

“We are called to be a blessing” (Gen. 12:1-3)

Whenever I think of Gilroy United Methodist church, I thank God for what you did for so many years, not only for people inside, but also for people outside as a beacon to the community in need of Christ. Considering our identity as a people of God who have been called to serve all people God is leading us to, I thought it would be most appropriate today to share with you Genesis 12:1-3. In these verses, God gave his special blessing to Abraham, the forefather of our Christian faith as well as other faith traditions.

Genesis chapter 12 includes a story of Abraham moving into a new place called Canaan. Do you know why he chose to move there instead of staying in his hometown? Did he move because he had a spirit of adventure inside him, or because he wanted to become famous by moving into a larger, more competitive place? In fact, all those reasons did not matter to him. What mattered to him was that God called him to that place. All the other factors did not matter to him.

I believe this principle of life of Abraham should be the example to be followed by all people of faith. Like Abraham, we should live according to God’s call, not according to any other reasons or purposes. Since I believe that to live like Abraham is the best way of living as a Christian, and also I believe that it is how Gilroy UMC will be able to continue to serve God and his people for at least the next 170 years, I want to emphasize one fundamental truth about the blessing of God.

What is the end of God’s blessing? Why does God bless people anyway? For what purpose? The end of God’s blessing is not in me or you but always in others. In other words, the essence of God’s blessing is not in the promise that we (that is, you and I) will become great among people, but that we will be a blessing to other

people; that we will be a holy instrument to transmit God's blessing to them.

Let us consider the case of Abraham. In verse 2, God says to Abraham, "I will make of you a great nation and I will bless you; I will make your name great." How wonderful it is that God makes Abraham's name great! And how wonderful it would be as well if one night God shows himself in our own dream, saying that I will become rich, famous, and great among people! But we should know that that cannot be the end of the story. God's blessing is rather a means to be used by God to reach His specific goal, that is, to make Abraham (or you and me) become a blessing to all people. And this is why the second half of verse 2 immediately follows: "and you will be a blessing," and the next verse 3 reads, "In you all the families of the earth shall be blessed."

So, who is the final recipient of the blessing? It is not me; it is not you, but other people! When other people are blessed through me, only then I am really blessed. But if the blessing somehow stops at me and remains in me, and others have nothing to do with it, then it is really not a blessing. In many cases, it rather becomes a curse.

The Dead Sea in Israel serves as a poignant example of this. We know why it is called the Dead Sea. It is called such because it cannot sustain life due to its excessively high salinity. Why does this happen? It happens because the sea only receives water without sharing its blessing with any others. Like the sea, if we hoard our blessing and fail to share it with others, we become stagnant and finally dead. In other words, the blessing we receive should not be regarded as an end in themselves but rather as a means to bless others.

Ultimately, the final recipients of blessings are not ourselves, but the people around us. The true measure of our blessings lies in how they positively impact others. When we embrace this understanding and actively

seek ways to share our blessings with others, we become a source of blessing to them; and only then, can we truly say that we are blessed.

Today is truly a blessed day, because we are celebrating our wonderful God who blessed Gilroy UMC for the past 170 years. And we know that we are truly blessed because many people inside and out have been blessed through our church for such a long time.

Now the question is, how can we continue to be blessed for the next 170 years? There is only one way: it is to continue to bless others by actively loving them in the name of Jesus Christ. Let us remember: God has no interest in us simply becoming rich, famous, or great among people; rather, his interest is in us becoming a blessing to all people inside and out. May God help us this day that we may faithfully respond to His call, by recognizing that the call is not about us but about people outside, those people who are to be blessed through our faithful obedience to God.