

Sermon Title: **“The Advocate, The Holy Spirit”**

Bible: **Acts 16:9-15 & John 14:23-29**

When: on the Sixth Sunday of Easter, May 22nd, 2022

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

Opening Prayer

O Lord, thank you so much for sending us your spirit! Please open our eyes to see your presence. Please open our ears to listen to your guidance. Please help us to work with you for your people, your church, and your kingdom. 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. Paul and Lydia

Today's first Scripture Reading is from Acts. It is a story of the conversion of Lydia. After Paul had a vision, he traveled to Philippi. While he stayed there, he met Lydia. “A worshiper of God,” which means a Gentile who worshiped Israel's God. This means that Lydia was a foreign and female Christian at that time. We are not surprised to meet female pastors and church leaders these days, right? We are not surprised to see those Christians from other countries, right? How many disciples in the Bible do we know who are foreigners? How many disciples in the Bible do we know who are female? About two thousands years ago, it was difficult for foreign and female Christians to be welcomed. But it happened in today's passage. No one stopped God's love from overflowing. God's overflowing love and grace is

still here, right?

How were Paul and Lydia able to meet each other? How many reasons could we name? That's because Paul followed the vision. That's because Lydia was at the place of prayer with other women. Is it enough to explain how they met? How about us? How do we happen to meet each other? How many reasons could we name? Maybe, we can find one hundred or one thousand reasons. Is it enough? Is there any place for the unknown, or mystery? So, I would like to add one more thing. It's because the Holy Spirit works through Lydia, Paul, and us.

2. The Advocate, The Holy Spirit

In the second Scripture Reading, Jesus talked about the Advocate, the Holy Spirit. As God sent us Jesus Christ, God sent us the Holy Spirit. While Jesus was on earth, Jesus was both God and a human being. Because Jesus was a human being, only some people would have the opportunity to meet Jesus in person. But God sent us the Holy Spirit. In the Old Testament, the Spirit of God fell on some specific people, like judges or prophets. But this time, God sent the Holy Spirit to all of us. Thanks to the Holy Spirit, we can believe in Jesus Christ, we can know God, and we can meet each other. There are many reasons why we are here today. But I would like to say that the Holy Spirit guides you and me to this place and this time.

3. The Work of the Holy Spirit

Do you remember the first time when you came to this church? Like in the story of Paul and

Lydia, was there anyone who welcomed you? Was there anyone who helped and encouraged you? Was there anyone who inspired you? Last week, as a pastor of Gilroy United Methodist Church, I had a time to be thankful for our former church members whom I have not met before: Claudia and Florence. Many of our church members signed a letter to request that the research room at the Gilroy Museum be named in Claudia's honor. When I was working on the letter last Monday, I felt the angel spirit of Claudia through our congregation. The same day, last Monday afternoon, I got a message that there was a couple who wanted to visit our church. The man turned out to be a grandson of Florence. I showed him Trimble Hall, Florence's photo in the fellowship hall, and our Sanctuary. He shared some memories of his grandmother, our beloved Florence. You probably can tell more stories. I know that Claudia and Florence were people who welcomed, helped, encouraged, and inspired us. I believe that they had the presence of the Holy Spirit in their lives. Like Paul, Lydia, Claudia, Florence, and many of our former church members, we can welcome, encourage, help, and inspire each other, and our visitors, and our future church members. That's because the same Holy Spirit is in us, with us, and among us. When the Holy Spirit guides us, let us follow it.

Closing Prayer

O Lord, thank you so much for sending us the Holy Spirit. As you used our former church members, please use us for your people, your church, and your kingdom. We are here, Lord! Please keep pouring out your love and grace upon us! In Jesus' name. Amen.