

Sermon Title: **“Like a Mustard Seed”**

Bible: **Mark 4:26-34**

Where & When: at Gilroy UMC on Sunday, June 13th, 2021

Audience: about 30 people (including 10 Youtube viewers)

Opening Prayer

Gracious God, your grace and love led us to meet each other. And we can taste the Kingdom of God. Now, you give us another opportunity to experience the Kingdom of God. O Lord, please guide us to open our eyes and ears to see and listen. Please lead us to be your church. Please be with my lips and mouth in your love and grace. In Jesus' name. Amen.

1. A Tree in the Pastor's Office

Today's Scripture Reading is from the lectionary. With two parables, Jesus spoke about the Kingdom of God. When I read these two parables, a tree that the congregation made came to my mind. We made the tree together. Can anyone remember this tree? In the first month, when I came to this church, we made this tree together. At that time, I asked the congregation to write down their hope for the church on a post-it note, and stick them on the paper tree, like tree leaves. Some of you might remember this tree. It is still in my pastor's office. Whenever I am in the pastor's office, I look at this tree. I remember the moments when you considered this church and what you wrote down. I remember your hope and your love for this church. Your love and your hope also became my love and my hope for this church. Because I have this awesome church, I became a pastor.

2. The Gift of a Stole

About two years ago, before this pandemic, I received a handmade gift from a church member that I could not use. I assume that she had started to make this gift by hand, even when she did not yet know me well. I really appreciated her gift. But I could not use it. I explained to her why I could not use this gift.

In the United Methodist Church, wearing a stole is allowed for ordained elders only. As a licensed pastor to a local church, I can wear a clergy shirt or a robe. But I cannot wear the stole until I am ordained. But somehow, she had already started to make the stole with her hands, and she wanted to give it to me, as a gift. What should I do? Should I receive it or not? I received her stole with gratitude, and I also received her vision, her seed for me, as an ordained elder. When I visited her last month, I shared the good news. I will be ordained as an elder on Sunday, June 27th. This means that I can accept her gift fully! Her joy when she made the stole, and when she gave it to me, will be complete.

3. Change and Transition

How do you distinguish change from transition? When I took the “Pastoral Transition Workshop for Clergy Leaders,” the speaker explained that change is external, and that transition is internal. Transition happens much slower than change. For example, wearing a stole can be a big change. But being an ordained pastor requires transition: more time and energy, and a lot of support in God’s love and grace. Somehow, my ordination process was really joyful! I received a lot of education. I submitted many documents. I was given many interviews. But, even in many interviews, I felt support and encouragement, rather than evaluation or judgement. I did not know why and how I enjoyed this ordination process. When I read today’s scripture, I

realized why and how. It is all because of this awesome church. Just as the seed has the earth, I have this awesome church. Your eye contact, your listening ears, your helping hands, your hospitality, your supportive feedback, your texts, your voices, your love, and your presence made me a better pastor day by day. The transition has already happened in me. This led me to being able to have a big change, to wear a stole. It is all because of you. Each of you made me a better pastor.

4. First-born Child and Twin Sister

Starting July 1st, there will be another big change to Gilroy United Methodist Church and to me. I will be serving two churches. And you will share your pastor with another church. How do you feel about this change? I do not know how this unique change leads us into the transition. But I would like to share two personal stories.

Are there any first-born children? Do you have younger sisters or brothers? I am a first-born child. I received 100% love and support from my parents, until my younger sister was born two years later. My ideal world was broken, because I could not receive 100% love from my parents. Even I needed to share many things. If you are a first-born child, you might understand what I mean. One habit I still have is that I try to write my name on everything. This is mine. Now that I am an adult, no one takes what is mine, and I know that I need to and can share things. But I still have this habit sometimes. What about you? What do you think of me? I am your pastor. And I will still be your pastor. But I will be a pastor of Hollister United Methodist Church. I have a name tag as a pastor of Gilroy United Methodist Church. And can I have another name tag for Hollister United Methodist Church? Can I wear a shirt that says “This

pastor has an awesome church” at Hollister United Methodist Church as well? Can we face and accept a little bit of complicated feelings?

This is another story about my wife. She is a twin sister. Mihyun and Mira are identical twins. Their DNAs are the same; their appearances look similar; they were born only 3 minutes apart; but their personalities are different; and their life experiences are totally different. When she was young, Mihyun slept with her mom and her twin sister. Her mom was in the middle. Mihyun was on the side. And Mira was on the other side. Both Mihyun and Mira wanted to have their mom’s lovely eye contact before they fell asleep. If you were their mom, what would you do? Is there any way to be fair or to be equal? Without making any eye contact with anyone, to look at the ceiling is neither fair nor equal, right? Sometimes, my mother-in-law looked at Mihyun, and sometimes looked at Mira. I learned that to look at the middle or at the ceiling is neither fair nor equal. Sometimes, I need to make eye contact with the Hollister congregation. And sometimes I need to make eye contact with the Gilroy congregation. I hope that there will be a peaceful life among us, just like my wife, my sister-in-law, and my mother-in law had.

5. Are you ready for this transition?

Change can happen right away. But transition cannot happen in a day. Having a child does not make us parents. Being parents is a different story. Last Sunday, I suggested changing worship time. It could happen right away after our lay leadership meeting. But transitions need more time, more understanding, and more energy. What I pray is not only for worship time change, but also for transition, if it is possible, for a smooth transition. My two-point charge

appointment is very unique and special. July 1st will be my fourth year to serve you. After having a senior and solo pastor for three years, sharing a senior pastor with another church will also be very unique and special. Who can think of this? Who can dare to do this? Because we are the United Methodist Church, we can do this. Because we are called not only to this Gilroy United Methodist Church, but also to the United Methodist Church, if you believe or not, we can do this. I am excited and nervous. I already say, "Yes, Lord, I will go anywhere the pastor is needed." I do not know if I can be a good parent, like my mother-in-law who raised twin sisters. But I decided to be a senior pastor of both churches. I believe that I am not alone, right? I will be able to be ordained, with all of your support and love. I will be an awesome pastor, just like this awesome church. I will be an awesome pastor to serve both churches, because God called us for this transition. Are you ready for this new special transition? Are you ready? Let us show who we are one more time. That's because we are called an awesome church.

Closing Prayer

Our Lord, in this time of transition, we face a lot of complicated emotions. Sometimes we are hopeful. Sometimes we doubt. But Lord, as you called us, we will go and follow your way. Please lead us to seek your way, your will, and God's Kingdom first. In Jesus' name. Amen.