

Sermon Title: **“Remembering the Body”**

Bible: **Isaiah 43:1-7 & Luke 3:15-17, 21-22**

When: on Baptism of the Lord Sunday, January 12, 2025

Where: about 25 people (plus YouTube Live Streaming 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. Baptism of the Lord Sunday**

Today is the Baptism of the Lord Sunday! As we read in the Gospel of Luke, it is the Sunday to remember and celebrate the Baptism of the Lord. And it is also the day to remember our baptisms. Some of you might remember the day of your baptism, but I cannot remember my baptism day, because I was baptized when I was a baby. But what I still remember and what I am thankful for is that I am God’s beloved child. It is just like what was said to Jesus, “You are my Son, the Beloved; with you I am well pleased.” As the prophet Isaiah also explained, God calls us by our name; God is with us; and God will be with us.

Through Baptism, what we confess together is “We are God’s children, the beloved ones, and with us God is well pleased.” That’s because God loves us first and all the time, and because God’s love and grace is God’s gift, offered to us without price. Sometimes, our faith can be shaken; we can doubt and question; we can be lost, even if we have been baptized.

Right after the Baptism of Jesus, Jesus experienced three temptations. To live in this world

with God's way is not easy. So, we can turn away from God, and our love can fail. However, God's grace is faithful, and God's love remains steadfast. So, we do not re-baptize, because God's love and grace does not change. As God loved us first, God still loves us. Just like the story of the prodigal son, our Lord is waiting for us all the time.

## **2. Remembering the Body**

Our baptism is not a private or family event, but a communal or congregational event. That's because we accept the baptized ones in our congregation and into the body of Jesus Christ. It is our serious commitment and promise, too. When we have a baptism for babies and children who are unable to answer for themselves, the baptism is not only the parents' or godparents' commitment, but also our church's commitment to nurture the children together in God's love and grace, while being examples of Christian life. Likewise, when we accept and celebrate our baptized ones or new members, it is our commitment, too. By the Sacrament of Baptism, we, the church, confess to each other, "Your joy, your pain, your gain, your loss, are ours, for you are one of us."

When we do baptism, the first question is "Do you renounce the spiritual forces of wickedness, reject the evil powers of this world, and repent of your sin?" What do you think of the evil power? In my understanding, the evil power is the spiritual forces that divide and separate us. The word "devil" comes from Greek "diabolos," from the verb "dia-ballein," to divide or throw apart. To me, the evil power is that which divides us from the divine one, from ourselves, and from others. When we are separated from the divine one, it seems like

we are free, but we can be addicted to someone or something and make them an idol. Then, there cannot be real freedom. Ironically, when we are closer to God, we can experience more freedom. When we are separated from ourselves, we cannot be peaceful in our minds, and we may experience some kind of mental problems. And how about others? These days, it is more difficult to be one with each other, because our society has become more polarized in many ways. Unity is not uniformity. We cannot be the same. We are different. Nevertheless, can we love each other?

Our founder, John Wesley, coined the phrase, “agree to disagree” after many years of theological debates with another popular pastor named George Whitefield. Both were very passionate, and they agreed to disagree. And I love this quote from John Wesley, “Though we cannot think alike, may we not love alike? May we not be of one heart, though we are not of one opinion?” The evil power might want to divide us, and to separate us from each other. But each of us are God’s beloved ones. I am God’s beloved one. You are God’s beloved ones. And others are also God’s beloved ones. All are God’s beloved ones. We are different, and we are one body of Jesus Christ. Through Baptism, and through Communion, let us experience and confess that we are the body of Jesus Christ.

Sacrament of Baptism: Remembering Baptism