

Sermon Title: **“Hospitality and Fellowship”**

Bible: **Psalm 14 & Luke 15:1-10**

When: on Sunday, September 11, 2022

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

Opening Prayer

O Lord, as we are weak, and as we are vulnerable, you came to us. You welcome us and you eat together with us. For all of your grace, hospitality, and fellowship, we give you thanks.

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. What made you come to church?

What made you come to church? Wonderful music? Beautiful and Historic Sanctuary? Nice Parking Lot? Awesome Church Members? Hospitality? Fellowship? There are many reasons why you come to church.

In the 14th century, there was the Great Plague. About 75-200 million people in Europe died because of this pandemic. At that time, there was a belief that salvation comes only through the Church. It was taught that there was no salvation outside of the church. So, many people, at that time who were afraid of disease and death, came to the church. At that time, the church was good at “marketing.” To be Christians, they required people to be baptized. That’s because they believed that coming to the church, and being baptized would save them. What I see in this moment of our Christian history is that fear is very powerful. Unfortunately, our

church could take advantage of that fear. At that time, people came to the church because of the fear of disease and death. Are you coming to church, because of fear? Or are you coming to church because of God's love and grace?

2. Through the perspective of Psalms and Luke

Psalm 14 is from the lectionary today. It has a very interesting perspective about people.

Fools were equal to evildoers. They were saying and acting like there was no God. The righteous people were wise, and did good. But to me, it is a very idealized concept.

Do you think that all Christians or believers are good? I wish that all Christians could be nice and good! But I learned that it is not true. In my faith journey, I have met some not so good Christians. Then, likewise, do you think that non-Christians or non-believers are all bad, like the ones who eat up people like they eat bread? I have met many good people who are neither Christians nor believers. I am sure that you have met many good people as well.

In the first two verses from the reading of the Gospel of Luke today, we can see my point. At the time of Jesus, the tax collectors and sinners were regarded as bad. The Pharisees and the scribes were regarded as good, because they were leaders and because they went to the temple. They were temple or church-goers. But we can see that our Lord Jesus welcomes sinners and eats with them. Jesus does not eat with the Pharisees and the scribes. Does this make sense to you? The temple goers were grumbling and complaining about Jesus' hospitality and fellowship.

3. The Parables of a Hundred Sheep and Ten Silver Coins

Now Jesus shared the two parables of a hundred sheep and ten silver coins. If you were a shepherd, could you leave ninety-nine of your sheep in the wilderness, and go after the one lost sheep? If you were the woman who lost one silver coin, would you search for it? Does this make sense to you? It does not make sense to me. I cannot understand it. Ironically, when I admit that it does not make sense to me, and that I cannot understand it, I catch the point.

Where are you? Who are you? Are you the ninety-nine sheep or the lost one? Are you the nine coins or the one lost coin? Because I am a church-goer, and because I became a Christian, a disciple, and because I became a pastor, I think that I am among the ninety-nine sheep and the nine coins. Maybe, to you, I am one of the good pastors. But in front of God, I am so weak. I am so vulnerable. I cannot deny my brokenness. If it makes sense, I am like one of the fools in the Psalm, saying there is no God, eating up others like bread. If it makes sense, I am one of the Pharisees and the scribes, who is grumbling and complaining.

5. I still come to church, because of Grace!

But I am here before you and God, because of God's unconditional love. In God's unconditional love, the logic, or the theory of cause and effect does not work. Because it is unconditional love and grace. Grace means the undeserved, unmerited and loving action of God. Even though it does not make sense, when we receive and accept God's grace, it makes sense. I come to church, because of the grace. I am welcomed and I am in the fellowship of our Lord. I know that I can meet some not so good Christians, or somewhat uncomfortable Christians. But it does not matter, because God's grace is in me and in us. As Jesus welcomes

me and has fellowship with me, I will welcome them and have fellowship with them as they are. I love this church, because there is God's love and grace here. I love this church, because there is God's hospitality and fellowship here. Let us love each other more and more. May God's grace be overflowing through us!

Closing Prayer

O Lord, we come to you, because of your unconditional love and grace. It is undeserved, unmerited, and loving action toward all of us. We know that you love us. Please help us to love one another with your love and grace. In Jesus' name. Amen.