

Sermon Title: **“Here Am I; Send Me!”**

Bible: **Isaiah 6:1-8 & John 3:1-17**

Where & When: at Gilroy UMC on Peace with Justice Sunday, May 30, 2021

Audience: about 30 people (including 15 Youtube viewers)

Opening Prayer

Gracious God, you sent us your son, Jesus Christ. And you also sent us the Holy Spirit. On Peace with Justice Sunday, please guide us to see your Kingdom of God, with the power of water and the Spirit. Please be with my lips and mouth in your love and grace. In Jesus' name. Amen.

1. Six Special Sundays of the United Methodist Church

Every Sunday is special, because we celebrate the resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ, and because we worship together. But, there are six special Sundays in the calendar of the United Methodist Church: Human Relations Day Sunday, UMCOR (United Methodist Committee on Relief) Sunday, which is formerly known as One Great Hour of Sharing Sunday, Native American Ministries Sunday, Peace With Justice Sunday, World Communion Sunday, and United Methodist Student Day Sunday. Many United Methodist Churches not only observe some of these six special Sundays, but also collect special offerings, according to their own context and value. Among these six special Sundays, this past year, we have Native American Ministries Sunday, World Communion Sunday, and Peace With Justice Sunday. Peace With Justice Sunday is today, the first Sunday after Pentecost.

2. Peace With Justice Sunday & Gun Violence

I was wrestling with both today's scripture readings from the lectionary, and the Peace With Justice Sunday theme together. When I meditate on Peace With Justice in this world, I cannot help but ask many questions, like Nicodemus asked many questions of Jesus. How can it be possible to have both Peace and Justice? When I heard the news of the San Jose mass shooting and ten deaths last week, my heart was broken again, like when we experienced the 2019 Garlic Festival shooting. I still remember that Sunday evening. Right after I heard the news, I looked for our church directory. And I gave calls to our church members and friends one by one. We worried and cared about each other. Your voices, your texts, and your social media messages were just a relief and comfort. We have a great love and compassion. But we still hear more news of gun violence. It feels like we cannot enter the kingdom of God, or we cannot yet see the kingdom of God. How can it be? God loved the world, and God sent us Jesus Christ, and the Holy Spirit. Where or when can we see the kingdom of God? How can we enter or even taste the kingdom of God here and now? In this broken world, we might just feel frustrated and exhausted.

3. Vaccine against COVID-19

We are all fighting against the COVID-19 virus. Wearing face coverings and keeping a six foot distance protects us from the virus. Vaccines are most effective against the virus, and we are almost there, back to normal or probably back to a new normal. When you get the vaccine, have you experienced any side effects? I could not sleep after I got the second shot, because there was pain on my shoulders and back. It felt like someone punched me all night. But I got the vaccine, because I believe that vaccines will give me immunity. I recommend to my family

in South Korea that they get the vaccines when it is their turn. This is a good recommendation, right? And I also recommend to them that they take a good rest, after the shots, because there might be some side effects.

4. Vaccine against Racism

As I recommend a vaccine against the COVID-19 virus, I decided to share a short version of this video as a vaccine against the Racism virus, especially to AAPI, Asian American and Pacific Islander. Our United Methodist Church stands against racism, and is working on dismantling racism. The long version takes about 12 minutes, and this short version takes about 5 minutes.

Just in case of side effects, I need to say this. I thought about side effects. And I thought about us, you and me. We are a loving and open-minded faith community. We love each other. Our congregation accepted me, a Korean pastor, as your pastor. I know and I feel your sincere love. You made me a better pastor day by day. Very truly, this pastor has an awesome church. So, I would like to do one awesome thing for the church as well as for me. Let us watch this short video with our open-minds! [Short Version of YouTube Video - Dismantling Racism: Asian American Pacific Islanders](#)

5. We are Vaccines! Use Us!

What surprised you? The comments are real ones to Asian American and Pacific Islanders in the settings of our United Methodist Churches. The concept of “model minority” bothers me. I work hard, sometimes very diligently, and sometimes smartly. But in the concept of “model minority,” Asians or Asian Americans can be used, in order to discriminate against

African-American or Hispanic People, and other non-Asian people of color. The concept can make each minority group tend to compete, rather than to live harmoniously together.

To dismantle racism is not easy, but not impossible, because of us, Gilroy United Methodist Church. We are a great example of a Cross Racial and Cross Cultural Appointment. Actually, I believe that we can be the vaccine for dismantling racism in this community and for other churches. I learned that in 2020 alone, hate crimes against Asian Americans increased 150 percent over previous years. When my wife was afraid of going to the grocery store because of racism, I told her, “No worries, we have our church members, and many Gilroyans are family and friends of our church members.” We can be the vaccine. We are the vaccine against racism. As God has used us for many many years, God wants to use us again here and now. Are you ready to say, “Here am I, send me!”? As a pastor of this awesome church, I will say, “Here am I, send me!”

Closing Prayer

Our Lord, you are looking for whom you shall send. You are looking for who will go on your behalf. We are not perfect. We are not clean. We are broken. But we are here. Use us by the power of your Holy Spirit. Please use us as the vaccine against all forms of hatred in this world. Please send us! In Jesus’ name. Amen.