

Sermon Title: **“LOVE - Blessed Are Those Who Believed”**

Bible: **Micah 5:2-5a & Luke 1:39-45**

When: on 4th Sunday of Advent, December 19th, 2021

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

### **Opening Prayer**

Gracious God, your son Jesus' life is our joy. And we know that our lives are also a great joy to you, as you love us. 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. Our Very First Birthday**

Today's gospel reading of Luke is about our Baby Jesus' baby shower, or both our baby John the Baptist's and our little Lord Jesus' baby showers. Is there anyone who remembers your own baby shower? Or is there anyone who remembers your own very first birthday? Maybe, some of us have photos and videos of our baby shower or our very first birthday. Anyone? I cannot remember my baby shower, and my very first birthday. Actually, in Korean tradition, there is no baby shower, but in Korea, when the baby becomes one year old, that birthday is the biggest party! How do we count? Is it the first birthday or the second birthday? Anyway, in Korea, there is a very fun tradition, which is called “Dol-Jab-i,” a kind of ‘one-year-old catch.’ The parents put some objects before a one-year-old baby, which symbolize career choices or personality traits. Then, the baby grabs one thing. For example, if the baby picks money, the baby will be rich. If the baby picks a pen, the baby will be wise

or become a scholar. If the baby picks up the thread, the baby will live a long life, like a long thread. I cannot remember my one-year-old birthday, either. But I believe that I did have my first birthday. I cannot remember and see many things, but I believe in them. What I believe and what I know is that to our parents, our grandparents, and our families, we are just blessings. As a church, we are also blessings to each other and to this community and to our Lord.

## **2. Nature Versus Nurture**

When I took a class in Christian Education, I learned that there has been a long history of research and debate about Nature versus Nurture. Because of the developments of Social Media and DNA research, there are more cases of twins who can be reunited after being separated at birth. This documentary movie “Twinsters” is one of the examples. They were separated at birth. Anais was adopted by a family in Paris, and Samantha was adopted by a family in LA. Since they are identical, they look alike. Then, some friends of both on Facebook were surprised at how much they looked so alike. Anais and Samantha contacted each other, and their story of being reunited began. They were born in Korea as identical twins, but they were educated and grew up in different places. They still look alike, but their career and their personalities are unique and different. But I feel that both of them are loved by their families and friends.

## **3. Unfolding Potential and Original Blessing**

What I learned from the Christian Education class is that Christian Education's purpose is to unfold potential, beyond the debate of nature versus nurture. The focus is on how to unfold our potential, because all of us have it. Have you heard of "Original Blessing"?<sup>1</sup> I believe that many of us have heard and learned about "Original Sin." But, how about "Original Blessing?" Are we created as sinners? Or are we created in the image of God? We need to confess that there are times when we have turned away, and when our love has failed. But aren't we created in the image of God? I do not reject the concept of "Original Sin." But, when I unfold the concept of "Original Sin," what I find first and last is "Original Blessing." I cannot remember when I was created. But I believe that our God created each of us in the image of God, and blessed us, and still blesses us here and now. God's original interest is "Blessing," God's grace and love upon us. Yes, there is grace and love at the beginning of our lives and at the end.

#### **4. To Be Loved and To Love**

In each of our own lives, and even in our church life, we are so vulnerable. We are so weak. Sometimes we are broken. But please remember that we are not made, but created, by our Lord, God. We are created as the image of God. As we cannot remember our baby showers, and our very first or second birthday, we cannot remember when and how we are created. But during this season of Advent, how about believing that we are all created as God's image? When we see our little Lord Jesus, we know that there is love and grace from God. As much

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<sup>1</sup> This concept of "Original Blessing" from the book of "Original Blessing" by Matthew Fox.

as our God loves our little Jesus, our God loves us. There is love and grace upon each of us, as well. Like our baby Jesus, we are also created to be loved and to love by God. Blessed are those who believe that they are created by God's love and grace. Amen.

### **Closing Prayer**

Gracious God, thank you so much for creating us as your image. We know that you are always with us, even when we have turned away, and even when our love has failed.

As you created us, please lead us to be loved more and to love more. In Jesus' name. Amen.