

Sermon Title: **“But I ask you to protect them from the evil one.”**

Bible: **Psalm 1 & John 17:6-19**

Where & When: at Gilroy UMC on Sunday, May 16, 2021

Audience: about 30 people (including 15 Youtube viewers)

Opening Prayer

Gracious God, we are all yours. You created all of us in your image, and you called us your servants, your friends, and your children. We are all yours. And you are our Lord. Protect us this time. Please be with my lips and mouth in your love and grace. In Jesus' name. Amen.

1. AAPI

Recently, I learned a new term in English vocabulary. Have you heard of AAPI? What does AAPI stand for? It means Asian American and Pacific Islander. This month, May is Asian American and Pacific Islander Heritage Month. But unfortunately, I learned this AAPI not because of this heritage month, but because of hatred. During this time, we have been fighting against COVID-19, which is a virus. I have also learned that we need to fight against another virus, which is a type of hatred. “STOP AAPI HATE.” When I saw AAPI, I googled my English dictionary to look for AAPI. It was a bitter learning experience.

2. What is the evil one?

Today's scripture readings come from the lectionary for the seventh Sunday of Easter. Psalm 1 is about two ways: the way of the righteous and the way of the wicked. Today's reading of the Gospel of John is a part of Jesus' final prayer before his cross. He prayed for the unity of his disciples in this world. He asked God to protect them from the evil one. This is just like the

Lord's prayer, "And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil." Then, what is the evil one? How do you understand evil?

3. Separation

In my opinion--which does not mean this is the definitive answer--in my opinion, the evil is separation: separation from ourselves, from others, and from nature. Have you put on masks which are not yours? Wearing masks one time or two times might be okay. When we wear masks that are not ours many times, we might lose ourselves. That's because the masks are not ours. Even Jesus was afraid of the cross, and prayed to remove the cup from him. It is totally fine for us to come to God as who we are, as we are vulnerable.

I believe that making scapegoats, or having hatred is a form of separation from others. Blaming others, and tearing them down could be the easiest and the worst for us. I might be able to not blame others, but I still cannot follow Jesus' love on the cross. On the cross, Jesus said, "Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing." How can we embrace those who are acting wickedly?

There was a separation from nature. I believe that God created nature, not to conquer, but to live together with. Nature has been an object to be taken care of, to be used, or to be conquered, rather than a creature to live together in harmony with. There are many theologians. Among them, eco-theologians who reflect on the human relationship with nature, and find a new understanding of creation.

4. "So that they may be one, as we are one."

Jesus prayed, “Holy Father, protect them in your name that you have given me, so that they may be one, as we are one.” Jesus asked God to protect us from evil, in order to be one, for unity. Unity does not mean sameness. I cannot be you, and you cannot be me. Unity is not like a melting pot, but more like a salad bowl. In the melting pot, we might lose many different cultures, languages, and foods. But in the salad bowl, we can enjoy the diversity of different cultures, languages, and foods, while not losing each other’s uniqueness. We are God’s children. We are created, not made. As God is creative, I believe that we are also creative. How can we be one, as God and Jesus are one? What does that look like? “Thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.” I believe that thy kingdom is more than the melting pot or the salad bowl, or beyond them. What does God’s kingdom look like? I hope that God’s kingdom is on earth, in this church, and here in Gilroy.

Closing Prayer

Our Lord, Jesus Christ, please protect us from many viruses, COVID-19, and Hatred. Please lead us to love one another. Please guide us to be one, as you are one. You are our Lord. We are your people. In Jesus’ name. Amen.