**First Presbyterian Church Tucumcari**

**Worship 11:00AM**

**Sunday, August 21, 2016, the Twenty-first Sunday in Ordinary Time**

**Call to Worship (please see bulletin)**

**Prayer of the Day**

God of Grace,

We praise you for the redemption you offer.

We thank you for plucking us out of the life of sin

To teach us the ways of everlasting life.

Let our worship today proclaim our gratitude and praise,

That in all we do and say,

We may show what it means to belong to you.

We love you. In Christ we pray,

Amen

**Call to Confession**

**Prayer of Confession – (please see bulletin)**

**Assurance of Pardon**

Hear the words of Jesus:  “If you abide in me, and my words abide in you, ask for whatever you wish, and it will be done for you.”  When we offer our confession to God with a humble and contrite heart, we will receive forgiveness.

**In Jesus Christ we are forgiven!**

The Lord be with you.

**And also with you.**

**Responsive Reading Psalm 71:1-6 (please see bulletin)**

**Prayers of the People**

In the Olympics this week, O God, we have watched many people gather and compete. We been moved by amazing human achievements, touched by individual stories, and inspired by our neighbors from around the world. We stand in awe, O God, of the miraculous gifts of life, and the human spirit, and the human body. We praise you, recognizing with gratitude that all of us are fearfully and wonderfully made by you.

We remember that you hovered over the waters of creation and the waters of our own baptism. Thank you for the gift of abundant access to clean water, and the cleansing power of your spirit. We pray for those who thirst for water, those who suffer either flood or drought, and those who thirst for your spirit.

We remember that you walked in the garden of Eden, seeking your shamed creatures after they sinned, and that you walked among us as a redeeming Savior. We give thanks for the gift of mobility – our ability to walk and run and bend and move. We pray for those who are disabled, or who have trouble walking or running, and all who suffer due to disease, injury, or age.

We remember that yours is the Spirit of strength and balance that holds the world together. We give thanks for the way you bend and shape and challenge us. We pray for those who are stiff or stuck, including ourselves – make us more flexible and more open to the movement of your Spirit.

We remember that you made us because of love and for love, and that in your wisdom gave us each other and called us to live in community. We thank you for our families and friends, and for the fellowship we find in your church. We pray for those who are lonely, who feel alienated or unwelcome, who are isolated in their grief, fear, or pain. And we pray that you would help us reach out to them with your love and kindness.

We remember that you are the God of every nation. We give thanks for the gift of our own country, and all the freedoms we enjoy. We pray for our great country, for its leaders and those seeking office, and for all of us in this challenging season. We also pray for the leaders and citizens of every nation, and for the whole world, praying that your peace would flourish among us.

We pray all of this and much more, in the name of your son, our Savior Jesus Christ, who taught us to pray saying…

**Time Out for Teaching: What is a Prophet?**

What is a prophet? Have you noticed that prophets generally show up only when things are going wrong? This is because when things are going fine overall, it’s because the people are living well and not offending God.

We often think that prophets are there to give us bad news. But what they are really giving us is good news. The good news is the chance to change our ways.

We have lots of prophets in our Old Testament and New Testament.

**Gospel Luke 13:10-17**

10Now he was teaching in one of the synagogues on the sabbath. 11And just then there appeared a woman with a spirit that had crippled her for eighteen years. She was bent over and was quite unable to stand up straight. 12When Jesus saw her, he called her over and said, "Woman, you are set free from your ailment." 13When he laid his hands on her, immediately she stood up straight and began praising God. 14But the leader of the synagogue, indignant because Jesus had cured on the sabbath, kept saying to the crowd, "There are six days on which work ought to be done; come on those days and be cured, and not on the sabbath day." 15But the Lord answered him and said, "You hypocrites! Does not each of you on the sabbath untie his ox or his donkey from the manger, and lead it away to give it water? 16And ought not this woman, a daughter of Abraham whom Satan bound for eighteen long years, be set free from this bondage on the sabbath day?" 17When he said this, all his opponents were put to shame; and the entire crowd was rejoicing at all the wonderful things that he was doing.

**Jeremiah 1:4-10**

4Now the word of the LORD came to me saying, 5"Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, and before you were born I consecrated you; I appointed you a prophet to the nations." 6Then I said, "Ah, Lord GOD! Truly I do not know how to speak, for I am only a boy." 7But the LORD said to me, "Do not say, 'I am only a boy'; for you shall go to all to whom I send you, and you shall speak whatever I command you, 8Do not be afraid of them, for I am with you to deliver you, says the LORD." 9Then the LORD put out his hand and touched my mouth; and the LORD said to me, "Now I have put my words in your mouth. 10See, today I appoint you over nations and over kingdoms, to pluck up and to pull down, to destroy and to overthrow, to build and to plant."

**Sermon: “To Pluck Up and to Plant”**

Jeremiah is called by the Lord to be a prophet. But he has problem. He doubts himself and God. It seems that he has an inferiority complex. What he is being told to do is a difficult task: to speak the truth to the powers at work in his time, and it happens that those in power are pretending that they’ve done nothing wrong. But the powers that be were his very own leaders, of his nation and his faith. Those to whom he had always been a subject, not ever thinking that he would have to take charge of his own destiny and, listening to God, and tell them what they were doing wrong.

That must have been intimidating for him, and he questions God on it.

We all may feel intimidated by the idea of what it means for us to live prophetically. To live prophetically means to interpret what God wants us to do and how He wants us to live. This type of life is tenuous, at best, as soon as we try to put it into action. For, as soon as we share our lives with others, we set ourselves up for rejection, speaking our faith to a world where some do not want to listen. Perhaps we are like Jeremiah, thinking the job is too big for us. Perhaps we don’t think we have the time or energy or knowledge. Jeremiah’s story might lead us to think we might become an unpopular voice in an already conflicted world. It is intimidating to have been given the authority to pluck up and tear down, to build and to plant.

But if you want to see intimidating, just look at the termite damage next door.

You might remember a couple of years ago the building project we had been contemplating, to do something about that termite damage. The problem is: the wood is so pretty, but it is old and brittle. Any wood we were to choose to replace it would be very expensive, much more expensive than if we used sheetrock and painted it. At the time we couldn’t come to a clear decision. Some of our more sentimental members weren’t ready to see that beautiful wood go away, as “holey” as it is. Plus, the proposal we received from a contractor pretty costly! Here was one of those moments that we had to think prophetically, and it seemed it wasn’t the right time – not yet – to tear down and rebuild.

We often think of the prophets as big heroes who spoke truth to power, were given the authority to tell off kings. We often think of prophets as people given by God strange instructions to demonstrate a message. Jeremiah definitely did those things. We think that the prophets were all about doing the big thing, that would turn hearts away from sin and back to the Lord. Jeremiah still does that to us now.

But don’t let that fool you into thinking you don’t have a role as a prophet in your daily living. Not all of us have the same calling to change thousands of hearts. At least maybe not at first. Most of us start with being prophets in our own backyard. Taking a stand on what we feel God wants us to do here and now. Even if it deals with termite damage. We are prophets whenever we are trying to understand what God wants us to do and say. And there is much to be done and said. These decisions may not make us popular. But when we follow through, then we are pointing to God’s purpose and plan.

This is why there is strength in a church, when our leadership considers weighty and important tasks. It is not for us to be stuck in a rut always doing the same thing we’ve always done. Monkeys can do that. But honest dialogue asking the question, “Lord, what do us want us to do and why?” allows us to embrace our roles as believers, concerned with stewardship, justice and loving-kindness. “Lord, what do you want us to do and why?” opens our minds and hearts to His leading, gives us a humble but willing attitude towards this extraordinary privilege of God’s authority on earth. It will lead us to challenge what others have taken for granted, like Jesus did, who healed a woman on a Sabbath. It will lead us to break out of a mold if it has led us down a path of sin and death. We might change our expectations of others based on the way they walk, the color of their skin or the length of their hair. We might alter our expectations of ourselves, and become willing to try what’s different if what we’re doing isn’t working.

Maybe we are too young, too inexperienced, too tired. None of us deserves the role God has given us. It’s big. But God has promised, if we are following His wishes: “Do not be afraid of them, for I am with you to deliver you, says the LORD…Now I have put my words in your mouth.” That’s the Good News, my friends. Go and do likewise.