

Sermon Title: **“Remember Our Baptism”**

Bible: **Isaiah 43:1-7 & Luke 3:15-17, 21-22**

When: on Sunday, January 16th, 2022

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

Opening Prayer

Gracious God, your grace welcomes us, transforms us, and leads us. At this time, we are looking for your grace again. Please lead us to open our minds. 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. Baptism: One of Two Sacraments

Today’s Scripture readings came from last Sunday, the Sunday of January 9th, the Baptism of the Lord. I decided to visit last Sunday’s scripture readings. That’s because I hope for us to remember our baptism. In the United Methodist Church, how many sacraments do we have? We have two sacraments: Baptism and Communion. Baptism is one of the two sacraments. It is another great privilege for the pastors to officiate at the sacrament of baptism. So, I do not want to miss that opportunity. It is never too late to catch up, right? Last year, on Easter Sunday, we baptized our new church member, Julia, and confirmed Heather, and received them into our membership. It was a wonderful time of joy and gratitude! Even though we do not have any candidates to be baptized or confirmed today, we can have a time to remember our baptism. In the United Methodist Church, we do not re-baptize, because we believe that

God's love and grace does not change. Even when our faith is shaken or when our love fails, God's love and grace is still with us. It is unconditional. But many times, we forget God's gentle, powerful, and steadfast presence. At the beginning of this new year 2022, I hope for us to look back and remember our baptism, God's presence, and God's love and grace.

2. Do You Remember Your Baptism?

Do you remember your baptism? Did you happen to have Godparents? How were you baptized? Sprinkling? Pouring water? Or being immersed in water? Where were you baptized? Is there anyone who was baptized here in this church? What is the most important part when we have the sacrament? All of our baptisms are different, but I believe that we experience the presence of God's love and grace, which is the most important and the most meaningful aspect. In our Christian history, there were some interesting debates about the sacraments. This is one of many. What if the pastor who officiated over the sacraments turned out to be a bad person? As you know, "very rarely," we might come into contact with a "bad" pastor. Then, are the sacraments observed by "bad" pastors ineffective or not? Pastors take part in the important roles of the sacraments. But pastors are human beings, like us, who are vulnerable and weak. I am not an exception. I am also vulnerable and weak. For the sacraments, the most important part is God's grace and love upon us. Because God's grace and love are present, all of our baptisms are still meaningful, and still touch our spirits.

3. First Two Questions of Baptism and Example of Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.

I would like to revisit the first two questions of the baptism. The first question is “Do you renounce the spiritual forces of wickedness, reject the evil powers of this world, and repent of your sin?” The second question is “Do you accept the freedom and power God gives you to resist evil, injustice, and oppression in whatever forms they present themselves?” What are your answers? Where do you see evil, injustice, and oppression? Then, as our baptismal covenant, do we renounce and reject the evil powers of this world? Do we accept and use the freedom and power God gives us? Tomorrow, we honor Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. He is a great example of our baptismal commitment. What he resisted was racial discrimination, racism, injustice, and oppression. What he resisted was violence as well. He resisted racism in a non-violent way. I also see our Lord, Jesus Christ, who was in the manger and was on the cross. To save the world, to love all of us, our little Lord Jesus came to the lowest place, the manger. And he was on the cross, even though he has the almighty power. He did not use his power. He showed us not only His love, but also His way. I believe that this is the most important ethos of our baptismal covenant.

4. Remember Our Baptism

I would like to close my message with a time to remember our baptism.

(CONGREGATIONAL REAFFIRMATION OF THE BAPTISMAL COVENANT)