**First Presbyterian Church Tucumcari**

**Worship 11:00AM**

**Sunday, August 6, 2017, 18th Sunday in Ordinary Time**

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

**Prayer of the Day**

God of love and grace,

We praise you for your greatness

Your majesty is reflected in the beauty of your Creation

Shines in the small smile of a child

Shows in small acts of compassion for a stranger.

We adore you,

For you are our teacher of forgiveness.

So let the words of our mouths

And the meditations of all our hearts today

Be acceptable in your sight,

Our Lord and Savior,

Amen.

**Call to Confession**

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

**Assurance of Pardon**

Friends, Believe the Good News of Jesus Christ.

**In Jesus Christ we are forgiven!**

The Lord be with you.

**And also with you.**

**Psalm 17:1-7,15 (please see bulletin)**

**Time Out for Teaching: Hands**

Have you ever noticed that when there is a need to do something merciful, it usually comes at an inconvenient time?

Then, how do you respond?

Our gospel reading is going to be the focus of today’s sermon. We will continue to hear the stories of Jacob in the Old Testament and some good stuff from the letter to the Romans, but our focus is going to be on the feeding of the 5,000 people.

This is one of those moments when Jesus is actually trying to get away for a moment. To get a little “alone-time” – but instead he finds more people who want to see him. Has this ever happened to you?

You had your plans but God has God’s plans…

Jesus has compassion on them. Jesus feeds them.

Comedian Robin Williams once said (and he was an Episcopalian), “If you want to make God laugh, make plans.”

Perhaps what this feeding of the 5,000 story could be telling us is, even though we aren’t perfect like Jesus, and maybe we do need to get away sometimes, we also could use some flexibility. For we cannot always predict when God is going to call upon our service.

**Genesis 32:22-31**

22The same night he got up and took his two wives, his two maids, and his eleven children, and crossed the ford of the Jabbok. 23He took them and sent them across the stream, and likewise everything that he had. 24Jacob was left alone; and a man wrestled with him until daybreak. 25When the man saw that he did not prevail against Jacob, he struck him on the hip socket; and Jacob’s hip was put out of joint as he wrestled with him. 26Then he said, “Let me go, for the day is breaking.” But Jacob said, “I will not let you go, unless you bless me.” 27So he said to him, “What is your name?” And he said, “Jacob.” 28Then the man said, “You shall no longer be called Jacob, but Israel, for you have striven with God and with humans, and have prevailed.” 29Then Jacob asked him, “Please tell me your name.” But he said, “Why is it that you ask my name?” And there he blessed him. 30So Jacob called the place Peniel, saying, “For I have seen God face to face, and yet my life is preserved.” 31The sun rose upon him as he passed Penuel, limping because of his hip.

**Romans 9:1-5**

1I am speaking the truth in Christ — I am not lying; my conscience confirms it by the Holy Spirit — 2I have great sorrow and unceasing anguish in my heart. 3For I could wish that I myself were accursed and cut off from Christ for the sake of my own people, my kindred according to the flesh. 4They are Israelites, and to them belong the adoption, the glory, the covenants, the giving of the law, the worship, and the promises; 5to them belong the patriarchs, and from them, according to the flesh, comes the Messiah, who is over all, God blessed for ever. Amen.

**Matthew 14:13-21**

13Now when Jesus heard this, he withdrew from there in a boat to a deserted place by himself. But when the crowds heard it, they followed him on foot from the towns. 14When he went ashore, he saw a great crowd; and he had compassion for them and cured their sick. 15When it was evening, the disciples came to him and said, “This is a deserted place, and the hour is now late; send the crowds away so that they may go into the villages and buy food for themselves.” 16Jesus said to them, “They need not go away; you give them something to eat.” 17They replied, “We have nothing here but five loaves and two fish.” 18And he said, “Bring them here to me.” 19Then he ordered the crowds to sit down on the grass. Taking the five loaves and the two fish, he looked up to heaven, and blessed and broke the loaves, and gave them to the disciples, and the disciples gave them to the crowds. 20And all ate and were filled; and they took up what was left over of the broken pieces, twelve baskets full. 21And those who ate were about five thousand men, besides women and children.

**Sermon: Many Hands**

This past week I got a call from Ronni Wright, a member of our church who heads up the Domestic Violence Program. She explained to me that she had a family of three with her – a mother, a teenager and a baby. They had to flee their home the day before and Ronni’s program put them up for the night. However, as usual, this family needed several more nights of shelter before it would be safe to return home. The abuser had taken all their money and destroyed mom’s cell phone, which is also typical. The mom felt completely alone, since they had just moved here four weeks ago. Our church’s 3-2-1 Go! Grant was about to be put to use.

This being Rattler Reunion Weekend, it took several phone calls to find a room for a family of three. Many places were booked or overpriced. Each hotel I called, I explained I am the Presbyterian minister and our church was helping a local family in a housing emergency. The hotel staff were sympathetic and gave me referrals to other hotels. Finally I found one, thanks be to God, near where the mom works. I also purchased for her a gift card to use at the grocery so they could purchase formula for the baby, because all of their stuff was still at the house.

As with just about all the people we have helped through this program, I don’t even know what they look like. Every conversation I have with these families is by telephone. I usually just know their first names. They need their privacy so they don’t have to see me unless they want to. Some have told me they are too traumatized to go to a place where there are lots of strangers. I have to resist the urge to reach out to them. I wish I could reach out and hold their hand. I wish I could pray with them or hug them.

Even though this seems like a very “hands off” ministry, it is still mission and evangelism. These families will always remember our church as a hand of mercy in a time of fear.

In our Gospel selection today, the primary motive for feeding these thousands of people by the lakeside is to show them mercy. It’s a bit ironic at first. Just like with other opportunities to show mercy, this situation presents itself to Jesus spontaneously. Jesus is there because he is trying to get away for moment of quiet. In fact, he was probably grieving, having just heard of the execution of John the Baptist. But in his pursuit of a little “alone-time,” the crowds find him.

But instead of reacting in frustration and telling them to buzz off, Jesus calls for his disciples to help him feed the masses. It says, “He had compassion for them.” Compassion is a Latin word for feeling “suffering with” someone. He tells the disciples to bring out their food, which wasn’t much, just enough for 12 people. And this is where Jesus and we tend to part ways. We complain it looks like there isn’t enough, that we don’t have enough food or money or energy or time or compassion. But Jesus blesses and multiplies what there is. So that mercy is felt by all.

The thousands are satisfied. It began with Jesus’ own hands, as he blessed and broke and passed it on to those anxious, irritable disciples. To their amazement, from their very own hands, the bread and fish get around to everyone.

How many people do you think it took for faith to be passed on to you? It started with Jesus. Traveled through the centuries of believers, until eventually, perhaps first through several generations of your own family and friends it made it all the way to you. And now you get to pass it on! It takes many hands, hearts and minds to do the work of God, in order to affect the entire world. It starts with individuals and situations and looking for solutions, and then many hands to come together in fellowship, in caring, in dreaming and planning, in worship and in sharing the message of mercy God has for this world. Think for a moment how many hands were a part of helping that family find shelter this past week. Me, Ronni, the police, several hotel employees, a couple of grocery clerk, all of you, the Presbytery Mission Committee, our Synod and General Assembly. That’s a lot of hands involved in sharing God’s abundant life. That’s a lot of hands!

Your hands are the extension of God’s work in this world. Remember that, when you leave this place to hug others, push pencils and paper around, answer phone calls, shake someone else’s hand, cook a meal… whatever it is you do, do it for good. But before you do that, put your holy handprint on that county fair booth display. Amen.

**Service of Holy Communion**

**Invitation**

The Messiah looked upon the crowds with compassion and wanted to feed them. They were the crowds from neighboring towns and it was getting late.

Friends, this table is a place where we can encounter the living God.

This is the table of our Savior, who sees us with compassion and by his own hand we are fed.

We can be grateful for the many hands who prepared this bread and juice and, whether they know it or not, the fruits of their labors are to be celebrated as the Lord’s work,

Signifying His mercy and grace at this table of love.

All seeking Him are welcome to this feast.

**Great Prayer of Thanksgiving**

The Lord be with you.

**And also with you.**

Lift up your hearts.

**We lift them unto the Lord.**

Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

**It is right to give our thanks and praise.**

We thank you and praise you, Almighty God,

For your mercy extends from everlasting to everlasting.

All your Creation is sustained by your unseen hands,

Made and held by your lovingkindness.

Since the beginning of the world,

You sought to plant love.

When we fell from grace, which we do time and again,

You were there to catch us with unexpected forgiveness.

You sent us your Law to shield us, but when we stepped out of bounds, you were there again,

Jesus, the Word made Flesh to dwell among us and show us the way.

You sent us your Holy Spirit to abide in us and around us

The prophetic voice, the fire in our hearts, the guide and comforter,

Leading us to live your Word for this broken world.

Today at this table let this bread become bread for the world and this cup be the cup of salvation for all. When they are broken and poured, may we share you with others.

Together with the choirs of angels and with believers of every time and place we pray,

Holy, holy holy Lord, God of power and might,

Heaven and earth are full of your glory,

Hosanna in the highest.

Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord,

Hosanna in the highest!

Join us to one another  
and transform us by your presence,  
that we may be the sign of your life in this world  
for all who are hurting, hungering, and searching.

This day we remember the needs of your people. We lift up those who suffer from violence, those who are sick, those who are lonely. Remember the needs of those who are traveling by road, sea or air. Remember the needs of those who live in fear. Bring assistance to the refugee, to those who grieve, to those who are ill. Bring protection to those who serve in our military and comfort those who wait for them.

These things we pray in the name of the one who taught all of us to pray, saying, “Our Father, who art in heaven…Amen.”

**Distribution of the Elements**

On the night that Jesus was betrayed, he took the bread, broke it, and gave it to his disciples saying,

Take, eat, this is my body broken for you. Do this in remembrance of me.

When they had finished eating, he took the cup and blessed it, and gave it to the disciples, saying,

Take and drink. This cup is the new covenant poured out in my blood for the forgiveness of many. Do this in remembrance of me.

**Prayer After Communion**

Jesus, you have fed us with your holy meal. Follow us from this table with your goodness and mercy,  
that we might rise to serve you with new life and hope  
as we dwell in your house forever.  
Lord, come quickly! Amen.