

Sermon Title: **“Back to School”**

Bible: **Deuteronomy 31:1-18 & 2 Timothy 1:1-7**

When: on Sunday, August 14th, 2022

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

Opening Prayer

O Lord, we are at the beginning of a new school year. We are thankful to meet our schools, our teachers, and friends. Today, we hope to bless our children with our love, as they are your children. 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. Back to School

Today’s message is for our Annual Backpack Project. With our love, we bring backpacks and school supplies. I hope for us to think of the meaning of the backpack project and to pray for our children. As they are God’s children, they are our children, too.

When you were in school, what was your favorite subject? Do you have any school friends that you still contact? Who was your favorite teacher? I would like to share my stories of teachers, along with the Bible stories. There are a lot of great biblical characters. Among them, I chose Moses and Paul’s stories, because they were not only great leaders, but also great teachers.

2. Moses and Joshua

Moses was the greatest leader in the Bible and for the Hebrew people. He delivered his

people from Egypt. He led them from slavery into the promised land. He did many miracles. When the people were trapped between the Egyptian army and the sea, Moses parted the Red Sea, so the people could cross the sea. He even encountered God in the burning bush. He was the first user of the tablets, the Ten Commandments. Absolutely, Moses was the greatest leader! Then, who could be his successor? Coming after a great leader, it is very challenging to be a good successor. But Moses was a great mentor and a great teacher as well. Today's Deuteronomy reading is about Moses and his successor Joshua. Moses knew his limitations and God's possibilities. As Moses was a human being, he could not live forever and lead the people. Moses trusted God's never-ending guidance. Moses also believed that as God used Moses, God would use Joshua. Joshua did not need to be like Moses, because Moses and Joshua were different, and because their callings were different. What was most important was that God used Joshua as God used Moses. So, Moses' advice to Joshua was to be strong and bold about his calling. Joshua could make mistakes, but God does not make mistakes.

It is not easy to be a great leader. It is difficult to be a great teacher. But Moses was a great leader and a great teacher and mentor. In the United Methodist Church, there is a mentoring system for the pastors. Because I am still a young pastor, I have a great mentor. What I have learned from my mentor pastor is that I do not need to be like him, just like Joshua did not need to be like Moses. What I have learned is to be strong and bold about my calling. As God used Moses and Joshua, as God uses my mentor pastor, God wants to use me. I can make many mistakes. But I will learn from the mistakes, and I can be better day by day, because it

is God who leads me and uses me.

3. Paul and Timothy

The second reading from 2nd Timothy is the first chapter of Paul's letter to Timothy. As you might know, Paul was single. Paul did not have any children. But Paul regarded Timothy as his beloved child. When we read Paul's other letters, we can see more. Just like a father, Paul educated, raised, and cared for Timothy. So, Paul remembered Timothy in his prayers constantly night and day.

I believe that teachers are not only the ones who deliver knowledge, but also the ones who give love and care. Sometimes, they are just like our parents. If we have loving and caring teachers, it is a great blessing to us.

As you might know, I am left-handed. The reason why I survived as a left-handed person was because of my first-year elementary school teacher. When I was a little boy in Korea, being left-handed was regarded as bad. All of my relatives worried about it. My parents worried about my left-handedness, too. So, they were thinking of forcing me to use my right hand. But, when my parents consulted with my first-year elementary school teacher, my parents changed their minds. Sometimes, in Korea what teachers say is more powerful than what parents say. My teacher protected my left hand. Thankfully, my parents decided to follow my teacher's guidelines. So, when I was young, I did not have any stress about my left-handedness. I learned that it is okay to be left-handed and to be myself, even though many people do not understand me. As my teacher and my parents understand my

left-handedness, some people who love and care for me, understand me as who I am. Do you have any teachers in your lives who love and care for you like parents?

4. Blessing the Backpacks

When we prepare our backpacks and school supplies, let us send our prayers. Because of school policy, we cannot say that these are coming to them from the church. But we can pray to the Lord and for the children who will receive our backpacks. The children cannot know who we are. But the Lord knows who we are and what we do. The Lord will listen to our prayers, and the children will be blessed. Then, we will be filled with joy.

I hope to close my message with a prayer for our backpacks and school supplies. Let us pray together with one voice.

“Lord, bless these backpacks and school supplies and the children who will use them. Let these physical gifts be symbols of the love and support we give to the children of our community throughout the year. Help us to look upon every child in our community as one of our own, helping them to grow in character and knowledge. Amen.”