

Sermon Title: **“Laity Sunday of the United Methodist Church”**

Bible: **Mark 10:35-45**

When: on Laity Sunday, October 17th, 2021

Where: about 30 people (plus YouTube live streaming viewers) at Gilroy UMC

Opening Prayer

Gracious God, thank you so much for calling us as your children. Thank you so much for calling us as your people, and your church. Let the words of our mouths, and the meditations of our hearts, be acceptable in your sight, O Lord, our Rock, and our Redeemer. Amen.

1. Laity Sunday

Every Sunday is special. Today is a special Sunday of the United Methodist Church, which is Laity Sunday. A lot of the United Methodist Churches celebrate this third Sunday in October as Laity Sunday. It means that we celebrate the ministry of all lay Christians. Without lay Christians, without you, the church cannot exist.

In the history of early Methodism, pastors totally relied on lay Christians. At that time, pastors were circuit riders, which means that they served more than one church. There were no highways, no cellular phones, no cars. They needed to travel on horseback. They needed to receive help about where to stay and what to eat. When the pastors were not at a church, because they needed to serve another church, the lay Christians supported each other and took care of each other. Our church members' presence, their prayers, their gifts, their service, and their witness are the root of our Methodism.

We still have this precious tradition. Some churches have many pastors. Some churches have many paid staff members. We have our church members. We have you and me. That's because we are the church. We still value the ministry of our church members. It is not only for the local church, but also for the Annual Conference. Every year, the same number of pastors and the same number of lay members meet at the Annual Conference, as representatives of the local church. As a connectional church, we celebrate together, we make decisions together, and we look forward together. That's because the lay member is as important as the pastor.

2. Church Committees

In a local church of the United Methodist Church, there are some basic committees: SPRC (Staff-Parish Relations Committee), Finance Committee, Trustees, and Church Council. The Staff-Parish Relations Committee works for the relationship between staff and the congregation. As a pastor, I am one of the staff. Because I am a staff member, I listen to our congregation's feedback and opinion through our SPRC members. I also share my opinion and concerns. Furthermore, the SPRC recommends pastoral compensation, pastors' salary to the church via the Annual Charge or Church Conference. They also share their ideas about the appointment of the pastor. The Finance Committee works for our church finances. On behalf of the church, the Finance Committee members take care of our church finances. They receive our offering, and they spend church money according to our budget and its purpose. Stewardship is not only to give, but also to handle our church finances. Trustees take care of our church facilities. Sometimes they repair some parts of the church buildings. They clean and organize our church

facilities. The Church Council is not only to oversee the administration of the church, but also to plan our church's ministries or programs. To envision is one of the important roles for our church council. Beyond these basic committees, there are many teams and meetings.

There are many committees in the church. As a pastor, I attend all of these meetings. But, I cannot be a chair of these committees. The chairs are from the congregation. The chairs are made up of our lay Christians. That's because you are the church. You are the church itself. You are the hands of this church. You are the hands of our Lord, Jesus Christ.

3. Not to Be Served but to Serve

Today's scripture reading came from the lectionary. I read it for our Laity Sunday. Among the disciples, there was an argument about who would sit next to Jesus, who was great, and who was the first. Then, Jesus told them, "Be your servant. Be a slave of all." Our Jesus came not to be served and to serve. How can we serve? How can we serve and not be burned out? Because we are one of the small churches, many lay leaders have many hats, many responsibilities, in the past and still. How can we serve with joy? Joy is not equal to happiness. Even when we are tired, we can find joy, if there is meaning. How can we serve with overflowing grace? Because we are not perfect, we can make mistakes. We can make wrong decisions. We can be slow. How can we serve?

4. Nominations and Leadership Development Committee

As a pastor, I cannot be a chair of SPRC, because I cannot evaluate myself. I cannot be a chair of the Finance Committee, because I am paid by the church. I cannot be a chair of Trustees and

Church Council, because I am here to follow you and serve you. But there is one chair! As a pastor, I am a chair of the Nominations Committee, according to our book of disciplines. I learned another name for the Nominations Committee, which is the Leadership Development Committee. This means that as a pastor, I should be with our church members, our lay leaders, from the beginning of the nomination to the end of resignation. That's because I am here not to be served, but to serve, to serve all of you, because you are children of God, the body of Jesus Christ, and you are the church.

5. To be Loved, and To Serve Each Other

As a pastor who serves two churches, one goal I practice is not to be burned out. How can I serve two churches, and not get burned out? First of all, because I am paid. I am paid by your love and by the church. Second, I do have a time of Sabbath. Sabbath means to me, to be Hwapyoung, rather than to be a Pastor. I love to be a Pastor, and it is my privilege. But I do not want to see my position of pastor consume myself. I do not want to be burned out. So, I have a time of Sabbath. Because I serve two churches, it is challenging to have a whole day off. But I take half a day off by myself, according to my schedule. I remind myself of being a child of God, being a part of the body of Jesus Christ. I do not do anything. Very unproductive. But, Sabbath is a time for me to be, to be loved by God. I try to feel God's overflowing grace and unfailing love. That is who I am: to be loved by God. Then, I can serve you with God's love and grace. I hope to serve you more. So, I hope to be loved by God more and more. And I hope for us to remember that we are loved by each other and we are loved by our Lord, God.

Closing Prayer

Gracious God, thank you so much for your love. You came not to be served but to serve. Your love and your grace is overflowing upon us. We are your children. We are your body. Please be with us. In Jesus' name. Amen.