

First Presbyterian Church, Tucumcari
The Church With the Holy Spirit Window
April 10, 2016 Third Sunday of Easter
11:00 a.m.

Rev. Amy Pospichal, Pastor

Marjorie Gene McKenzie, Accompanist

Prelude

**Surely the presence of the Lord is in this place.
I can feel His mighty power and His grace.
I can feel the brush of angels' wings, I see glory on each face.
Surely the presence of the Lord is in this place.
Surely the presence of the Lord is in this place.**

Call to Worship (please see bulletin)

Opening Prayer

We followed you here, Risen Lord,
For something in our hearts spoke to us,
Roused us from our slumber and from our week of work and
Brought us here into your house.
And we are straining to heed your call
Seeking where you shall take us this week
Open our eyes, O Lord,
Help us to discover your purpose for us,
And give us the strength, to respond to the call, "Follow Me."
With the power of the Holy Spirit, we pray,
Amen.

***Opening Hymn**

Call to Confession

Prayer of Confession (please see bulletin)

Assurance of Pardon

Friends, in the name of the Jesus Christ, you and I are forgiven!

Thanks be to God! Amen!

The Lord be with you.

And also with you.

***Gloria Patri**

Glory be to the Father, and to the Son and to the Holy Ghost. As it was in the beginning, is now and ever shall be, world without end, Amen, Amen.

Psalms 30 (please see bulletin)

Pastoral Prayer (responsive)

Hear us, gracious Lord: **come and be our help!**

We give you praise, O Lord, for lifting us up
from the waters of despair into the dawning of hope.
In Jesus Christ, you have triumphed over all life's foes;
in his love, we have been healed.

Raise up those who dwell in the pit today,
who face illness or adversity,
those who long for health and success,
especially _____.
Hear us, gracious Lord: come and be our help!

Hear the voices of your faithful ones
who acknowledge your favor in their lives,
and receive our praises for your gifts to your people,
(especially _____).
Sustain those who rejoice today.
Hear us, gracious Lord: come and be our help!

Come especially to those who face death today,
and give your comfort to all who mourn.
You who raised Jesus Christ from the grave,
work your healing even in the midst of loss and grief.
(We pray especially for _____.)
Hear us, gracious Lord: come and be our help!

Open our eyes, transform our vision;
turn our mourning into dancing;
take off our mourning and clothe us again with joy,
that everything we do might become your praise,
now and forever.
Hear us, gracious Lord: come and be our help!

Hear us, Holy One, for we pray in the name of the risen Christ, as we say now together...

Offering

Time Out for Teaching:

Hymn

Prayer for Illumination

Holy God,
remove the stones that block the portals of our minds...
shine your light so that it may take over the darkness within...
and fill our thoughts with your perfect vision for creation
so we may go, and tell, and be, and do.
Amen.

Acts 9:1-6 (7-20)

1Meanwhile Saul, still breathing threats and murder against the disciples of the Lord, went to the high priest 2and asked him for letters to the synagogues at Damascus, so that if he found any who belonged to the Way, men or women, he might bring them bound to Jerusalem. 3Now as he was going along and approaching Damascus, suddenly a light from heaven flashed around him. 4He fell to the ground and heard a voice saying to him, "Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?" 5He asked, "Who are you, Lord?" The reply came, "I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting. 6But get up and enter the city, and you will be told what you are to do." 7The men who were traveling with him stood speechless because they heard the voice but saw no one. 8Saul got up from the ground, and though his eyes were open, he could see nothing; so they led him by the hand and brought him into Damascus. 9For three days he was without sight, and neither ate nor drank.

10Now there was a disciple in Damascus named Ananias. The Lord said to him in a vision, "Ananias." He answered, "Here I am, Lord." 11The Lord said to him, "Get up and go to the street called Straight, and at the house of Judas look for a man of Tarsus named Saul. At this moment he is praying, 12and he has seen in a vision a man named Ananias come in and lay his hands on him so that he might regain his sight." 13But Ananias answered, "Lord, I have heard from many about this man, how much evil he has done to your saints in Jerusalem; 14and here he has authority from the chief priests to bind all who invoke your name." 15But the Lord said to him, "Go, for he is an instrument whom I have chosen to bring my name before Gentiles and kings and before the people of Israel; 16I myself will show him how much he must suffer for the sake of my name." 17So Ananias went and entered the house. He laid his hands on Saul and said, "Brother Saul, the Lord Jesus, who appeared to you on your way here, has sent me so that you may regain your sight and be filled with the Holy Spirit." 18And immediately something like scales fell from his eyes, and his sight was restored. Then he got up and was baptized, 19and after taking some food, he regained his strength.

For several days he was with the disciples in Damascus, 20and immediately he began to proclaim Jesus in the synagogues, saying, "He is the Son of God."

John 21:1-19

1After these things Jesus showed himself again to the disciples by the Sea of Tiberias; and he showed himself in this way. 2Gathered there together were Simon Peter, Thomas called the Twin, Nathanael of Cana in Galilee, the sons of Zebedee, and two others of his disciples. 3Simon Peter said to them, "I am going fishing." They said to him, "We will go with you." They went out and got into the boat, but that night they caught nothing.

4Just after daybreak, Jesus stood on the beach; but the disciples did not know that it was Jesus. 5Jesus said to them, "Children, you have no fish, have you?" They answered him, "No." 6He said to them, "Cast the net to the right side of the boat, and you will find some." So they cast it, and now they were not able to haul it in because there were so many fish. 7That disciple whom Jesus loved said to Peter, "It is the Lord!" When Simon Peter heard that it was the Lord, he put on some clothes, for he was naked, and jumped into the sea. 8But the other disciples came in the boat, dragging the net full of fish, for they were not far from the land, only about a hundred yards off.

9When they had gone ashore, they saw a charcoal fire there, with fish on it, and bread. 10Jesus said to them, "Bring some of the fish that you have just caught." 11So Simon Peter went aboard and hauled the net ashore, full of large fish, a hundred fifty-three of them; and though there were so many, the net was not torn. 12Jesus said to them, "Come and have breakfast." Now none of the disciples dared to ask him, "Who are you?" because they knew it was the Lord. 13Jesus came and took the bread and gave it to them, and did the same with the fish. 14This was now the third time that Jesus appeared to the disciples after he was raised from the dead. 15When they had finished breakfast, Jesus said to Simon Peter, "Simon son of John, do you love me more than these?" He said to him, "Yes, Lord; you know that I love you." Jesus said to him, "Feed my lambs." 16A second time he said to him, "Simon son of John, do you love me?" He said to him, "Yes, Lord; you know that I love you." Jesus said to him, "Tend my sheep." 17He said to him the third time, "Simon son of John, do you love me?" Peter felt hurt because he said to him the third time, "Do you love me?" And he said to him, "Lord, you know everything; you know that I love you." Jesus said to him, "Feed my sheep. 18Very truly, I tell you, when you were younger, you used to fasten your own belt and to go wherever you wished. But when you grow old, you will stretch out your hands, and someone else will fasten a belt around you and take you where you do not wish to go." 19 (He said this to indicate the kind of death by which he would glorify God.) After this he said to him, "Follow me."

Do you love me? Jesus implores Peter. Three times he says it to Peter and every time Peter answers in the affirmative: "Yes Lord." But the third time Peter seems a little annoyed, "Lord, you know everything! You know that I love you!" I don't think Jesus meant this to be an interrogation, but Peter seems to take it that way.

Jesus is persistent in asking, for he is giving Peter the his marching orders along his journey of faith. Since the Day of Resurrection, Peter seems to be in a holding pattern, perhaps awaiting word from Jesus. So what's a fisherman to do when he doesn't know what else to do with his time? He goes fishing, of course! His choice go out fishing after all he and the other disciples had been through might look to you and to me as if he was just returning to his old life. We don't have lots of explanation for this fishing expedition. Maybe they were hungry. Maybe they needed time to make sense of all they had seen and heard. Jesus uses it as a chance to do another sign, instructing them to fish on the other side of the boat and they haul in 153 fish!

Up to this point, Peter has been shown to us as a sort of impetuous and passionate disciple, one who is still trying to "get it." There are numerous stories in which he declares something with great enthusiasm and then finds out that there is still more to grow on. Remember his declaration that Jesus is the Messiah - and then he refuses to accept Jesus' prediction that he would die and rise in three days? And Jesus says, "Get behind me, Satan!" Remember just a few weeks ago at the dinner table, when Jesus says that Peter would deny him three times and Peter says, "No way! I wouldn't ever!" Only to find out, once again, Jesus is right, and Peter weeps his heart out. You've got to admire Peter for his passion, we feel for him.

I don't doubt that Peter loved Jesus, and I'm pretty sure Jesus didn't doubt it either. But perhaps Jesus is trying to teach him something, give him a focal point, the means by which he must live his life now, after the Resurrection. To love Jesus is to feed and tend his flock.

To love Jesus will keep you on track. It's where the rubber meets the road for all of us.

I had a good friend who rode a motorcycle, a nice, BMW 1970s model, which he had maintained beautifully. He and his friends would go out cruising around Dallas and into the countryside where it was much safer for bikes. Whenever a friend of his was getting ready to travel, he had this little "benediction" for the person, "Rubber side down." That meant, "Hope your tires stay on the ground and you'll be all right." Makes sense. If you keep the tires to the ground, then you get the traction you need to keep going forward. If your tire is NOT to the ground, then we have a problem!

Loving Jesus is fundamental. It gives us traction to go. To love Jesus is to obey him. To not love Jesus, then that quickly becomes a problem if we are trying to do all these good works. If we don't love him, we can run out of energy and lose sight of our purpose as believers. If you are struggling to find your love for him in your heart, think about what He has done for you, and that gives us plenty of reason to love him back. For he, obedient to His Father in life, did extraordinary works of mercy, healing, and loving the world, even till death on a cross. This is more than enough reason to love him. For Jesus did it all out of love.

That's why Christians exist today in the world. We are His sheep, and we are to care for His sheep. John 10 reminds us that there are sheep not yet a part of the fold, but who belong to Jesus. And that there are "hired hands" who will run at the sign of danger. But we are not the "hired hands." We are the next generation of apostles. Following Peter, following Jesus.

There are so many opportunities to take care of His sheep. And this church does in many ways to care for the sheep. Our Rummage Sales raise funds, Menaul School, CYFD and the Domestic Violence Program. We tend his sheep by offering periodic Community Health Talks, participating in the KIVA microloan program, and other things which empower people to have a better life. On a more personal basis, you tend his sheep, whenever you are present to someone in need. You are not hired hands, you are kindly Christian people who listen to people's problems, respond with gentleness. You are out there on the front lines, living out there in that broken and fearful world, maintain righteous Christian character, and that is not easy. But it's our calling.

"Do you love me?" "Feed my lambs." "Do you love me?" "Tend my sheep." "Do you love me." "Feed my sheep." This is not an interrogation. It is to ground us, bring our attention span to what really matters. You cannot separate your love for Jesus from your calling to tend his flock.

Loving Him is where the rubber meets the road in faith. It gives us purpose, makes the church go, giving the Church traction. I am reminded of a song we used to sing in youth group, "They will know we are Christians by our love, by our love, yes they'll know we are Christians by our love..." We don't just rest on God's love, we have it, and now, we are called to love Jesus back, and to love Him is to do his will. Look for the opportunities this week to tend Jesus' sheep – and if you respond as one who loves Jesus, they will recognize Him in you. Alleluia! Amen.