**First Presbyterian Church, Tucumcari**

*The Church With the Holy Spirit Window*

**April 4, 2021 Easter Sunday**

**11:00 a.m.**

**Rev. Amy Pospichal, Pastor Marjorie G. McKenzie, Accompanist**

204 Jesus Christ is Risen Today

203 The Strife is O'er, the Battle Done

209 Thine is the Glory

**Call to Worship (from Isaiah 25:6-9)**

On this mountain the Lord of hosts will make for all peoples  
          a feast of rich food, a feast of well-aged wines,  
          of rich food filled with marrow, of well-aged wines strained clear.

**And he will destroy on this mountain  
          the shroud that is cast over all peoples,  
          the sheet that is spread over all nations;  
        he will swallow up death forever.**Then the Lord God will wipe away the tears from all faces,  
          and the disgrace of his people he will take away from all the earth,  
          for the Lord has spoken.  
**It will be said on that day,  
          Lo, this is our God; we have waited for him, so that he might save us.  
          This is the Lord for whom we have waited;**

**Opening Prayer**

You are risen, Almighty God! For this we give you thanks and praise.

**\*Opening Hymn #204 RH “Jesus Christ is Risen Today!”**

**Call to Confession**

**Prayer of Confession**

**God of new life… too often, we seem to be controlled by our fear of “uns”; fear of the unexpected…the unknown…the uninhibited. Sometimes, like Mary, Mary, and Salome, we cannot believe that anything other than the usual cycle of life could be at work. We forget to look up to see your living presence because we think it’s impossible… even when what we’re afraid of is your life-changing good news. Give us the wisdom and the courage to know how to respond to our fears… and more importantly, to your renewing presence… even now…as we offer our silent confessions… (silence)**  Amen.

**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.**

**Special Music Kenna McKenzie-Young, Harp**

**Psalm 118:1-2, 14-24**

O give thanks to the LORD, for he is good;   
**his steadfast love endures forever!**

Let Israel say,   
**“His steadfast love endures forever.”**

The LORD is my strength and my might;  he has become my salvation.   
There are glad songs of victory in the tents of the righteous:   
**“The right hand of the LORD does valiantly;   
the right hand of the LORD is exalted;   
the right hand of the LORD does valiantly.”**

I shall not die, but I shall live,   
and recount the deeds of the LORD.   
**The LORD has punished me severely,   
but he did not give me over to death.**

Open to me the gates of righteousness,   
that I may enter through them   
and give thanks to the LORD.

**This is the gate of the LORD;   
the righteous shall enter through it.**

I thank you that you have answered me   
and have become my salvation.   
**The stone that the builders rejected   
has become the chief cornerstone.**This is the LORD’s doing;   
it is marvelous in our eyes.   
**This is the day that the LORD has made;   
let us rejoice and be glad in it.**

**Offering**

**Hymn #203 RH The Strife is O’er the Battle Done**

**Time out for Teaching: Mark’s Four Endings**

I have a set of paperback books called “Choose Your own Adventure.”

Let’s turn to Mark’s gospel, chapter 16. In a little while, we will be hearing from verses 1-8. But let’s look and see what else Mark has in chapter 16!

What do you think?

There is lectio brevior and lectio difficilior to help us determine whether those other endings could be authentic to Mark. They are early additions to Mark, very very early, or they would not have been included in the canon at all.

Why do you think Mark wrote this gospel? John Mark may have been in a hurry to write it all down. He also may have had a different idea of what a “gospel” is. He is the first of the writers to use the word as a noun. Also it is possible that this book was written more like an “elegy” for Jesus. Maybe it wasn’t exactly the same as a “biography” and instead was a different kind of meditation on who Jesus was.

**Prayer for Illumination**

**Acts 10:34-43**

34Then Peter began to speak to them: “I truly understand that God shows no partiality, 35but in every nation anyone who fears him and does what is right is acceptable to him. 36You know the message he sent to the people of Israel, preaching peace by Jesus Christ — he is Lord of all. 37That message spread throughout Judea, beginning in Galilee after the baptism that John announced: 38how God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power; how he went about doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil, for God was with him. 39We are witnesses to all that he did both in Judea and in Jerusalem. They put him to death by hanging him on a tree; 40but God raised him on the third day and allowed him to appear, 41not to all the people but to us who were chosen by God as witnesses, and who ate and drank with him after he rose from the dead. 42He commanded us to preach to the people and to testify that he is the one ordained by God as judge of the living and the dead. 43All the prophets testify about him that everyone who believes in him receives forgiveness of sins through his name.”

**Gospel Mark 16:1-8**

1When the sabbath was over, Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James, and Salome bought spices, so that they might go and anoint him. 2And very early on the first day of the week, when the sun had risen, they went to the tomb. 3They had been saying to one another, “Who will roll away the stone for us from the entrance to the tomb?” 4When they looked up, they saw that the stone, which was very large, had already been rolled back. 5As they entered the tomb, they saw a young man, dressed in a white robe, sitting on the right side; and they were alarmed. 6But he said to them, “Do not be alarmed; you are looking for Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified. He has been raised; he is not here. Look, there is the place they laid him. 7But go, tell his disciples and Peter that he is going ahead of you to Galilee; there you will see him, just as he told you.” 8So they went out and fled from the tomb, for terror and amazement had seized them; and they said nothing to anyone, for they were afraid.

**Sermon “Every Morning” Rev. Amy Pospichal**

I can just imagine the mindset of the women who went to the tomb to anoint Jesus’ body. Every morning since his crucifixion, they awoke to reminders that he was really gone.

Every morning after their Lord’s death they awoke - perhaps somewhat numb and in disbelief – to the reminder that their courageous, powerful and dear Teacher – a man who washed their feet so that he could share His Kingdom with them – was still gone.

Every morning they awoke, missing his fellowship and teachings, feeling the loss rammed through their hearts. Three days hence and he had not returned. Nor did his ghost appear to them as some believed could happen in those times. It was a bleak and dark time. A pall hung all around them, enshrouding their greatest hopes in darkness.

For with the death of any one so great, you lose so much more than a dear friend. All of your dreams and hopes attached to that person are also gone. The big plans you had made together. The personal dreams, all of your expectations are then taken away.

How quickly all of that can fall to pieces, how hard it is to even accept, especially about one who promised so much. Jesus was the Messiah. Peter confessed this to be true. Jesus told them that this would happen. But as it did, so many doubts were cast into their hearts as they witnessed the terror of his crucifixion, dying in such a way that was not considered “kosher” to Jews. He was also accused of blasphemy. He was also denied by his own disciples. No one can come back from all of that.

I think those mornings after the crucifixion were agonizing for the disciples. They must have felt lost. No wonder they kept to themselves behind locked doors.

So, on the third day, it was time to go anoint the body with spices. That was normally viewed as “womens’ work” – to prepare the dead, to wail and weep for the dead. Our reading from Mark chooses the shortest and most troubling ending for Mark. Troubling because it ends with telling us that the women said “nothing to anyone, for they were afraid.” I already discussed the other endings for Mark and how those different endings made it into the Bible. I prefer to stop the story right here. I prefer to think that with Mark’s track record for being an abrupt writer who takes a lot of license to prove a point. And so I believe this is probably the ending Mark intended for this gospel.

So the women did not say anything at all for they were afraid. Not just afraid in the normal sense. The word in the Greek is “existasthai,” which means something akin to being “out of your mind” with fear. They were continuing in that state of shock, for His body had not yet been seen. I like that ending the most. It is a lot like our own lives. As if things weren’t hard enough for them in their state of grief, now their Lord’s body was missing. And all they have to go on are the words of the young man they meet in the tomb: “Do not be alarmed; you are looking for Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified. He has been raised; he is not here. Look, there is the place they laid him. 7But go, tell his disciples and Peter that he is going ahead of you to Galilee; there you will see him, just as he told you.” They are seized with terror and amazement. They have been given instructions to go and tell the disciples to go and meet up with Jesus in Galilee. But we are told they said nothing. Obviously word got out or none of us would be here today!

But the womens’ fear to say something sounds a little more like our own experience of faith. We get bogged down with fear to talk about things which can lead to new life. Perhaps we have allowed our troubles to weigh us down so much that the celebration of the Resurrection of Jesus doesn’t seem to make a big difference to us. Perhaps our own list of losses and grief, sadnesses and anxieties is so long, that Easter morning feels no different from any other. Perhaps we have wrongly expected this Resurrection Day to somehow press all of the right buttons and fix us, suddenly make us all feel better. But the greatest gift of this day, is, I think, that it includes answers to all of our losses, fears and griefs. It doesn’t stop our pain and sadness from happening. But the Resurrection of the Lord means that we have hope. It brings proof of God’s amazing love and power to overcome death. And while death is still all around, we have our ways of overcoming it. With the recent loss of my husband, now 2 weeks since, I have felt very loved and supported by all of you and many others. It is God’s answer to all of our pain. God gave us the church to be the Body of Christ. Where a part of the Body hurts, all of the other parts rush in to help. Irregardless of your status, your experience as a Christian. Peter reminds his listeners in our reading from Acts today that we have a God who shows no partiality. He was resurrected to be proof to all of the world, not just a select few. And he gave us a family who loves us to help remove the sting of our pain.

The Resurrection of Jesus Christ is no magic trick. This morning is special but not just because of the trick. It is special because we are reminded of the proof that God has won over death. The proof of God’s power that can no live on in us, not just today, but every day. We all have a very special purpose. To be the proof of God’s amazing love, to be God’s church, to shine the light of hope. Not just on Easter morning, but every morning. Amen.

**Service of Holy Communion**

**Invitation to the Table**

**Great Prayer of Thanksgiving**

The Lord be with you.  
**And also with you.**  
Lift up your hearts.  
**We lift them up to the Lord.**  
Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.  
**It is right to give our thanks and praise.**

Our souls long to give you thanks and praise, O God,  
just as the deer longs to quench its thirst in springs of water.  
When reality itself was thirsty for you, Living God,  
you poured out the living water of your presence;  
through day and night, you called creation into being.  
We join our souls, hearts, and minds  
with the multitude of your creation  
singing praise and thanksgiving for your good works.  
We put our trust in you,  
and we give thanks to you, our help and our God.

From the depth of your compassion to the depth of our sin,  
you sent your Beloved, Jesus the Christ,  
to show your faithfulness every day,  
to sing your song of joy every night,  
to teach us your ways, O God of our life.  
When it appeared that your strength forgot him  
and our enemy Death claimed the victory,  
you were yet present  
and made the grave itself a spring of living water.  
We put our trust in you,  
and we give thanks to you, our help and our God.

In your righteousness, O God,  
pour out your strength upon us again.  
As we gather around this meal of bread and cup,  
draw us near to you  
and lift us up with the lightness of your Breath in us.  
Send forth your Spirit of light and truth to lead us,  
and bring us to the place you dwell in all people and places.  
Then let us worship in joy and gladness,  
in spirit and truth,  
in song and service,  
with all your people in every time and place.  
We put our trust in you,  
and we give thanks to you, our help and our God.

We pray through Christ, with Christ, in Christ,  
who prays with us as we say together:  
**The Lord’s Prayer**

**The Lord’s Prayer**

**Prayer After Communion**

**\*Closing Hymn #209 "Thine is the Glory"**

**\*Benediction**