

Sermon Title: **“JOY: Are You the One?”**

Bible: **Isaiah 35:1-10 & Matthew 11:2-11**

When: on the 3rd Sunday of Advent, December 11th, 2022

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

### **Opening Prayer**

O Lord, we are waiting for the one who was and is to come. Please open our eyes to see you and open our ears to listen to you. 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. Joy**

Today is the 3rd Sunday of Advent in Joy. We have lit the three Advent candles. The last pink candle means Joy. Do you have joy? Do you distinguish joy from happiness? What is the difference between joy and happiness? What is your definition of joy? Are you joyful today?

### **2. What Made John the Baptist Joyful?**

In today's gospel of Matthew, John the Baptist was in prison. Could he feel joyful? Even though he was in prison, even though he was threatened with death, he was still surrounded by his disciples. Like Jesus, John the Baptist had his own disciples. It seems like the disciples of John the Baptist were more faithful than those disciples of Jesus. That's because John the Baptist's disciples did not betray him or depart from him. So, could he feel joyful? But John the Baptist's only interest was to wait for the One. So, he could send his disciples to Jesus to

ask a question. When John the Baptist found that Jesus was the One, could he be joyful? He was still in prison. His situation did not change at all. Could he be joyful?

Who was John the Baptist? Which one had started baptism, John or Jesus? John was the one who had started baptizing. Many people came to him to repent and get baptized. Even Jesus was baptized by John the Baptist. The influence of John the Baptist was more powerful than that of Jesus at that time. When John the Baptist was in prison, his disciples still followed him. Even after John the Baptist was killed, his influence did not stop. When Jesus started his ministries, many people misunderstood and thought that John the Baptist was resurrected as Jesus. This great John the Baptist was put into prison. His joy was in finding the One, the One who is to come, regardless of his situation. So, he sent his disciples to Jesus to ask, “Are you the One?” I believe that when he found that Jesus was the One, John the Baptist was in joy, saying “Jesus, You are the One!”

### **3. What Made Us Joyful?**

Do you have the One in your life? Do you have moments of joy regardless of your situation? As you know, I am an immigrant from South Korea. I came to the United States to study at seminary, with my student visa. While I was doing my internship at the church, thankfully, I was able to submit my application for a religious visa to work in the church. My ideal hope was to receive my religious visa during my one-year internship program. I might have been too ideal or too naive at that time. My student visa had almost expired. My religious visa was pending. At that time, my wife, Mihyun, was an international student, too.

Her student visa expired. Because of our complicated visa situation, Mihyun could not get the family visa. And my religious one was still pending. This means that she could not stay in the States, while I was waiting for the result of my religious visa. So, we made a very difficult decision. While we were waiting for my religious visa result, I stayed in the States, and Mihyun stayed in South Korea. We thought that one year would be enough to get the result of my religious visa. But one year was not enough time to receive the result. I worked at the church diligently, and there were many fruits of the ministries here and there. But my personal life was bad. I was not able to sleep. To wait for the result without any date drove me crazy. I could not sleep at all. My body gave me some kind of signs. So, I decided to give up. This means that I needed to come back to South Korea, and I needed to start from the beginning, if I wanted to pursue my career as a future pastor. I shared all of my miserable situation and my frustrations with Mihyun. She was the one with whom I could share all of me, even my failures and my worst moments. It was a moment of joy for me. Even though my difficult situation had not changed at all, I had and have the one who knows me, understands me, supports me, and who is with me. Do you have the One in your life? The one who knows you, understands you, supports you, and who is with you, regardless of the situation?

How about Jesus? Is Jesus the One? I encountered Jesus while I denied Jesus. When I was a college student, it looked like everything was going well. I was a student in one of the most prestigious universities in South Korea. I got all A's and received an award and scholarship.

But somehow, my faith journey was a mess. John the Baptist was waiting for the One. But I could not accept Jesus as God, my Lord, and my savior. I doubted Jesus more than the doubting Thomas. I denied Jesus. Jesus could not be the One. I could not understand his way. How could God become a human? How could Jesus be on the cross and suffering? How could Jesus be silent on the way to the cross? How could God be silent in the situations of injustice and in the suffering and the death of the innocent? How could Jesus forgive those sinners? I was even against Jesus. I poured out to Jesus my doubt, my sadness, and even my anger. “You are not the One!” “You cannot be the One.”

I thought that Jesus would forsake me. I thought that Jesus would give me up. But Jesus was there. Jesus embraced me more and more. Jesus on the cross embraced my anger, my frustration, my hatred, and my crying. And I realized that Jesus is the One. I still cannot understand all of Jesus’ ways. But I believe and I know that Jesus is the One, not only as the one who was on the earth about two thousand years ago, but also as the one who abides in me here and now. So, I will follow Jesus’ way. Even though I cannot understand all of his ways, even though his way is narrow and not easy, I have the joy to follow Jesus!

#### **4. Are You the One?**

Do you have the One in your life? Then, you must have joy! Who is Jesus to you? Is Jesus the one for you? Then, you must have joy! In our life, and in our faith journey, regardless of our situation, whether it is good or bad, to have the One gives us joy! I hope for us to have the One in our life and in our faith journey. And I also hope that we can be the one for others.

Then, there is joy wherever we are. May God's joy and our joy be overflowing through us!

### **Closing Prayer**

O Lord, you are the One. Thanks to your presence, we can be joyful regardless of our situations. No one and nothing can take away our joy to be with you. Thank you so much for being the One to us. In Jesus' name. Amen.