

Sermon Title: **“As We Are One”**

Bible: **Acts 1:1-11 & John 17:6-11**

When: on the Seventh of Easter, May 21, 2023

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

Opening Prayer

O Lord, thanks to your love, we come to you. Please guide us into your love. 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. Ascension of the Lord

Today is the Seventh Sunday of Easter. It is after the Ascension of the Lord. Last Thursday, May 18th, was known as the Ascension day, forty days after Easter. After Jesus was resurrected, Jesus Christ spent forty days with his disciples. As we read in Acts 1 today, while Jesus Christ was speaking to his disciples, Jesus was taken up into heaven. Jesus told his disciples to wait for the promise; the coming of the Holy Spirit. Ten days after the Ascension, the Holy Spirit has come down to the disciples and followers of Jesus Christ, which was the beginning of the church, the birthday of the very first church. Next Sunday is Pentecost Sunday. Please do not forget to wear red, which is a sign of the Holy Spirit.

2. The Holy Spirit and Trinity

Today's second reading, the Gospel of John, is a part of Jesus' final prayer before his crucifixion. It has often been called a “high-priestly prayer.” This is kind of a last will of

Jesus Christ, and it shows how Jesus might intercede or pray for his disciples. The last sentence is what Jesus prays for his disciples and for us; “Holy Father, protect them in your name that you have given me, so that they may be one, as we are one.”

What Jesus prays for us is to be one, as God is one. There is a unity: God and Jesus are one. The Father and the Son are one. And after Jesus ascended into heaven, the Holy Spirit has come to us. In our Christian tradition, the Holy Spirit is God, too. There have been many debates and studies about this unity of God and Jesus, and the trinity in our church history; God is three and God is one; God the Father, Jesus the Son, and the Holy Spirit; Or God the Creator, Jesus the Redeemer, and the Holy Spirit the Sustainer. We have the tradition of the trinity. When we baptize, we baptize in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. And when we sing Doxology, we praise God, praise Jesus Christ, and praise the Spirit. Then, how can God be one and how can God be three? How can we understand this trinity?

3. As We Are One

What does it look like the trinity of God? There are many various understandings of the trinity. There is always the mystery of the trinity that we cannot fully understand. But because God is with us, we can feel and experience the trinity! I believe that God’s trinity is based on God’s love. In the loving mutual relationship, they respect each other, and their unity is open and overflowing. There is a traditional painting of the Holy Trinity. This is based on the story when three men visited Abraham in Genesis 18, even from the Old

Testament. When three men sat at the table, this table was open. When we see this table, food is there for us. We are invited as guests, and we can join this table. There is hospitality. This hospitality is for us. That's because Godself is love. And that love is open and overflowing. There is always room for others.

I am not a professional musician. But when we sing, we can feel this unity and love that are open and overflowing. Let us look at a C major triad. Do, Mi, Sol, or C, E, G. Can we get some help from our musician? We can sing Do, Mi, Sol separately and together at the same time. There are three notes and it is one chord. And based on this harmony, we can add more notes and we can sing. At the beginning of the song "Jesus Loves Me," it is based on this beautiful harmony. There is beauty and joy. There is unity. This unity invites others to join.

We might have a similar experience when we circle dance together. There is a concept of the Divine Dance of the Trinity. The theologians in the early church described the reality of trinity with "Perichoresis." Perichoresis can be understood as a circle dance from the Greek Wedding Dance. There are not two dancers, but at least three dancers. They start to go in circles. More people join this circle dance. They dance together while keeping the right rhythm with each other and the right space for each other. There are each person's unique motions. There is unity as a large circle dance. When we sing together, and when we dance together, we can feel and experience the unity of God, the Trinity, and God's love. Can we feel this joy and beauty of the unity through this church and in your faith journey?

4. Make Us One

You might hear of our denomination's division. You might hear of some United Methodist Churches' disaffiliation. You might hear of our resident Bishop's suspension and its church trial. This is painful and sad, because we all are one. It is not easy to be one. Please remember our denomination and our Annual Conference in your prayers.

How about our church? Do we feel unity? Do we feel the joy and beauty of unity? Do we feel and experience the love of God that is open and overflowing? It is not easy to be one. But it is possible. That's because we are God's people. We can start this from our church. Our Jesus Christ prays for us to be one. The Holy Spirit has come down upon all of us to be with us. And our founder John Wesley said, "Though we cannot think alike, may we not love alike? May we not be of one heart, though we are not of one opinion?" We are here not because of our love, but because of God's love. When we receive God's love, when we follow Jesus Christ, and when we wait for the Holy Spirit, God will make us one, as God is one.

Closing Prayer

O Lord, we come to you, to your mystery of the trinity, because there is your love. Your love is open and overflowing. As you are one, please protect us to be one. In Jesus' name. Amen.