**First Presbyterian Church Tucumcari**

**Worship 11:00AM**

**Sunday, November 12, 2017, 32nd Sunday in Ordinary Time**

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

**Prayer of the Day**

**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 78:1-7 (please see bulletin)**

**Prayers of the People**

God of all the ages, you have been with us in every season. When we strayed from us, you were still there. When we returned to you, you were there for us.

We thank you for your eternal dedication to your church and your people. We thank you also for the countless reminders of service and sacrifice you show us through human beings who believed fervently in the word freedom, and who served so we may live lives of freedom in our country.

It is for this country we pray now. That in these tumultuous times we cling to your strength and unfailing love. Unite us to our fellow Christians. We pray you protect all those who seek to serve your mission.

We lift high the needs of all your people around the world, O God. For those who suffer from disease and disaster. For those who suffer under tyrannical regimes. For those who suffer from discrimination, prejudice and abuse.

For those who are living with the terror of the shootings one week ago in Texas, we pray for you to bring them comfort and purpose.

For the folks listed in our church bulletin today in need of prayer, we ask for your constant hope.

You are our constant and primary hope, O God. You have reached out to us since the beginning of the world, to tell the world of your love. You have walked with us all our lives. Thank you for this life you give us and for those who’ve made it possible for to live it. This and much more we pray in the name of Jesus the Christ, who taught us to pray,

“Our Father, who art in heaven…Amen.”

**Time Out for Teaching: Reformed Terminology “Confession”**

Three ways we might think of Confession:

1. Private confession of sin
2. Corporate confession of sin
3. Confession of faith – throughout all of our history, Christians have confessed their faith. It is an act of remembering what we believe and speaking it out loud. It’s a way of taking stock of our relationship to God and what it means to us in the present time. This is why the Presbyterian Book of Confessions has so many statements of faith. Because with every season or period of history, it is a beneficial exercise to stand up together and remember what we believe, saying it in a way that makes sense to us in this moment in time.

**1 Thessalonians 4:13-18**

13But we do not want you to be uninformed, brothers and sisters, about those who have died, so that you may not grieve as others do who have no hope. 14For since we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so, through Jesus, God will bring with him those who have died. 15For this we declare to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive, who are left until the coming of the Lord, will by no means precede those who have died. 16For the Lord himself, with a cry of command, with the archangel’s call and with the sound of God’s trumpet, will descend from heaven, and the dead in Christ will rise first. 17Then we who are alive, who are left, will be caught up in the clouds together with them to meet the Lord in the air; and so we will be with the Lord forever. 18Therefore encourage one another with these words.

**Matthew 25:1-13**

1“Then the kingdom of heaven will be like this. Ten bridesmaids took their lamps and went to meet the bridegroom. 2Five of them were foolish, and five were wise. 3When the foolish took their lamps, they took no oil with them; 4but the wise took flasks of oil with their lamps. 5As the bridegroom was delayed, all of them became drowsy and slept. 6But at midnight there was a shout, ‘Look! Here is the bridegroom! Come out to meet him.’ 7Then all those bridesmaids got up and trimmed their lamps. 8The foolish said to the wise, ‘Give us some of your oil, for our lamps are going out.’ 9But the wise replied, ‘No! there will not be enough for you and for us; you had better go to the dealers and buy some for yourselves.’ 10And while they went to buy it, the bridegroom came, and those who were ready went with him into the wedding banquet; and the door was shut. 11Later the other bridesmaids came also, saying, ‘Lord, lord, open to us.’ 12But he replied, ‘Truly I tell you, I do not know you.’ 13Keep awake therefore, for you know neither the day nor the hour.”

**Joshua 24:1-3a, 14-25**

1Then Joshua gathered all the tribes of Israel to Shechem, and summoned the elders, the heads, the judges, and the officers of Israel; and they presented themselves before God. 2And Joshua said to all the people, “Thus says the LORD, the God of Israel: Long ago your ancestors — Terah and his sons Abraham and Nahor — lived beyond the Euphrates and served other gods. 3aThen I took your father Abraham from beyond the River and led him through all the land of Canaan and made his offspring many.

14“Now therefore revere the LORD, and serve him in sincerity and in faithfulness; put away the gods that your ancestors served beyond the River and in Egypt, and serve the LORD. 15Now if you are unwilling to serve the LORD, choose this day whom you will serve, whether the gods your ancestors served in the region beyond the River or the gods of the Amorites in whose land you are living; but as for me and my household, we will serve the LORD.”

16Then the people answered, “Far be it from us that we should forsake the LORD to serve other gods; 17for it is the LORD our God who brought us and our ancestors up from the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery, and who did those great signs in our sight. He protected us along all the way that we went, and among all the peoples through whom we passed; 18and the LORD drove out before us all the peoples, the Amorites who lived in the land. Therefore we also will serve the LORD, for he is our God.”

19But Joshua said to the people, “You cannot serve the LORD, for he is a holy God. He is a jealous God; he will not forgive your transgressions or your sins. 20If you forsake the LORD and serve foreign gods, then he will turn and do you harm, and consume you, after having done you good.” 21And the people said to Joshua, “No, we will serve the LORD!” 22Then Joshua said to the people, “You are witnesses against yourselves that you have chosen the LORD, to serve him.” And they said, “We are witnesses.” 23He said, “Then put away the foreign gods that are among you, and incline your hearts to the LORD, the God of Israel.” 24The people said to Joshua, “The LORD our God we will serve, and him we will obey.” 25So Joshua made a covenant with the people that day, and made statutes and ordinances for them at Shechem.

**Sermon: When the Going Gets Tough**

When the going gets tough,

What do you do?

When a bad thing happens, on whom do you call?

When tragedy strikes, where is God?

Do you turn to old habits when the going gets tough?

When bad things happen, our faith gets put to the test. I remember sitting with someone at the bedside of their loved one who had just died, “I can’t imagine going through this without God!” Perhaps you’ve said it yourself.

All it takes a look back on hard times and realize that God was there for us all along. Remembering that without God, those times would have been so much harder. Can you say that, the next time the going gets tough?

Americans who fought during World War II had something very special with them to remind them that God was with them. After all, war is hell, but even there they could be reminded of God was with them, because each service man and woman was given a pocket-sized New Testament. I have my grandfather’s. Inside the front cover is a short inscription from President Roosevelt. I think of all the places it went – to a farmhouse where they hid in Northern France. To a concentration camp they liberated. To areas of England and Germany. And then home where he finished college, attended law school, got married, raised three daughters. What horrible things and wonderful things that little Bible saw! What comfort it must have brought to millions of soldiers. For it represented God incarnate while they traveled through valleys of death and the peaks of triumph.

Joshua calls the people of Israel to snap to attention after having seen the horrors of war. And now, they are preparing for peace time. They finally get to settle down and take stock of their lives. The going was tough, but they could to see God’s mighty hand at work along the way. And now, before they fully get to enjoy life in the Promised Land, Joshua presses them to make a conscious commitment - To rededicate themselves to the Lord, God of Israel. And, before Joshua accepts their affirmative answer, he reminds them that one cannot serve the Lord perfectly, and that God has a tendency to get jealous.

This might feel strange to hear. First, Joshua says, “serve the Lord” and then says, “you cannot serve the Lord…” What he is telling them is the same as what Jesus once said, “You cannot serve two masters.” If your heart is divided between two gods, it will eventually bring trouble. For serving two masters is not true service. God is jealous for Israel, which means that God is so much in love with them that He demands their whole heart, just as two people commit their whole lives to one other in marriage.

So Joshua reminds them of the many times God was faithful to them even when they were not faithful to God. God provided for them whenever the going was tough. God was with them as they escaped Egypt, as they traveled forty years in the wilderness, entered the Promised Land. And now, it’s time to make a choice – is it going to be Him or those foreign idols they still carry around?

It’s important when we have come through hellish times to also take stock of our lives. To look back at the ways God helped us find a way through them. In these days, when we have plenty of distractions, it is tempting to just avoid the past and try to forget about it. It’s less painful in the moment to shop till we drop, make our favorite comfort foods, immerse ourselves in football, beer or Netflix. We don’t want to remember those hard times. In these times of self-gratification, it is common to say, “I deserve this” or it’s “me-time now.” Thank God we live in a country where we can enjoy such freedoms. But God is best served when we also remember our painful past and that God cared for us along the way when the going was tough. Our remembrance of God’s presence with us can keep our faith strengthened for the future and spirits tempered for the present.

After all, we should be spiritually prepared for the next time the going gets tough, by recalling God’s passion for us. And decisively, consciously, choose to serve God. Like the bridesmaids who are prepared with their lights and are ready to meet the bridegroom, we shall be better prepared for anything, when we have firmly chosen to give our lives in service to the living God. So, remember to keep looking out for God at work in your life. He wants your whole heart. Amen.