**First Presbyterian Church Tucumcari**

**Worship 11:00AM**

**Sunday, August 28, 2016, the Twenty-second Sunday in Ordinary Time**

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

**Prayer of the Day**

O God, the heavens declare your glory,  
and all creation reveals your surpassing wisdom.  
We give thanks to you for teaching us in the way we should go.  
We pray for all who are searching,  
that you would shine your light ahead of them,  
and help all people rejoice in you.  
Revive all our souls and refresh our spirits.  
Let all that we say or do be acceptable in your sight,  
Amen

**Call to Confession**

**Prayer of Confession (see bulletin)**

**Assurance of Pardon**

“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 81:1, 10-16 (see bulletin)**

**Prayers of the People**

O God, you have been our help in ages past,  
and you are our hope for years to come.  
We give you thanks for calling us together to worship,  
and for hearing us when we pray.  
Before the word is on our lips, you know the desires and cries of our hearts,  
your healing balm covers our hurt and your spirit of joy dances in our midst.  
We celebrate together, rejoicing with those who rejoice,  
for life and family, health and opportunity.  
Help us to live in gratitude, recognizing all you have done for us.  
And we lift up to you a world in need—  
people in need of healing,  
communities in need of comfort,  
nations in need of guidance.  
Where there is violence, give us courage to make peace.  
Where there is fear, give us courage to stand with hope.  
Where there is illness and disease, give us courage to reach out with healing hands.

Lord, we pray for:

AnnaLee’s family, the Hardy’s,

For the Sims

For the Cherry Family,

For Ellen Shenkles and Kay David’s families

For those dealing with the flooding in the south and southeast

For those dealing with the aftermath of tornadoes

For those who struggle against loneliness.

For those dealing with illness in our church

For Laura in her surgery and for Rachel with her infection,

Laurie Coates’ husband in his medication adjustments and her brother dealing with kidney damage.  
Open our hearts, O God—break our hearts open for what breaks yours.  
Pour in your hope, and then lead us into your world unafraid,  
ready to stand with your people near and far,  
as signs of your kingdom here on earth, among us and within us,  
hope overflowing,  
until all creation sings your grace.  
We pray these and all things in the name of Jesus the Christ. Amen.

**Time Out for Teaching: Foundations for Righteousness**

What do you consider “righteousness?”

Righteousness cannot be captured easily without a long list of many different spiritual and ethical values. It is a way of life that strives to be all you can be in many different areas.

The word in Hebrew is “Tzidiq” – and it refers to standing upright. Ironically, for those of us confessing a doctrine of total depravity, it may be darned impossible to stand completely upright. But with God’s grace, we might have at least the dignity manage it.

You are about to hear from Jeremiah and the Letter to the Hebrews, each which call the people of God to righteous living. The list of what it takes to be righteous is long, but it gives our lives integrity and worth. It speaks highly also of our faith in God. So listen carefully to the readings and try to hear what each of them say to us about the definition of righteousness.

**Prayer for Illumination**

Holy Spirit, bring your divine light into the readings this morning. Help us to see as you see – to hear as you hear – to act in the world as you would have us act. Breathe life into us as you breathe into your living Word, Jesus Christ. Amen.

**Jeremiah 2:4-5, 9-13**

4Hear the word of the LORD, O house of Jacob, and all the families of the house of Israel. 5Thus says the LORD: What wrong did your ancestors find in me that they went far from me, and went after worthless things, and became worthless themselves?

9Therefore once more I accuse you, says the LORD, and I accuse your children's children. 10Cross to the coasts of Cyprus and look, send to Kedar and examine with care; see if there has ever been such a thing. 11Has a nation changed its gods, even though they are no gods? But my people have changed their glory for something that does not profit. 12Be appalled, O heavens, at this, be shocked, be utterly desolate, says the LORD, 13for my people have committed two evils: they have forsaken me, the fountain of living water, and dug out cisterns for themselves, cracked cisterns that can hold no water.

**Hebrews 13:1-8, 15-16**

1Let mutual love continue. 2Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers, for by doing that some have entertained angels without knowing it. 3Remember those who are in prison, as though you were in prison with them; those who are being tortured, as though you yourselves were being tortured. 4Let marriage be held in honor by all, and let the marriage bed be kept undefiled; for God will judge fornicators and adulterers. 5Keep your lives free from the love of money, and be content with what you have; for he has said, "I will never leave you or forsake you." 6So we can say with confidence, "The Lord is my helper; I will not be afraid. What can anyone do to me?"

7Remember your leaders, those who spoke the word of God to you; consider the outcome of their way of life, and imitate their faith. 8Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever.

15Through him, then, let us continually offer a sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of lips that confess his name. 16Do not neglect to do good and to share what you have, for such sacrifices are pleasing to God.

**Gospel Luke 14:1, 7-14**

1On one occasion when Jesus was going to the house of a leader of the Pharisees to eat a meal on the sabbath, they were watching him closely.

7When he noticed how the guests chose the places of honor, he told them a parable. 8"When you are invited by someone to a wedding banquet, do not sit down at the place of honor, in case someone more distinguished than you has been invited by your host; 9and the host who invited both of you may come and say to you, 'Give this person your place', and then in disgrace you would start to take the lowest place. 10But when you are invited, go and sit down at the lowest place, so that when your host comes, he may say to you, 'Friend, move up higher'; then you will be honored in the presence of all who sit at the table with you. 11For all who exalt themselves will be humbled, and those who humble themselves will be exalted."

12He said also to the one who had invited him, "When you give a luncheon or a dinner, do not invite your friends or your brothers or your relatives or rich neighbors, in case they may invite you in return, and you would be repaid. 13But when you give a banquet, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, and the blind. 14And you will be blessed, because they cannot repay you, for you will be repaid at the resurrection of the righteous."

**Sermon: “The Royal Treatment”**

I’ve heard this before and heard it again just recently. “I’ll help you out not because I like you, but so you will owe me one day.” It was on a TV show, but I have heard it in the world of business too. Sort of the “I’ll scratch your back” concept, but it holds over the other guy an expectation that one day you will be cashing in the favor.

Now, maybe we’re ashamed to admit this, but, don’t we sometimes expect just an eensy-weensy bit that that person we’ve helped should return the favor one day?

When I was in my 20s, I was floating along looking for a career. A friend offered to “put in a good word” for me. And I, being the stubborn, first-born, White Anglo Saxon Protestant work ethic type-of-person, turned him down. It was primarily because I was embarrassed to accept someone’s help for something I should be able to do for myself. But what bothered me, he told me he would be happy to help because one day I would owe him.

It’s possible that in our acts of charity, we may also expect too much of the person we’ve helped. There are times and places when we set up expectations for others who really can’t do much in return… either they don’t have the money or don’t have the know-how to reciprocate. I fall into the trap when I give someone a few dollars and then get disappointed that they don’t visit our church.

In our reading from Luke today, Jesus just might have been in that situation of favors and expectations.

Why he is at the Pharisee’s house for dinner, we are not entirely sure. Maybe he was considered a charity case. Maybe he was being honored for his skillful teachings and healings. But this invitation to dinner does not prevent him from criticizing the system of privilege he sees before him. As he watches everyone assume their seats, he sees this as a teachable moment: ‘Do not assume that you get the important seat in the house, for you may find that you are not as important as you think you are.’ He reminds them that it will far less humiliating to assume a lower seat, and get to move up, than to be forced to move down.

There was a very influential system at work in their society, called the “Patron-Client” system. The high ups did favors for someone, so that person would always owe them and have to honor them in public events. So no matter where you were on the ladder, there was always someone above you, expecting you to honor them and pay tribute. You were never free.

Taken by itself, Jesus sounds like he’s giving advice on how to get ahead in business. But he is actually about to say even more, that this system of privilege and favors does not reflect the Kingdom of God. He must have surprised them with what he says next: ‘At your next dinner party, invite people who cannot reciprocate at all!’ Well, that would just throw everyone off. Leave it to Jesus.

See He has a problem with us when our lives turn primarily on reciprocal obligations and not enough on grace.

So as we think more deeply about his two teachings – first on how to act at dinner parties, and second, how to throw your own dinner party – we see a larger message than just one of how to be humble. The larger message is about God’s abundant grace, extended especially those who have no way of repaying. It’s a message of honoring those who least expect honor, who might even be embarrassed to receive the royal treatment.

The people of whom Jesus speaks are not the sorts who would ever expect to be invited to a dinner party, especially at a Pharisee’s house, especially where they would be given a seat of honor. The poor of whom Jesus speaks are the ones who are truly destitute – there are two main Greek words for “poor” – one refers to the peasant class, but the one he uses here refers to those who are truly destitute. They are what we call “poorest of the poor,” the people who are outside of society by virtue of the fact they have nothing at all. Because of their position, no one would ever honor them.

So such an honor would take them by surprise.

All of our readings today charge us to be surprisingly different, to be Christians of noble character. Persons who walk the talk. Jeremiah calls his people “cracked cisterns that cannot hold water.” Do our lives hold water, do we live as we speak? We are called to a life of integrity, whose daily living expresses what we believe and say.

Hospitality is a large part of our faith. It is lifted high by the author of Hebrews as a very important part of our walk in Christ. It is first on the list of instructions given: “Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers, for by doing that some have entertained angels without knowing it.”

A few years ago, “Presbyterians Today” featured a short story of a Cambodian refugee who came to the States in the 1970s. A Buddhist man, he was introduced to a Presbyterian Church. It was then when he learned about Jesus Christ. That man is now a Presbyterian minister serving a church in Oregon. We may never know who God sends our way. Moreover, our welcome may in fact be the hand up someone needs to get a new start with God.

You might receive the poorest of the poor. You might greet a person poor in spirit. One of the most important things you do with your faith is to surprise someone with the royal treatment. Thanks be to God for the one who first showed us grace! Amen.