**First Presbyterian Church, Tucumcari**

*The Church With the Holy Spirit Window*

**March 6, 2016 Fourth Sunday in Lent**

**11:00 a.m.**

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

**Welcome and Announcements**

**Prelude**

**Surely the presence of the Lord is in this place. I can feel His mighty power and His grace.**

**I can feel the brush of angels’ wings, I see glory on each face.**

**Surely the presence of the Lord is in this place. Surely the presence of the Lord is in this place.**

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

**Opening Prayer**

God you welcomed us first with the gift of grace

Through your son our Lord Jesus Christ.

We return to your house today

In need of your grace again and again.

Let us experience anew your presence

That it be the feast that gives us strength

To carry out your ministry in the world.

We thank you and adore you, Almighty God,

In Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit. Amen.

**\*Opening Hymn**

**Call to Confession**

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

**Assurance of Pardon**

Hear the good news, my friends. We have been made God's ambassadors, through the gracious forgiveness granted us through Jesus Christ. The old life is gone. A new life has begun.

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.**

**Psalm 32 (please see bulletin)**

**Prayers of the People**

**Time Out for Teaching: Common Worship**

Sometimes we might discount the meaning and purpose of Common Worship. If we think it's not going to be interesting enough to call us away from our other weekend activities, maybe we run the risk of expecting it to be entertainment. If we think it's something we've just got to do and all we can do is just show up, we might forget that it is actually a two-way street. It's more than showing up, it's paying careful attention to what God is saying to us. If we think that we can be members and that's all that's needed – and that common worship isn't really important to the life of this church, then that's another misunderstanding. When we come to worship, everyone else comes and feels more whole as a congregation.

Worship is the believing community giving divine service to God. As we gather here, we proclaim, even by our attending here, we proclaim that God is more important than anything else in our lives. We show God is worthy of our time and attention.

Worship is an orderly approach to all that, for several reasons. The main reason for the orderliness of worship is so that others can tell what is going on from one moment to the next. This allows us to pay closer attention to the movement of the Holy Spirit and helps us to focus on the different parts of worship and what they are supposed to do.

Worship is also a place where we can find a mutual accountability with one another. We hear the same sermon, we pray the same prayers of confessions, we ponder the same scriptures at the same time, we hear the same prayer requests, we as a Body of worshipers, witness the same things that need our attention as a church.

Worship is a major witness to the community and the world. We talk about what we believe and we never know how what we say will help someone else who worships with us on that given day.

Lastly, I have heard some important statistical data from church consultants who say, "A healthy church is one where at least 50% of its members worship at least 44 weeks out of the year." I don't know where that comes from but it makes sense. For all that I have said and more happens when we worship. It's good for a church's health and for your health.

**Luke 15:1-3, 11B-32**

1Now all the tax collectors and sinners were coming near to listen to him. 2And the Pharisees and the scribes were grumbling and saying, "This fellow welcomes sinners and eats with them."

3So he told them this parable:

11b"There was a man who had two sons. 12The younger of them said to his father, 'Father, give me the share of the property that will belong to me.' So he divided his property between them. 13A few days later the younger son gathered all he had and traveled to a distant country, and there he squandered his property in dissolute living. 14When he had spent everything, a severe famine took place throughout that country, and he began to be in need. 15So he went and hired himself out to one of the citizens of that country, who sent him to his fields to feed the pigs. 16He would gladly have filled himself with the pods that the pigs were eating; and no one gave him anything. 17But when he came to himself he said, 'How many of my father's hired hands have bread enough and to spare, but here I am dying of hunger! 18I will get up and go to my father, and I will say to him, "Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you; 19I am no longer worthy to be called your son; treat me like one of your hired hands."' 20So he set off and went to his father. But while he was still far off, his father saw him and was filled with compassion; he ran and put his arms around him and kissed him. 21Then the son said to him, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you; I am no longer worthy to be called your son.' 22But the father said to his slaves, 'Quickly, bring out a robe-the best one-and put it on him; put a ring on his finger and sandals on his feet. 23And get the fatted calf and kill it, and let us eat and celebrate; 24for this son of mine was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found!' And they began to celebrate.

25"Now his elder son was in the field; and when he came and approached the house, he heard music and dancing. 26He called one of the slaves and asked what was going on. 27He replied, 'Your brother has come, and your father has killed the fatted calf, because he has got him back safe and sound.' 28Then he became angry and refused to go in. His father came out and began to plead with him. 29But he answered his father, 'Listen! For all these years I have been working like a slave for you, and I have never disobeyed your command; yet you have never given me even a young goat so that I might celebrate with my friends. 30But when this son of yours came back, who has devoured your property with prostitutes, you killed the fatted calf for him!' 31Then the father said to him, 'Son, you are always with me, and all that is mine is yours. 32But we had to celebrate and rejoice, because this brother of yours was dead and has come to life; he was lost and has been found.'"

**2 Corinthians 5:16-21**

16From now on, therefore, we regard no one from a human point of view; even though we once knew Christ from a human point of view, we know him no longer in that way. 17So if anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation: everything old has passed away; see, everything has become new! 18All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ, and has given us the ministry of reconciliation; 19that is, in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting the message of reconciliation to us. 20So we are ambassadors for Christ, since God is making his appeal through us; we entreat you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God. 21For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

**Sermon "Extravagant Grace" Rev. Amy Pospichal**

Last summer I taught a class at Mesalands for incoming college students. It was a course to get used to college-level education - how to take good notes in class, how to organize their time, and so forth. And one of the recommendations to students with regards to listening to the professor's lectures: whenever a teacher spends a lot of time talking about a subject, and whenever a teacher seems especially excited or passionate about something – chances are those are pretty important topics. If a teacher gets really excited about something or spends lots of time on it, you can bet that that will be on the test!

Those things are both true in our readings this morning. The Prodigal Son and his Brother is a fairly lengthy story for the Gospel of Luke, and our bit of reading from Paul's Second Letter to the Corinthians is a very passionate appeal to the church in Corinth. Both of them deal with similar topics: forgiveness and reconciliation. Obviously these are important topics, and you can bet it will be on the test.

Forgiveness is the number one reason why the church exists in the world. The church's most important ministry. Forgiveness is the glue that binds people together after a conflict. When you find an active ministry of reconciliation in a church, it's a sign that God is at work there.

We know it's important. But so often we avoid it. We would prefer to stand off in the distance, nursing our hurt feelings, and just repeat to ourselves, "I will try and forgive..." We avoid the conflict that could come of telling someone that our feelings were hurt. On the flip side, we crave the chance to forgive someone, if only they would come and tell us they are sorry. It amazes me how conflicted this world looks when we turn on the news, but on the personal level, we have trouble knowing how to begin reconciliation with our brother or sister.

But the church is called to that very thing.

Paul explains to the Corinthians that this is his calling. It's not just a two-way street, it's a three-step process. Paul explains that he and the other apostles are made for the ministry of reconciliation, but it is only because he first learned such mercy from God through the blood of Christ. It started with Jesus, working through the apostles, and then out to the people. In other words, it isn't really just our own work. Reconciliation is God's ministry through us, and to others. But it is doubly hard to do that ministry if we are not first working out our own conflicts with our Lord and Creator.

T he Prodigal Son and his brother reminds us that there are two very different sides to the same story. That there isn't just one who is the sinner. There is usually at least two, often guilty of different things. As we witness the heroic return of the repentant younger brother, there is also an older brother, who believes himself the "good son," but makes the mistake of thinking a little too highly of himself, and failing to welcome his brother as does his father.

There wasn't just one sinner, but more than one.

Perhaps these are keys to the all-important ministry of the church – that we remember we are all sinners in need of redemption. As we seek reconciliation with others, we could be humbled in remembering we could be one of those sons. Forgiveness isn't just some nice trapping that comes with being Christian. It is central to the Christian life.

If we took this thing seriously as central to our lives, maybe we would approach it more courage and determination, but also with humility. As we put forth an effort, we might surprise people who have felt disappointed by God, and we might encourage those whose faith had been compromised. We would also discover as we reach out in mercy and grace, God speaks through us, we become the bearers of His welcome. We would grow to view our enemies as humans with problems. And even if some might not welcome our offer of welcome, we might find satisfaction in doing God's will.

Friends, there are people who need you to reach out to them. So when gather at this table of grace, lift up in prayer those who need your ministry of reconciliation. And, as you savor the bread and the cup, remember the joyous welcome the son received from his Father. For the grace you take into the world today is the very same grace that God gives you. May God bless you on that journey. Amen.

**\*Apostles’ Creed P 12 red hymnal**

**Service of Holy Communion**

**Invitation**

Friends, this is the feast of God for the people of God. All who seek to be united with Christ are invited to this table. It's not just a table for Presbyterians, but for all who come here looking for Him.

As you prepare to come feast with Jesus Christ, remember these words of Scripture:

On the night of his arrest, Jesus took the bread, blessed it, broke it, and gave it to his disciples saying,

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

And when his disciples were finished eating, he took the cup, blessed it and gave it to them, saying,

Drink this, all of you, in remembrance of me. This is the cup of the new covenant in my blood.

Whenever we eat this bread and drink this cup, we proclaim the Lord's death until he comes again.

**Prayer of Thanksgiving and Intercession**

Great God of all that is,

and was, and yet may be –

by your Word the cosmos became

you called for light, and light was

and it was good, many times over, good.

You are the one in whom we stand,

the rock on which we build,

the wave that levels all.

No life lives apart from you,

and no death comes that is secret from you.

We thank you for being, for making, and for knowing.

Christ Jesus, the Logos of God made flesh,

living all life at once, and for all time,

you offered your words on mountain and plain,

at sea and at table,

on the cross and after.

We treasure your words,

and listen for your knock at the door,

your voice calling us out of the dark.

Holy Spirit, indwelling life,

you intercede for us with sighs

when we have no words of our own.

You are the fire on the tongue,

and the tongues of fire,

the light in the dark,

the wisdom of the foolish,

the strength of the child

and the vigor of the old.

You subdue the violent,

overthrow the dominant,

and breathe new life into the least of us.

You make a way where there is no way,

and are God present with us.

Being, Love and Life,

we are thankful for all that is,

all that was, and all that yet may be.

Thank you for the redemption you offer us in Jesus Christ. Make us vessels of your grace and hope. Teach us the words we need to do your ministry of forgiveness. We now take a moment in silence to remember those who need the healing ministry of reconciliation.

As we remember the brokenness of your body and the blood you shed on our behalf, we remember the brokenness and need for redemption of those in this community and the world

We lift up the Morris family in their grief, and this family in our grief for losing our friend Tom.

We remember Bob at Quail Ridge, and his family's difficulties

Matt Story

All this we pray in the name in the name of JEsus who taught his disciples to pray, "Our Father...Amen."

Amen.

**Distribution of the Elements**

**Prayer after Communion**

God of grace, you have given us all things, and you have fed us with Christ’s presence through this sacrament. We commit ourselves to you now, and we give ourselves to the work of your kingdom, which is upon us in Jesus’ life. Thanks be to God! Amen.

**\*Closing Hymn**

**\*Benediction**