**First Presbyterian Church Tucumcari**

**Worship 11:00AM**

**Sunday, December 2, 2018, 1st Sunday of Advent**

**Prelude – Come, Thou Long-Expected Jesus**

**Announcements**

**Lighting the Candle of Hope**

We light this candle as a sign of the coming light of Christ.

**In Christ there is life and light for all people.**

Now lift up your heads and rejoice: your redeemer is drawing near.

**Glory to God in the highest, and peace to God’s people on earth!**

**Come and worship the long-expected Jesus!**

**Prayer of the Day**

This day we celebrate your imminent arrival O Lord! This day is the first day of the new church year, when we make ready for your arrival. Our decorations are up but now let our hearts be open to the newness that only you can provide.

**Call to Confession**

Prepare the way of the Lord! Make His paths straight. May every valley be lifted up and every mountain laid low. Let us together and in silence reflect on our need for God’s forgiveness.

**Prayer of Confession (Mirrors)**

**Almighty God, how often you explode our expectations. Our arrogance convinces us that we can understand where and how you will show up in the world. Our excessive confidence is not centered in you, but in ourselves. (silence…)**

**We utter words of judgment against our adversaries; but we readily forget the ways we sin against you. We have all become unclean in your most Holy eyes. Even our righteous deeds are like a filthy cloth, compared to the pure swaddle of the Babe of Bethlehem. If left to our own devices, our sins would take us away like a leaf in the wind. (silence…)**

**Forgive us, O God. Remind us of the ways you enter our lives and bind us to your sovereign love. (silence…)**Amen.

**Assurance of Pardon**

Hear the good news! Upon reflection, God’s mercy cleanses us all of our unrighteousness, so we are freed to reflect his mercy and love to all whom we meet.

Friends, Believe the Good News of Jesus Christ.

**In Jesus Christ we are forgiven!**

The Lord be with you.

**And also with you.**

**Psalm 25:1-10 (please see bulletin)**

**Time Out for Teaching: The Big Bang Theory**

This morning we begin the season of Advent. As you can see, several of us were busy in here and next door this past week.

We begin this season with a lot of promises from God and Jesus Christ. Our readings from Jeremiah, 1 Thessalonians and the Gospel according to Luke all share a promise that God shall return and execute justice and righteousness, and shelter for God’s people.

But another thing that is the undercurrent of all this good news and promise of salvation is that God does it. God is the first mover that began it all. God is the one who takes initiative to save us, even though we are the ones who get into trouble. God “shall execute justice and righteousness in the land,” says Jeremiah. “The days are surely coming…” says the Lord.

As believers I invite you to ponder how this brings joy and hope to you, to consider that God is truly in charge of this situation. To know that while it’s important for us to be strong in faith, vigilant to see signs of God’s kingdom, it is also good news to know that God has taken the initiative by choosing to be born a baby in the manger. How is that good news to you?

 As for me, it means that God loves us that much. That God can handle anything. And that the redemption God offers involves entering this broken and material world He once pronounced “Good” and healing it.

**Prayer for Illumination**

**Jeremiah 33:14-16**

14The days are surely coming, says the LORD, when I will fulfill the promise I made to the house of Israel and the house of Judah. 15In those days and at that time I will cause a righteous Branch to spring up for David; and he shall execute justice and righteousness in the land. 16In those days Judah will be saved and Jerusalem will live in safety. And this is the name by which it will be called: "The LORD is our righteousness."

**1 Thessalonians 3:9-13**

9How can we thank God enough for you in return for all the joy that we feel before our God because of you? 10Night and day we pray most earnestly that we may see you face to face and restore whatever is lacking in your faith.

11Now may our God and Father himself and our Lord Jesus direct our way to you. 12And may the Lord make you increase and abound in love for one another and for all, just as we abound in love for you. 13And may he so strengthen your hearts in holiness that you may be blameless before our God and Father at the coming of our Lord Jesus with all his saints.

**Gospel Luke 21:25-36**

25"There will be signs in the sun, the moon, and the stars, and on the earth distress among nations confused by the roaring of the sea and the waves. 26People will faint from fear and foreboding of what is coming upon the world, for the powers of the heavens will be shaken. 27Then they will see 'the Son of Man coming in a cloud' with power and great glory. 28Now when these things begin to take place, stand up and raise your heads, because your redemption is drawing near."

29Then he told them a parable: "Look at the fig tree and all the trees; 30as soon as they sprout leaves you can see for yourselves and know that summer is already near. 31So also, when you see these things taking place, you know that the kingdom of God is near. 32Truly I tell you, this generation will not pass away until all things have taken place. 33Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away.

34"Be on guard so that your hearts are not weighed down with dissipation and drunkenness and the worries of this life, and that day catch you unexpectedly, 35like a trap. For it will come upon all who live on the face of the whole earth. 36Be alert at all times, praying that you may have the strength to escape all these things that will take place, and to stand before the Son of Man."

\*Reading the signs of the Kingdom of God is elementary as understanding the season when the fig tree sprouts its leaves.

\*\*Good news is – “when these things begin to take place, stand up and raise your heads because your redemption is drawing near…”

\*\*\*Be on guard and don’t let yourself be caught unprepared by being caught up in the dissipation, drunkenness and worries of this life.

\*\*\*\* God takes initiative for us and always has. So glad He’s in charge!

**Sermon: “On the Move”**

On Black Friday, I walked around the Old Town Plaza in Santa Fe. It was evening. I think it got bone-chillingly cold that night but I strolled around the square a while eating a scoop of Häagen-Dazs. Even though it was getting dark out, there had to have been hundreds of people there – more than I have ever seen at that plaza before. There were sales going on in the small shops on the square, but more so I think the people were just out there to be out, walking off last night’s turkey dinner, enjoying live Christmas music by a woodwind and brass band in the bandstand. Workers walked about lighting the luminarias lining the streets and buildings. Those luminarias were everywhere. As I said, lots of people were there and I most of them seemed to be just walking and hanging out. I believe we were there to see the signs and signs of Christmas. And the best part of it was seeing many happy and festive people.

God gives us Christmas. God can stir up in us that little shred of hope we have for a world of peace, love and justice. But it works only if we are ready to receive it. Our God is a giving God, who made the first move by giving us the gift of Jesus Christ, our Salvation. But we are the ones who have to be prepared to receive Him.

This first week of the Advent season can be hard for us at first, drum up that Christmas Spirit, and shift gears from Thanksgiving to Christmas. I feel the pressure every year from the Christmas commercials to think Christmas is already here. But now is the time for us to stop, take deep breaths **(pause…… )** and contemplate the birth of Christ and what that means to us to believe that God entered the world as a baby just like the rest of us. It was an act of God, and we can confess with our hope-filled hearts that this act of God was filled only with good intentions. That gives me hope. Because God chose to do it, and then God made the first move, for us and our salvation.

While I was walking about Santa Fe that evening, returning to the packed downtown parking garage, there was a car with a bumper sticker which read, “Aslan is on the move.” Seeing that just wrapped up the perfect evening. It was an evening to witness festive and joyful masses of God’s people – whom God came in Jesus Christ to save, and an evening of beautiful lights and then to see that bumper sticker, which reminded me of what hope is. You might recall that line from C.S. Lewis’ Chronicles of Narnia. In the last book, “The Last Battle,” Aslan – king of the jungle, savior of Narnia – has been away a long time, and as many of the animals had fallen into slavery by the evil Ape king, they begin to see “signs” that told them that “Aslan is on the move!” Trees whispering messages on the breeze, behaviors of birds, all said that it means Aslan is coming back. They take that message as good news. Those in slavery began to feel bolder with hope. Others rally and prepare to stand with Aslan when he arrived. Their hope – and faith – emboldened them and excited them.

Let us allow ourselves the Spirit which emboldens and excites us with hope. Let us remember that God’s kingdom is always on the move, for God takes initiative and chooses to dwell among us. Therefore, Jesus says, Lift up your heads for your redemption draws near. We get to be on the lookout for signs of God’s Kingdom that emboldens and excites us. This time leading us up to Christmas is a waiting time, but it is not passive. It is time for us to be on the look out for signs of God’s Kingdom. And instead of worrying about the things Jesus tells us – distress in the sun, moon and stars – we can take this as good news. God takes initiative. God is on the move. For us and for our salvation. We get to celebrate and participate in the signs we see this time of year: peace, goodwill, joy, generosity, mercy and as much music and lights as possible.

So friends, it’s time. Look about for the signs of God’s kingdom – bumper stickers or masses of shoppers. And stop, pause and give thanks for the hope we have. Amen.

**Service of Holy Communion**

**Invitation**

**Great Prayer of Thanksgiving**

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

With our whole heart and our very being
we praise you for you are a wise and wonderful God.
With nothing more than a word,
you created the whirling planets
and breathed life into all of creation.
You made us in your image,
that we might be stewards of this good earth.

With all creation, with people in every time and place,
we join the everlasting chorus:

**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.  Hosanna in the highest.**

You blessed us with the promise of abundance and grace
if only we lived within the bounds of your mercy.
But we pushed those boundaries and neglected your earth,
mistreating one another and failing to care for creation.
So you sent your Son, Jesus Christ,
to redeem us for we were unable to redeem ourselves.
In the flesh he came among us and preached the Gospel
not only in word but in deed.

We give you thanks that the Lord Jesus,
on the night before he died, took bread,
and after giving thanks to you, he broke it,
and gave it to his disciples, saying:
Take, eat. This is my body, broken for you.

In the same way Jesus took the cup, saying:
This cup is the new covenant sealed in my blood,
shed for you for the forgiveness of sins.
Whenever you drink it, do this in remembrance of me.

We gather this day, God of all majesty and power,
to lift up your holy name and proclaim the mystery of faith:

As we wait, watch, and wonder with the wisemen and the shepherds,
we proclaim the mystery of faith:

**Christ has died, Christ is risen, Christ will come again…**

As we prepare to live as your disciples,

Hear us as you taught us to pray*… (The Lord’s Prayer)*

**Distribution of Elements**

**Prayer after Communion**

Giver of Every Mercy,
send with us as we leave the presence your Spirit
that we might be blessings to your world,
sending us forth
to be both hearers and doers of your Word.
Unite us with our sisters and brothers around the world
as we preach the Gospel and grow in our understanding of discipleship.

Through Christ, with Christ, in Christ,
all glory and honor are yours, Holy God,
both now and forever more. **Amen**.

**Announcements:**

This Saturday, December 8th at noon will be the Presbyterian Women Christmas Party. Make sure you come to Fellowship Hall to celebrate. You don’t even need to bring food this time, but bring your appetite.

My translation:

25 – And they will be signs in the sun and moon and stars, and upon the earth distress of peoples in perplexity to the noise of sea and of surge,

26 – of ones having breathed their last humans from fear and anticipation of the coming to the inhabited world the powers of the heavens will be shaken.

27 – And then they will see “the son of man coming on the cloud” with power and much glory.

28 – But/and these beginning things to happen you will stand tall and you will be lifted with respect to the heads of you, for the reason that near the redemption of you.

29 – And he spoke a parable to them: “Behold the fig and it’s trees

30 – When already they put out, having seen of itself, you know that already near the summer is,

31 – Thusly also you whenever see these things happening [the trees, or the things in vv 25-28??] you know that near is the kingdom of God.

32 – Truly I saw to you that not-not this generation shall/may pass away until then all things which will happen.

33 – The heaven and the earth will not pass away but the words of me not-not will pass away.

34 – But take care/beware in yourselves/ that they not be burdened in your hearts in dizzying and drunkenness and anxieties with respect to living and stand upon you suddenly that day

35 – as a trap/snare for it will come upon all the things sitting upon the face of the earth.

36 – And/But be alert in every time, asking in order that you may prevail to flee all these things about to happen and to stand in front of the Son of Man.

This passage assumes that if we become burdened with the anxieties of our day, then we may be caught unprepared to meet Jesus Christ.

Jesus is not totally specific here. He says these things are “about to happen” and yet if we think he is only talking about some day in the future “end times” that the kingdom of God will happen, then it hasn’t happened yet. But if the things that are about to happen that reveal the Kingdom of God, are “about to happen” that could also mean what happens to us today, tomorrow, whatever happens to us during our daily living when the Kingdom of God is revealed to us. It points to signs of distress in the celestial bodies, which for the ancient ones they commonly believed that the “normal functioning of heavenly bodies will cease” when the world ceases to be. Furthermore, distress of the peoples is supposed to be a sign.

 I’m no scientist of heavenly bodies, but distress of peoples seems to also have been a fact throughout history, not just now. We, awash in our own world of news and social media, find it difficult to pinpoint whether the world is truly worse off than it was 2,000 years ago when Jesus said this, or not.

 But Jesus charges us to be ever watchful – vigilant, he says. It is our antidote to the waiting. It is our purpose so as not to fall into the same dizzying sleepiness that keeps so many of us from having hope with a purpose.