Baptism, it is not only for the candidates, but also for the congregation. The pastor asks the following questions of the congregation:

“Do you, as Christ’s body, the Church, reaffirm both your rejection of sin and your commitment to Christ?” Our response would be “We do.”

“Will you nurture one another in the Christian faith and life and include *these persons* now before you in your care?” Our response would be “With God’s help we will proclaim the good news and live according to the example of Christ. We will surround *these persons* with a community of love and forgiveness, that *they* may grow in their trust of God, and be found faithful in *their* service to others. We will pray for *them*, that *they* may be true disciples who walk in the way that leads to life.”

As we are the body of Christ, we are one in Christ. As 1 Corinthians 12:26 says, “If one member suffers, all suffer together with it; if one member is honored, all rejoice together with it.” Her joy is our joy. His suffering is our suffering. Your sadness is my sadness, and our sadness. Your crisis is my and our crisis. So, I do pray for OUR nation, too, with *a Prayer in a Time of National Crisis*, which is from the United Methodist Church Book of Worship #517.

Can you join me in this prayer?

*God of all the ages,
In your sight nations rise and fall, and pass through times of peril.
Now when our land is troubled, be near to judge and save.
May leaders be led by your wisdom;
may they search your will and see it clearly.
If we have turned from your way,*

reverse our ways and help us to repent.

Give us your light and your truth, let them guide us;

Through Jesus Christ, who is Lord of this world, and our Savior. Amen.

4. Remember Our Baptism

I know that we wash our hands frequently these days. When you wash your hands, remember that we need to wash our hands for at least 20 seconds. And please remember our Baptism.

During this time of COVID-19, many sufferings, and many challenges, I hope for us to remember our Baptism. The Baptism is to reject the evil powers of this world. It is to resist evil, injustice, and oppression. It is to be one as Christ's body. Like today's scripture reading, we are God's children, the beloved; with us, God is well pleased.

I would like to close my message with a ritual of remembering our Baptism.

(The water may be poured into the bowl so that the congregation can see and hear the water.)

Let us pray. Pour out your Holy Spirit to bless this gift of water and those who receive it, to wash away their sin and clothe them in righteousness throughout their lives, that, dying and being raised with Christ, they may share in his final victory. **All praise to you, Eternal Father, through your Son Jesus Christ, who with you and the Holy Spirit lives and reigns for ever. Amen.**

(The pastor may scoop up a handful of water and let it flow back into the bowl so that it is heard and seen.)

Remember your baptism and be thankful. Amen!

(A very small amount of water may be sprinkled toward the congregation.)

Closing Prayer

The Holy Spirit works within you,
that having been born through water and the Spirit,
You may live as faithful disciples of Jesus Christ. Amen.