

Sermon Title: **“LOVE: Family?”**

Bible: **Isaiah 7:10-16 & Matthew 1:18-25**

When: on the 4th Sunday of Advent, December 18th, 2022

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

### **Opening Prayer**

O Lord, we are preparing for your coming with love. When we make a meaningful and difficult decision, please guide us with your love and with your holy presence. 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. The Fourth Sunday of Advent with Love**

Today is the 4th Sunday of Advent. We have lit the four Advent candles. The last candle means Love. Because of love, our hearts are beating, and our faces are full of beautiful smiles. Because of love, tears could be in our eyes. Love is always great, and sometimes hard. Sometimes, we cannot explain what love is, but we know that it is love.

### **2. Aha Moments?**

With the perspective of love, I would like to share some of my aha moments. This means that I need to share my immature moments or my prejudices. It is totally fine to judge my immaturity or my bias, because I know that you love me, right? Just in case, if you do not love me, can you listen to me and my message with your love? That's because it is Christmas.

### 3. Joseph's Love and Family

Our church has a beautiful nativity scene: Mary and Joseph in the stable with the animals; three Kings, their gifts, and the star; the shepherds and the angels. We have heard the very first Christmas story many, many times. But when I read today's gospel of Matthew, I had an aha moment, because of Joseph's love. Mary's husband Joseph was a righteous man. Joseph was unwilling to expose Mary to public disgrace, when Mary was found to be pregnant. Joseph knew that he was not the father of the baby. So, Joseph planned to divorce quietly. At that moment, an angel came to Joseph, saying, "Do not be afraid to take Mary as your wife." And in my reading between the lines, "Joseph, do not be afraid to be a father to the baby that you do not know." In other words, "Joseph, do not be afraid to be a stepdad." Two thousand years ago, I believe that there was no concept of the stepdad. If we read the Gospel of Matthew, Chapter 1, from the very beginning, verses 1 to 17, right before today's scripture, it is Jesus' genealogy, the family tree. For example, Abraham was the father of Isaac; Isaac was the father of Jacob; Jacob was the father of Judah, and on and on. This means that the blood, the biological relationship, might have been the only factor considered as to what makes a family throughout the generations. Probably, it would have been the right thing for Joseph to divorce Mary, according to "what was right" at that time. But Joseph did not divorce. Joseph chose to be a husband. Joseph chose to be a stepdad to the baby. Beyond many challenges, worries, and fears, Joseph chose family. I cannot know and explain every detail with my limited knowledge and words, but I can say that there was love. There was Joseph's love for

Mary and the baby. This is my first aha moment.

#### **4. What is the Family?**

What is the family? Who or what can define the family? I will share my second aha moment. There was an Asian woman and a white man together in the bar. They were smiling and laughing a lot. The bartender was asking them, “Are you dating? Is it your anniversary or special day?” Then, the woman answered, “He is my brother.” The man answered, “She is my sister.” This story is from the documentary movie, “Twinsters.” Because my wife is a twin, I like to watch movies about twins. There were two Korean twin girls. When they were babies, one girl was adopted into an American family, and the other girl was adopted into a French family. Thanks to social media’s influence, they each found the other twin after they grew up. One girl, Samantha, was adopted into the American family where two older white brothers existed. The story that I shared is from one of the episodes about Samantha, a Korean-American girl who was adopted into a white American family. If I were the bartender, I would ask the same questions, because I could not imagine that they were sister and brother. Who or what gave me this narrow concept of the family?

When I worked for after school programs for low income families, most of the families were Latino. One day, we had a pool party. Many people came and enjoyed the pool party. One person came to me, looked at the Latino children who were enjoying the pool party, and asked me one question, “Are they your children?” This question was my third aha moment to break my narrow concept of the family. Wow, my concept of the family was just like

Matthew 1:1-17. But today's scripture, Matthew 1:18-25, is liberating to our concept of the family. Who or what can define family? Isn't it love?

### **5. Church Family and Love!**

There are many ways to describe the church. One of the many ways is as a church family. Family gives us great joy. I know that sometimes family can give us headaches, fears, and unbelievable pain. Probably, that's why it is not always easy to choose family and love. But our Joseph chose his family with love! The church can give us great joy, many meanings, and overflowing love. But sometimes the church can give us unexplainable broken hearts, pain, and tears. It might be easier to believe in God without a church family. It is not easy to be a part of a church family. But we are here as a church family with love. We know and we practice that there is love in our church family. Like Joseph's love, like Mary's love, like Jesus' love, let our love of the church family be overflowing upon all of us and through us. Christmas is coming. Let us love more and more.

### **Closing Prayer**

O Lord, there was love on the very first Christmas. And there is love here and now in our church. Thank you so much for calling us as your family and as our church family. In Jesus' name. Amen.