

Sermon Title: **“Do Not Be Afraid”**

Bible: **Genesis 15:1-12, 17-18 & Luke 13:31-35**

When: on the 2nd Sunday in Lent, March 13th, 2022

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

Opening Prayer

O Lord, in this challenging time, we come to you, because you are our shield. We are following your way, today, tomorrow, and the next day, because you are with us in our lives. 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 of the 2nd Sunday in Lent. How are you during this Lenten season? Are you having more meaningful time with God, and our faith community? Or are you experiencing any challenges, suffering, or concerns? Can you still feel and experience God’s presence even during this challenging time?

2. Do Not Be Afraid To Ask Questions

Today’s scripture reading of Genesis is a story of God’s covenant with Abram. Before Abram changed his name to Abraham, God came to him in a vision. Before sharing my message, I would like to mention that to me the Bible is not equal to God. The Bible is kind of a collection of our faith ancestors’ understanding and experience of God.

At the time of Abram, when people made a covenant, they needed animals. How about us? Do we need animals to make a covenant with God? Because we do not provide animals to God, does God not make a covenant with us? Because our God is a living God, God made a covenant with Abram in the way of that time, and I believe and know that God makes a covenant with us in the ways of today. When I became a pastor, I did not need to bring any animals. As many of you watched my ordination service, I answered my calling in front of God and in front of our brothers, sisters, and friends in Christ, and in public.

At the time of Abram, people believed that having children depended on God alone. But today we know that there are many factors, reasons, mysteries, choices, and stories in regard to having children and not having children. Personally, I hope to be an abuelo, grandfather in Spanish. That's why my personal email has the word "abuelo" in it. To be an abuelo, I need to be a parent first. I pray and I pray. If I become a parent, I will be thankful. But if I cannot become a parent, I do not want to blame God. I hope and pray that I would be thankful in any circumstance. Even though it is difficult, it is not impossible. For now, I am thankful and joyful to become a better husband day by day, as I practice "Yes, dear."

Anyway, at the time of Abram, people believed that having children depended on God. So, when God came to Abram, Abram asked many questions: "Who will be my heir?" "How is it possible?" "How do I know?" To ask questions does not mean the lack of faith. In this case, it means a mutual, deep, and alive relationship with God. In our faith journey, we cannot know everything. We do not need to know everything. But we can ask questions. Please do not be

afraid to ask questions about faith and God. It is the way of our faith journey. Don't be afraid! God does not ask us to bring him animals. God will answer us in the ways that we understand.

3. Do Not Be Afraid To Follow Jesus' Way

At the second reading, at the Reading of Gospel of Luke, Jesus got a warning to get away from Jerusalem. Like when Herod killed John the Baptist, there was a danger of Jesus' death. Actually, Jesus would die on the Cross in Jerusalem. But Jesus answered, "Today, tomorrow, and the next day, I must be on my way." Jesus could expect his death, because not only John the Baptist, but also many prophets were killed too. But what Jesus decided was to be on Jesus' way, to follow God's way. What is Jesus' way for us? What is God's way for our church? Can we follow Jesus' way, even though it might not be what we expect? Can we follow Jesus' way, even if it leads us to death?

4. Our Living God

When I was appointed to this church, one of the expectations and one of my callings was not to maintain the church but to grow the church. How do you define "the growth"? Does it mean growth in numbers? If so, do you pray for it? What do you do for the growth in numbers? I pray for the growth in numbers. I pray and hope that we become a more welcoming faith community when we have visitors. I hope and pray that they become our members in our faith journeys.

In addition to this, I hunger and pray for God's promise and God's way! I do not know what promise God has toward us. But I hope for us to ask questions of God consistently. How can we serve each other and our community? How can we be more church? How can we become a more loving faith community during this time and in this place? It is not the lack of faith. It is the way of the faith journey. It is the growth to be more God's church. I hope that when we ask, God reveals Godself to us! I also hope for us to remember that it does not guarantee the growth in numbers that we expect. But we can follow God's way, like Jesus followed. We can be a better church. Sometimes, it can look like death, but it was not the end. There is a resurrection. There is life and a new beginning. So, let us not be afraid of asking questions. Let us not be afraid of following God's way! As God was a living God to Abram and Jesus, God is our living God. God is living with us and working with us for this church and this community! God of Abram! God of Jesus! God of Gilroy United Methodist Church!

Closing Prayer

Gracious God, when we ask, please show yourself to us. When we follow your way, please give us your courage. As you led Abram and Jesus, please be with us today and here, as you are our living God. In Jesus' name. Amen.