

Sermon Title: **“UMC & World Communion Sunday”**

Bible: **Luke 17:5-10**

When: on World Communion Sunday, October 2, 2022

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

Opening Prayer

O Lord, you love all of us. You welcome all of us. This table is not ours, but yours. We will prepare your table and welcome all of us. Thank you so much for giving us the opportunity to prepare your table and serve your people and 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. World Communion Sunday

On the first Sunday in October, not all, but many Christian churches celebrate World Communion Sunday. This World Communion Sunday was begun by Shadyside Presbyterian Church in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, in 1933. The Sacrament of Holy Communion was chosen as a symbol of unity, regardless of the denomination. In 1940, the Federal Council of Churches of Christ in America adopted a world-wide Communion Sunday. And our denomination was one of these churches. So, I believe that most United Methodist Churches celebrate World Communion Sunday today!

2. UMC & World Communion Sunday

How we celebrate World Communion Sunday as United Methodists might be a little

different from other denominations. Depending on each local church's context, culture, and tradition, the way World Communion Sunday is celebrated can also be different. As GILROY United Methodist Church, we have our own mission and ministries for our Gilroy Community, and as the connectional United Methodist Church, we have our mission and ministries for the world, too. World Communion Sunday is one of the six church-wide Special Sundays with offerings of the United Methodist Church. While we celebrate World Communion Sunday, I do not promote the World Communion Special Sunday Offering. But as we are a connectional church, I would like to share how our denomination celebrates World Communion Sunday. I learned that last year our United Methodist Church collected \$473,970 for the World Communion Special Sunday Offering. It was for racial and ethnic students to achieve their educational goals. Fifty percent of it provides scholarships for graduate students and seminarians from the U.S. and other countries. Thirty-five percent of it supports ethnic scholarships for undergraduate students. Fifteen percent goes to in-service training programs for racial and ethnic persons. Just as our church is great, our denomination is also great, isn't it? As we are proud of our church, we are proud of our denomination.

3. Different Understandings of Communion

Have you been to other churches and joined in the Holy Communion? I have been to a Catholic Church to celebrate the first communion of a student who participates in my former church's Sunday school and after-school program. In her culture, the first communion is one of the most important ceremonies. For first communion, children are required to be a certain

age in order to receive communion. She was dressed up, and all her family members came to celebrate her first communion. At the end, there was communion. Because I was not a Catholic, I was not able to join in the communion.

I have been to an Orthodox Church for my Worship Class paper. I needed to go to a different denomination's worship service, and submit an observation report. Many things were different. There were beautiful icons on display. There were no pews or chairs. People needed to stand and sit on the floor. No musical instruments. They sang a cappella. When they had communion, the priest used a spoon. First, the priest put the bread into the cup of wine, and dipped a spoon into the cup. The priest put the spoon into the mouth of the people in line. Even the babies joined this communion. Because I was not an Orthodox, I was not able to join in the communion.

4. Open Communion

I prefer open communion. I love OUR OPEN COMMUNION. That's because this table is God's Table, neither yours nor mine. As God created all of us as God's image, God loves all of us as we are. There is God's grace to all of us even before we know God. God welcomes all of us. We do not ask how old you are. We do not ask if you are baptized or not. We do not ask if you are a member of this church. We just let you know, God loves you. You are Children of God. We are already one body of Jesus Christ. So, we have one bread and one cup. As you accept God's love and grace, please come to the table. When we practice, for health purposes, we use prepackaged communion elements: gluten free bread and juice.

Because of the pastoral concern for people who may have problems with alcohol, we use grape juice. For your understanding, grape juice was originally invented by a Methodist, Thomas Welch.

Today's Gospel reading of Luke from the lectionary shows the power of faith the size of a mustard seed. This table is very small, compared to this church building, this community, and this world. It might be like a mustard seed on the earth. But we believe that it is God's table. We welcome all. Open Communion is our blessing. There is God's love and grace. It is beyond denominations. It is beyond our colors, cultures, accents, and languages. Just like worthless slaves, we, our church, have done only what we ought to have done. We prepare God's table for you with joy and thanksgiving. Come as you are. Take and eat!

Closing Prayer

O Lord, your table is full of your love and grace. There is joy! There is gratitude. And you are here. As we are all your children, please be with us and make us one. In Jesus' name.
Amen.