

Sermon Title: **“Do You Want To See Jesus?”**

Bible: **Jeremiah 31:31-34 & John 12:20-33**

When: on the 5th Sunday in Lent, March 17, 2024

Where: about 25 people (plus YouTube viewers) at Gilroy UMC

Opening Prayer

O Lord, 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. Within Us!

As you know, I am a Korean, and I am a Christian. And I would like to share how we look at our Korean Christian History. There are many perspectives on how to look at history, but I will share two significant lenses. The first one can be translated into an ethnic view of history, even though it cannot contain all of the meanings of the perspective. What that means is that the knowledge of God has already been present in our Korean ethnicity. Even before the Christian missionaries came to Korea a long time ago, there was a concept of the deity, the divine one of heaven and earth. So, when the ancient Chinese Bible was first introduced to some Koreans, they read the Bible, learned about it, and believed in God by themselves. Very interesting, right? And it is amazing!

The first reading from the prophet Jeremiah can be a good explanation about this perspective. The Lord proclaimed that the Lord would make a new covenant—where? Within us, and it would be written on our hearts. We do not need to teach one another, because we shall know God, and because God is our Lord and our God. God is already within you and me. God’s love and grace already guides and leads us, because we are God’s people and God’s children.

In our United Methodist Church, there is a concept of three graces like prevenient grace, justifying grace, and sanctifying grace, even though God's grace cannot be divided. The prevenient grace, or welcoming grace, means that God loves us first and that God's love surrounds all of us and precedes any and all of our conscious wishes and desires, even before we believe in God. In our Cal-Nev Annual Conference of the United Methodist Church, we have three Native American churches. One of their confessions is that they already knew God and worshiped God, before they knew of our United Methodist Church. That's because as we read in Jeremiah, God's new covenant, God's love and grace, is within us and we know God.

2. Through Us!

The second perspective to look at in Korean Christian history is based on the Christian missionaries from outside. Many missionaries came to Korea and spread the good news. They also established schools and hospitals. My Yonsei University in Korea was established in 1885 with the help of many missionaries. Among them, I still remember two missionaries: a Presbyterian missionary, Horace Grant Underwood, and a Methodist missionary, Henry Gerhard Appenzeller. In this perspective, we need someone's help to come to the Lord.

During the season of Lent, some of us are reading the Gospel of John together. And there is a very unique and interesting pattern in the Gospel of John. Let me read John 12:21-23.

“They [some Greeks] came to Philip, ... said to him, “Sir, we wish to see Jesus.” Philip went and told Andrew, then Andrew and Philip went and told Jesus. Jesus answered them...”

There were some people who wanted to see Jesus. So, did they go to Jesus? No, they came

to Philip. Then, did Philip go to Jesus? No, he went to Andrew. And then, finally they went to Jesus. This similar pattern can be found in other places in the Gospel of John. In other Gospels, many times, Jesus called the disciples directly. But in the Gospel of John, there were helpers and friends. Let me read Matthew 4:18-20.

“¹⁸ As he [Jesus] walked by the Sea of Galilee, he saw two brothers, Simon, who is called Peter, and Andrew his brother, casting a net into the sea—for they were fishers. ¹⁹ And he said to them, “Follow me, and I will make you fishers of people.” ²⁰ Immediately they left their nets and followed him.”

Who called Peter and Andrew? Jesus called them to follow him! Let me read John 1:35-42.

“³⁵ The next day John [John the Baptist] again was standing with two of his disciples, ³⁶ and as he watched Jesus walk by he exclaimed, “Look, here is the Lamb of God!” ³⁷ The two disciples heard him say this, and they followed Jesus. ³⁸ When Jesus turned and saw them following, he said to them, “What are you looking for?” They said to him, “Rabbi” (which translated means Teacher), “where are you staying?” ³⁹ He said to them, “Come and see.” They came and saw where he was staying, and they remained with him that day. It was about four o’clock in the afternoon. ⁴⁰ One of the two who heard John speak and followed him was Andrew, Simon Peter’s brother. ⁴¹ He first found his brother Simon and said to him, “We have found the Messiah” (which is translated Anointed). ⁴² He brought Simon to Jesus, who looked at him and said, “You are Simon son of John. You are to be called Cephas” (which is translated Peter).”

Here, did Jesus call Peter and Andrew directly? John the Baptist helped Andrew to follow Jesus, and then, Andrew helped Peter to follow Jesus. Very interesting, right? We have four Gospels, and each Gospel has its own perspective and focus about how to remember and how to share.

Probably, the most famous moment where assistance was needed is from John 13:21-25.

“²¹ After saying this Jesus was troubled in spirit and declared, “Very truly, I tell you, one of you will betray me.” ²² The disciples looked at one another, uncertain of whom he was speaking. ²³ One of his disciples—the one whom Jesus loved—was reclining close to his heart; ²⁴ Simon Peter therefore motioned to him [the one whom Jesus loved, John] to ask Jesus of whom he was speaking. ²⁵ So while reclining next to Jesus, he asked him, “Lord, who is it?””

Did Simon Peter ask a question to Jesus directly? Somehow, Peter asked for help. Even a great disciple like Peter needed help.

3. Do You Want To See Jesus?

Do you want to see Jesus? I believe that since you are here today, I believe that God’s love and grace is already within you. God loves you. God cares for you. And you came here. Sometimes when it is not easy to see Jesus, please look at one another, our church members, your brothers, sisters, and friends in Christ. You are not alone. We are here for you.

Do you see Jesus? Then, be thankful and joyful for God’s love and grace within you. And be a help for others to see Jesus. It says, “Unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains just a single grain, but if it dies, it bears much fruit!” You yourselves are the Good News, and you spread the Good News. Let us love one another, as God is already within us.

Closing Prayer

Loving and living God, thank you for giving us the new covenant. Your love and grace are within us. And you give us helpers and you lead us to help others. Thank you so much for your grace within us and your overflowing grace through us. In Jesus’ name. Amen.