

Sermon Title: **“Love My Enemies?”**

Bible: **Luke 6:27-38 & Genesis 45:3-11, 15**

When: on Sunday, February 20th, 2022

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

Opening Prayer

O Lord, we come to you as who we are. As you love us, we come to you. Please cover us with your love and grace. 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. Intro

Today’s scripture readings are from the lectionary. Generally speaking, the lectionary consists of 4 passages: one from the Old Testament, one from the Psalms, one from Paul’s letters, and one from the Gospels. When I read today’s Gospel reading of Luke, and the Genesis story of Joseph, I needed to wrestle with the Bible, because I cannot yet love my enemies.

2. Love My Enemies?

Do you love Jesus? Do you love our Lord, God? Does God love us? How much do you feel that God loves you? How much do you experience how God loves you? Can you love your enemies? I cannot love my enemies. I might be able to love my friends, my church members, my neighbors, and even strangers. But when those who hate me, who curse me, and who abuse me are my family, when my family looks like my enemies, I cannot love my enemies.

Sometimes, my family, the closest people in my life, are the most difficult ones for me to love.

3. Joseph in Genesis

In the Bible, there are two Josephs who are well-known to us. In the Gospel, there are Mary and Joseph. In the story of the first Christmas, Joseph is Mary's husband. Today's Joseph is another Joseph from Genesis. Joseph's father was Jacob. Jacob had four wives, which was normal in their culture at that time. Joseph was born as the 11th son. However, Father Jacob loved Joseph most. That's because Joseph was the 1st son from Jacob's most loved wife, Rachel. Among 12 sons, Joseph was preferred by his father, Jacob. This made the other brothers jealous and angry. When Joseph was 17 years old, he was abandoned by his brothers, and eventually he was sold as a slave into Egypt. If you were Joseph, could you love your brothers? Those who hated you, those who abandoned you, and those who sold you as a slave? When our family acts like enemies, how can we love our family members? Could we even forgive them? Or could we forget them?

4. Joseph's Successful and Joyful Moment

Joseph was sold as a slave into Egypt. Even though he was a foreign slave in Egypt, he was honest and smart to get through many difficulties. He also had a special wisdom to interpret and understand dreams. With his wisdom, he interpreted Pharaoh's dreams, and he became the highest official next to Pharaoh when he was 30 years old. He was sold by his brothers when he was 17 years old. For 13 years, what did his life look like? When he was 37 years

old, he had two sons: Manasseh and Ephraim. The name of Manasseh means “For God has made me forget all my hardship and all my father’s house.” The name of Ephraim means “For God has made me fruitful in the land of my misfortunes.” Even after 20 years, Joseph could not forget his family, who had acted as his enemies, causing his most painful moments.

Then, there were the years of the famine not only in Egypt but also where Jacob and Joseph’s brothers lived. Joseph’s brothers came to Egypt to ask for help. Because Joseph was the highest official dealing with the famine in Egypt, the brothers needed to meet Joseph. If you were Joseph, when your jealous and hating brothers came to you, how would you feel like reacting? Joseph was not 17 years old any more. He was neither weak nor vulnerable. He had the power. Would you want to take revenge on them? Or would you want to just ignore them?

In today’s scripture reading of Genesis, Joseph revealed himself to his brothers, not to avenge them, but to forgive and love them. Even though his brothers acted like the enemies, Joseph showed his mercy and kindness. In other words, we can say that Joseph loved his enemies. When Joseph became the highest official, it was a great successful moment. But when Joseph wept with his brothers, it was a wonderful and joyful moment, because there was forgiveness, and a love.

5. In His Time

What a beautiful story! But I am not Joseph. I am Hwapyoung. No one sold me as a slave. I do not want to share the details, but there were moments when my closest people could not

understand my dream, when my family did not agree with my difficult and important choices. When I needed support and encouragement, my closest people were not there. Sometimes, I felt like they were the enemies who judged me, and who were against me. So, I cannot love my enemies. Jesus' teaching to love my enemies bothers me, when it comes to my family.

But one thing I can learn from Joseph is that Joseph saw God in his hardship and suffering. It took a while for Joseph to see God in his life. It was a very very slow process. When he was 17 years old, he was sold by his brothers. When he was about 39 years old, he forgave his brothers. It took about 22 years. It was just the beginning.

When I looked back, when my family looked like my enemies, I wondered "Where was God?" I could not see God. God's language was silence. Please remember that this was not a sudden and quick process. Between the lines, there were a lot of times, like Joseph's 22 years. I wondered again "Where was God?" I saw that God was there. But God's language was still silence. Then, I wondered "How was God?" I saw God's tears. But I did not want to see God's tears. God's tears bothered me somewhat. Later, I wondered "Where were God's tears?" I heard the sound of God's tears. That made me cry. And my crying tears led me to see myself in those painful or somewhat numb situations. I saw myself who was weak and vulnerable, and who did not know what to do. I felt numb first. But slowly, I felt my pain. It made my body sick. I saw God who was waiting for me. I saw God who was crying with me. And I still cry sometimes.

When I prayed, I told God, "I cannot love my enemies." I thought God ran away from me. But God is still with me, and I know that God stands by me. I know that God still loves me where I am. I was able to add just a very small, but a very heavy word "Yet." "God, I cannot love my enemies YET."

I would like to close my message with song lyrics.

In his time, in his time

He makes all things beautiful

In his time

Lord please show me everyday

As you're teaching me your way

That you do just what you say

In your time

In your time, in your time

You make all things beautiful

In your time. Amen.