

Sermon Title: **“JOY - Whoever Has Two Coats”**

Bible: **Zephaniah 3:14-20 & Luke 3:7-14**

When: on the 3rd Sunday of Advent, December 12th, 2021

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

Opening Prayer

Gracious God, we are preparing the way of the Lord. Please lead us to joyful obedience. 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. Stimulus Check & the Forgiveness of PPP

During this pandemic, what we learned is that we are all connected, not only in this community, but also globally. We have many of the same experiences: wearing masks, having social or physical distances, and experiencing some kind of side effect after vaccine shots. We lost our loved ones during this time. And sometimes, we were not able to have a time to celebrate a loved one's life together. We also experienced many other issues, which make it seem like we cannot come to a consensus about many things.

There have been some surprises and good news as well. As I have paid my taxes in the United States, I have received some stimulus checks. I did not expect any stimulus checks because I am not a US citizen yet. I did not receive the first one sent out. But later, I received one from the federal government and one from the state of CA. As a church, we received a loan from the PPP (Paycheck Protection Program). And it was forgiven. One of the reasons why I like English is this expression: Forgiven.

2. Repentance & Forgiveness

In our Lord's Prayer, we say, "Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us." This can be translated as "Forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors." Sins or trespasses can be understood as debts. Even in today's Gospel reading of Luke, John the Baptist talked about the fruits of repentance, and about money. To talk about the money collected by tax collectors makes sense. John said, "Collect no more than the amount prescribed for you." But even to soldiers, John talked about money: "Do not extort money from anyone by threats or false accusation, and be satisfied with your wages." And very interestingly, in the middle of this story, in the story of baptism and repentance, John said, "Whoever has two coats must share with anyone who has none; and whoever has food must do likewise."

3. Jubilee

When you face this pandemic, our natural response cannot be joyful. We are all still struggling with this difficult time. But when we received stimulus checks and when our PPP loan was forgiven, our natural response cannot be depressed. Even during this challenging time, it can be a time of a little surprise, gratitude, or joy.

In chapter 25 of the book of Leviticus in the Bible, there is a concept of Jubilee. After seven times seven years, every fifty years, it was a time of jubilee. In that ancient time, slaves were freed, and debts were forgiven. There was an experience of God's mercies. This is a very radical concept, because it would change not only the individuals in the society, but also

the society itself, the system itself. It seems like God gives the second chance for the new beginning to all people. It is a time of joy, and a time of celebration!! The Hebrew word “Jubilee” has the same origin as joy and celebration. When my debt was forgiven, I cried a lot. There was a joy that I cannot explain and that I could not contain. The joy overflowed with my tears. My tears and my joy overflowed. And I believe that it was our joy as well.

4. 100% of Christmas Eve Offering to St. Joseph’s Family Center

Christmas is coming. Thankfully, even in this time, we will donate 100% of our Christmas Eve Offering to St. Joseph’s Family Center. If we have two coats, we give one. If we have extra food, we give some. I hope that there will be joy in us and for those who receive. We are not alone. We are together. You are not alone. We are together. They are not alone. We are together. This pandemic reveals many existing and hidden problems. But it also reveals how much we miss each other, how much we care for each other, and how much we love each other. Then, we can share. We can be joyful. We can celebrate. That’s because we are together, just like our Jesus Christ: Emmanuel, God with us.

Closing Prayer

Gracious God, as God is with us, we are with you, and we are with your people. Please open our eyes and ears to see your people. Please lead us to be together with your people. And pour out your mercy and your joy upon all of us. In Jesus’ name. Amen.