

Sermon Title: **“My Reappointment”**

Bible: **2 Corinthians 12:2-10 & Mark 6:7-13**

When: on the 6th Sunday after Pentecost, June 30, 2024

Where: about 25 people (plus YouTube Live 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. I Cannot Wait!

Today’s scripture readings are not coming from today’s lectionary, but from next Sunday’s lectionary. Actually, my reappointment will begin next Sunday, which is the first Sunday of July. But I cannot wait to be thankful and celebrate my reappointment! I hope that my reappointment is good news to you. So, I chose today’s scripture readings from next Sunday! Next Sunday, I will give a message based on today’s lectionary.

2. United Methodist Church’s Appointment System

One of the unique characteristics of our United Methodist Church is an appointment system. Generally speaking, this means pastors are sent to the local churches. First of all, United Methodist pastors commit to go and serve wherever they are sent. And the congregation needs to receive the appointed pastor. The bishop is empowered to make and fix all appointments with the help of the District Superintendents, while consulting with the pastors and SPRC (the Staff Parish Relations Committee) of a local church.

Technically speaking, this is done every year. Today is the last Sunday of the appointment year. And next Sunday is the first Sunday of the new appointment year. And I heard that the average number of years of an appointment is about 5 years. On July 1st, 2024, my reappointment will be the 7th year in Gilroy UMC, and the 4th year in Hollister UMC.

If you are a life-long methodist, you have met many pastors. And if you are a regular visitor to our church, this appointment system is not that familiar. This appointment system is not easy, not only for the congregations, but also for the pastors. One of the United Methodist pastor's favorite Bible passages is today's Gospel reading of Mark, especially during this appointment transition time. Jesus said to his disciples, "Wherever you enter a house, stay there until you leave the place. If any place will not welcome you and they refuse to hear you, as you leave, shake off the dust that is on your feet as a testimony against them." Some pastors are sent to serve new congregations, and some congregations expect to welcome new pastors. And some congregations are assigned to keep incumbent or old pastors again, like us. Do you like our appointment system? What makes you still commit to be United Methodists?

I hope that you do not forget that I am a United Methodist pastor. I am a United Methodist pastor who committed to say yes to go and serve wherever I am sent. That's how I have served you so far. And I will serve you and this church for another year.

3. Whom Does God Use?

I love my church and I love my denomination. I know that they are not perfect. I know that

they have not only strengths, but also weaknesses. I know that the appointment system can be a challenge. It can be like the thorn in the flesh of the Apostle Paul. Even as one of the great church leaders, Paul had a weakness. Paul prayed to remove it three times. And what was God's answer? "Your grace is enough, for power is made perfect in weakness." When you welcome any pastors, they will come with their strengths, right? And do they leave their weaknesses at the former church they had served? No. All pastors are human beings. They have both strengths and weaknesses. Look at me! You can make a long list of my weaknesses, right? And I hope that you make a list of my strengths, too! What I would like to say is that what matters is what we rely on, when we do work for the mission of the church. Do we rely on God's grace? Or do we rely on our human strengths and efforts? What is our confession?

Whom did God use? Whom did God work with? God works with those who persecute God's people, just like the Apostle Paul. God works with those who deny God, like Jonah. God works with young people, like Joshua, Esther, and Timothy, and God works with old people, like Moses, Abraham, and Caleb. God works with foreigners, like Rahab. God works through all kinds of people, even the least likely. And our confession is that God's work is not only in the Bible, but also in our church and in our lives. Our church has many pastors and many, many church leaders and members. God loved them, called them, and worked with them, even though they were not perfect, and even though they had shortcomings. Now God loves us. God calls us. And God works with us. And our confession is that's all because of

God's grace.

4. Can You Pray For Me?

United Methodist pastors are paid, unlike our lay leaders, and unlike Jesus' sending two disciples out without money in Mark. To become a United Methodist pastor is not easy. It requires time, energy, effort, degrees, classes, interviews, discernments, mentoring, church support, etc., and appointments. So, pastors have many responsibilities and duties for the local church and its community. This also means that pastors need to be vulnerable, too. Pastors need to do self-evaluation and to be evaluated by SPRC (the Staff Parish Relations Committee), and District Superintendent, every year, until the point of retirement. So, pastors always need to be open to any feedback, even if it is not productive and positive feedback. I am not sure if this is a good metaphor. Everybody can cook, but not everyone can sell food. To sell food, it is required to get permits or licenses, and you need to take responsibility for the food, and to be open to any feedback. Nowadays, it includes online feedback. When we cook for our family and friends, we just enjoy it! But to sell food is a different story, right? Basically, pastors are human beings, and we live not in Jesus' time, but in the 21st century and in the United States.

When Jesus sent the disciples, he sent them out two by two. When the bishop sends the pastor, the bishop sends the family. Sometimes, it is only a pastor. Sometimes, it is the pastor and their partner. Sometimes it is a pastor with children. In my case, I came here with my wife. Mihyun, can you come forward and stand next to me? We need your prayers. I want to

include my wife in your prayers, because thankfully she decides to live with me wherever I am sent. I will use all of my gifts to serve you and this church. But I need your prayers.

That's because I am not perfect, and because I cannot be free from my weaknesses. I will try not to make too many mistakes. But I will make some mistakes. I need your prayers, because I would like us to rely on God's grace.

As I shared before, during the Annual Conference Session, I was blessed by our lay members and pastors when the appointments were fixed for another year. And I need your prayers. Can you pray for me? I got this prayer from the United Methodist Book of Worship. It is a part for the order of the celebration of an appointment. After your prayer, Mihyun and I would like to respond with a special song as a capella. Can you pray for me?

“Eternal God, strengthen and sustain us in our ministries together with *Hwapyoung* as our pastor. Give him and us patience, courage, and wisdom so to care for one another and challenge one another that together we may follow Jesus Christ, living together in love, and offering our gifts and talents in your service; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.”

RESPONSE SONG by Mihyun and me

I'm gonna live so God can use me anywhere, Lord, anytime!

I'm gonna live so God can use me anywhere, Lord, anytime!

Let us sing together!