

Sermon Title: **“When Kindred Live Together in Unity”**

Bible: **Psalm 133 & John 20:19-31**

Where & When: at Gilroy UMC on Sunday, April 11, 2021

Audience: about 30 people (including 15 Youtube viewers)

### **Opening Prayer**

Gracious God, thank you so much for the resurrection of Jesus Christ. Thank you so much for Jesus' appearance to the disciples and Thomas. Thank you so much for coming to us as our Lord. Please guide us to be your faith community. Please be with my lips and mouth in your love and grace. In Jesus' name. Amen.

### **1. Doubting Thomas**

Today's scripture readings come from the lectionary for the second Sunday of Easter. The Gospel reading of John is about Doubting Thomas. After the resurrection, Jesus appeared to the disciples. The disciples saw Jesus' hands and his side. They rejoiced that Jesus was risen. But Thomas was not there. The other disciples told Thomas that Jesus was risen, but Thomas could not believe it. A week later, Jesus appeared to the Doubting Thomas. Our Doubting Thomas saw and touched Jesus' hands and his side. Now, Thomas was not any more a Doubting Thomas. He became one of the most faithful disciples.

### **2. The Gospel of John's Christian Community**

This story ends with “Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have come to believe.” But if we listen to this story of Doubting Thomas carefully, this ending was not meant for Doubting Thomas. In the story, eventually, Doubting Thomas saw Jesus, and all of the disciples were able

to see Jesus. Then, who are the “blessed” referred to here in this verse? Who are those who have not seen but have come to believe?

John 20:31 says, “But these are written so that you may come to believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that through believing you may have life in his name.” This means that this story of Doubting Thomas was written, not for the disciples, not for Doubting Thomas, but for the Christian community who could not see Jesus. The Gospel written for John’s Christian Community is addressing people who could not see Jesus in person with their own eyes, and could not touch him with their hands. Probably, many Christians in John’s faith community could not believe in Jesus’ resurrection, like Doubting Thomas, because they could not see it.

To me, this story sounds like it is okay not to believe in what you cannot see. One of the disciples, Thomas, could not believe it, because he could not see it. It is okay to doubt. It is okay to ask questions. It is okay when your faith is shaken. As Doubting Thomas is still included as one of the disciples, even when you doubt, even when your faith is weak, you are still our sisters and brothers in Christ. I see this faith community’s openness, strength, and healthiness.

### **3. Hybrid Worship**

As a pastor, I really envy this faith community. As you see, I have many weaknesses. I ask many questions. Sometimes, I doubt. And I have made many mistakes. (But you still accept me as your pastor, right?) Last year, on Sunday, March 15th, we started our first YouTube Worship. It has been over one year. We have faced many challenges. We have improved one by one

together. We got through it together. Now, we begin the second chapter of this pandemic. Today, we officially start our first Hybrid Worship: both YouTube Worship and Indoor Worship together. There will be many challenges, many concerns, many questions, and many suggestions. But I believe that it will be okay. There will be God's protection. When our faith is weak, when we doubt, it might be the time when we see God or touch God, like Doubting Thomas. We are stronger than we thought. We are more tech-savvy than we can imagine. We are more open-minded than we feel. We are more caring for each other than we thought. Like today's Psalm reading, there will be the precious oil on our head, God's blessing on our head, running down. That's because we live together in unity, and get through this together.

### **Closing Prayer**

O Lord, during this time, like the Gospel of John's Christian Community, make us one with each other. Even when we are weak, even when our faith is shaken, even when we doubt, please lead us to be one, and show us your presence. In Jesus' name. Amen.