

Sermon Title: **“Where I am, there will my servant be also.”**

Bible: **Jeremiah 31:31-34 & John 12:20-33**

Where & When: at Gilroy UMC on the fifth Sunday in Lent, March 21, 2021

Audience: about 30 YouTube Viewers

## **Opening Prayer**

O Lord, during this season of Lent, we remember your love and grace upon us. You want to be with us, and you want to live with and within us. Please guide us to follow your love and grace, and your way. Please be with my lips and mouth in your love and grace. In Jesus' name. Amen.

## **1. Inner Voices**

Have you been bothered by inner voices before? Hearing inner voices does not mean that there were literal voices speaking to me. They are some conscious or unconscious thoughts or feelings in our minds. What kinds of inner voices have you heard? I can share some inner voices that I have heard of before. “You’re unattractive.” “You are such a loser.” “You’d better be perfect, or you’ll get fired.” “Nobody likes you here.” “She is too good for you.” “As soon as she gets to know you, she will reject you.” “You’re a failure.” “You messed up.” How about you? Have you heard any similar inner voices? When I was a college student, these inner voices really bothered me, and put me down. I tried to ignore them, but I failed, because I was a failure. This vicious circle was powerful and untouchable. Ironically, I studied very hard to escape from those toxic inner voices. I got all As and received a scholarship. But I was not able to overcome those inner voices. Furthermore, I did not want to face them, because they were so

dark, and so scary. I got used to this dark world somewhat. Because of the sacrifice made of my inner world, my outside world looked great!

## **2. The Holy Spirit in us**

I was deeply attached to this “perfect” dark world. However, there is another one inside me. I built this perfect dark inner world, but someone knocked on the door. I ignored it. I heard the voice. I ignored it again. I knew that it was not a good fit with my dark world. I knew that it would destroy my “perfect” dark world. Even though there were many loud noises, that knock, that voice came into my ears. I said “NO.” Yeah, I dared to say no. But I still heard the gentle knock and the soft voice. Then, what could I do? I decided to prepare myself, in order to say a definite no. I went to a retreat center where silence is a main spiritual practice. Without any noises, I could listen to that GENTLE knock and the SOFT voice. Finally, I answered them. But you know what? My anger exploded. I poured out my anger, my sadness, and my darkness towards the one I was hearing. I thought that my anger, my sadness, and my darkness would make the one reject me. I thought that the one would leave me. As my toxic inner voice said, as soon as the one got to know me, I thought that the one would reject me. But on the suffering, on the cross, Jesus Christ accepted all of me, even all of my explosive anger, my unending sadness, and my toxic darkness. I hugged Him and cried all of the days in His arms.

## **3. Listen to the Holy Spirit**

A long time ago, people needed to go to the temple, because people believed the temple was the only place where people could encounter God. In the time of Jesus, only a limited amount of people listened and experienced Jesus’ real life, His teaching, and His miracles. I understand

that today's message points out the presence of the Holy Spirit. Today's Scripture Readings come from the lectionary for the fifth Sunday in Lent. Jeremiah explained the new covenant. God is within us, because God is our God. God is in me. God is in you. The Gospel of John said, "Where I am, there will my servant be also." As God is in us, can we face our inner voices and go within ourselves?

We might hear many inner voices: right and wrong, good and bad, light and heavy. Sometimes, I still hear the poisonous inner voices. But so what? They do not bother me like before anymore. They do not matter anymore. God's grace is way bigger than anything or anyone. Those dark inner voices might be still there. But I do not hear the sounds of those dark inner voices anymore, because I have the light in me. We might be able to hear the voice of the Holy Spirit. When we hear the voice of the Holy Spirit, we will know that it is not from us, not from the world, but comes from God. Then, we can just be present, and listen to the Holy Spirit, because God is there. God starts the new covenant, to live in us. God's shining glory will be there. Surely, God is in us. So, just be there, and listen to our Lord, our living God.

### **Closing Prayer**

O Lord, sometimes, we hear many voices. Sometimes, we ignore many voices. But Lord, please guide us to listen to your voice, as you are in us. As much as you want to be with us, we want to listen to you. Please give us the courage to listen to your voice. In Jesus' name. Amen.