**First Presbyterian Church Tucumcari**

**Worship 11:00AM**

**Sunday, April 7, 2019, 5th Sunday in Lent**

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

**Prayer of the Day**

God of Creation,
all of the world proclaims your praise,
from the highest heavens to the deepest recesses of the sea.
Make our voices true and faithful
as we join the voices of all of creation to sing your praise. **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.**

**Isaiah 43:16-21 (please see bulletin)**

**Time Out for Teaching: Hill Country Theology**

Just this week, the well-known Kathie Lee Gifford retired from her work at NBC on the Today Show. All this last week as a tribute to her, they had surprise guests and many tearful goodbyes. As part of this celebration, there was a special performance of a song “The God who Sees,” which she herself produced and wrote. As the song was performed on camera, behind her was a photograph of red craggy dry cliffs and hill country that was so familiar to so many of us.

It looked a lot like the colorful, layered cliffs of New Mexico. It also reminded me an awful lot of the hill country to the west of Austin, Texas.

But… of course it wasn’t either of those places. It was somewhere in Israel.

So, I think that our living out here in Tucumcari, surrounded by mesas, wondering when we will get our next drop of rain…gives us a very interesting perspective that is not necessarily like other places. We know about the desert in the wilderness, how bad it can get when we don’t have rain. We know what it means for Isaiah the prophet to say, “I am about to do a new thing; now it springs forth, do you not perceive it? I will make a way in the wilderness and rivers in the desert.”

So, there are times when we might approach the Bible as if it is a foreign book about distant places and ancient people. When we start feeling like that, a good way to get back into it is to remember these people had the same needs as we do. Our basic needs for security, protection and precious water are the same as theirs, we just have different ways of talking about them. God remains the constant that connects us, from Hill Country to Mesalands to the Jordan River Valley.

When we hear these stories, we mustn’t forget just the depth of need in us to which God is speaking.

**Prayer for Illumination**

**Psalm 126**

1When the LORD restored the fortunes of Zion,

we were like those who dream.

2Then our mouth was filled with laughter,

and our tongue with shouts of joy;

then it was said among the nations,

"The LORD has done great things for them."

3The LORD has done great things for us,

and we rejoiced.

4Restore our fortunes, O LORD,

like the watercourses in the Negeb.

5May those who sow in tears

reap with shouts of joy.

6Those who go out weeping,

bearing the seed for sowing,

shall come home with shouts of joy,

carrying their sheaves.

**Gospel John 12:1-8**

1Six days before the Passover Jesus came to Bethany, the home of Lazarus, whom he had raised from the dead. 2There they gave a dinner for him. Martha served, and Lazarus was one of those at the table with him. 3Mary took a pound of costly perfume made of pure nard, anointed Jesus' feet, and wiped them with her hair. The house was filled with the fragrance of the perfume. 4But Judas Iscariot, one of his disciples (the one who was about to betray him), said, 5"Why was this perfume not sold for three hundred denarii and the money given to the poor?" 6(He said this not because he cared about the poor, but because he was a thief; he kept the common purse and used to steal what was put into it.) 7Jesus said, "Leave her alone. She bought it so that she might keep it for the day of my burial. 8You always have the poor with you, but you do not always have me."

**Philippians 3:4b-14**

4bIf anyone else has reason to be confident in the flesh, I have more: 5circumcised on the eighth day, a member of the people of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew born of Hebrews; as to the law, a Pharisee; 6as to zeal, a persecutor of the church; as to righteousness under the law, blameless.

7Yet whatever gains I had, these I have come to regard as loss because of Christ. 8More than that, I regard everything as loss because of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have suffered the loss of all things, and I regard them as rubbish, in order that I may gain Christ 9and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but one that comes through faith in Christ, the righteousness from God based on faith. 10I want to know Christ and the power of his resurrection and the sharing of his sufferings by becoming like him in his death, 11if somehow I may attain the resurrection from the dead.

12Not that I have already obtained this or have already reached the goal; but I press on to make it my own, because Christ Jesus has made me his own. 13Beloved, I do not consider that I have made it my own; but this one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead, 14I press on toward the goal for the prize of the heavenly call of God in Christ Jesus.

**Sermon: Watch for Water**

“I’ve got a river of life flowing out of me. Makes the lame to walk and the blind to see. Opens prison doors and sets the captives free. I’ve got a river of life flowing out of me.

Spring up oh well, within my soul. Spring up oh well, and make me whole

Spring up oh well, and give to me life abundantly.“

Along 104, on the way to Clovis, the wind turbines are going up faster than you can spit.

If you haven’t been to Clovis in a while, you will be amazed next time to see how many turbines are out there now between Grady and Broadview! And as one drives through gazing at the new forest of turbines, these technological marvels promising renewable energy, there is another reminder of an important resource – water. In several places along that stretch of highway are signs which say, “Watch for Water.”

I find it an amusing sign. Almost as amusing and mysterious as the signs you see in Tijeras Canyon on the way to Albuquerque which remind you that “Gusty Winds May Exist.” They may exist, they remind us to look around and be aware that they might pop up. But just like “Watch for Water,” it’s a funny thing to read when there is actually no water around!

After all, you don’t have to live in Tucumcari for long before you find yourself watching for water.

I like water a lot, after all. It’s good for me, for my garden, my pets, and I’m pretty sure all of you feel the same way. I watch for water. I rejoice anytime I see clouds with potential for rain. I get kind of excited when I notice droplets begin to hit the windshield of the car. For me, at least living in this part of the country, when there’s a good rain fall, there is a celebration of life. Precious moisture miraculously greens up our world within just about a day – the desert grasses and pinion look washed clean and literally look greener. It is truly a joy to see the effects of a good rainstorm! I have also noticed that after we have good rain, coming to church is a joy. It’s a palpable change in mood, throughout the congregation. You can tell by the mood of the crowd that we’ve had a good rain.

No wonder so many of our Biblical texts speak of God as a river of life. No wonder the promise of “enough water” for everyone and everything is a picture of God’s fulfillment for Israel and for us. I can think of times when I have forgotten to look for God’s fulfillment, God’s refreshing and mighty rainstorms. Isaiah the prophet tells us “I am doing a new thing, do you not perceive it? I will make a way in the wilderness and rivers in the desert…the wild animals shall honor me, for I give water in the wilderness…,” telling us that God deserves all honor and praise, even from the wild jackals, because they have received the water they need.

In your wilderness of life, what is the water you need? What is the elixir that puts you into that greener, fresher mood? If you were the grasses in God’s desert, what do you need to wash over you to give you new life?

If we’re not watching for water, then we might just be missing the arrival of God’s refreshment. For God will show up. Perhaps we forget how it feels, especially if we have recently been traveling a very long and dry stretch of desert. But the signs along the way are telling us to Watch for Water, and celebrate every little gift God surprises us with.

Watch for water, even if it’s just a little spring. Like our fellow desert creatures who celebrate the unexpected moisture, we too receive these gifts of the Holy Spirit who brings comfort in unexpected moments. No matter how bleak your life might feel, be prepared for God’s Comforter and Renewer of Life.

 Paul surprises us with his story for the Philippians today. He begins with the usual sort of thing, his highly decorated career as a good Jew, a Pharisee, a pedigree from the Tribe of Benjamin, all of this so impressive and seemingly exciting. He then surprises us with the statement, “everything that I have come to gain I consider a loss compared to the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus.” And then, he says that he has not yet attained his goal of knowing Christ Jesus and the resurrection – but he shall press on to the goal. He makes it sound like it will be a goal for the rest of his life – to know of the power of the resurrection of Jesus Christ, straining forward to always look out for that power of God. I am sure that this desire to see gave Paul purpose and hope, especially during bleak times.

 So, friends, on this last Sunday in Lent (next week is Palm Sunday), during your walks in the desert, watch for water. Prepare to see God do a new and surprising thing in you. And for those times your life is a desert, don’t ever let go of the hope that God is our well of strength, surpassing the value of all other things. Thanks be to God. Amen.

**Service of Holy Communion**

**Invitation to the Table**

Friends, this is the joyful feast of the people of God! They will come from east and west, and from north and south, and sit at table in the kingdom of God.

According to Luke, when our risen Lord was at table with his disciples, he took the bread, and blessed and broke it, and gave it to them. Then their eyes were opened and they recognized him.

This is not a Presbyterian Table. It is the Lord’s table. Our Savior invites those who trust him to share the feast which he has prepared.

**Great Prayer of Thanksgiving**

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

Blessed are you, O Lord our God, Ruler of the universe,
for you have provided for your people.
You have turned manna in the wilderness into the bread of life,
You have turned water from a rock into a spring of everlasting life,
You have turned law into love.
You have called us to this table, to know you in the breaking of bread and the sharing of the cup.
Here is grace, here is promise, here is love, here we see you face to face.

You, Lord, are the one who makes life bloom in the desert.
We give you thanks for your creating spirit, creating still,
and for the hope of your promise.
Where people still wait for fulfillment of your promise, give a glimpse of your glory.
Where people have lost hope, breathe your peace.
Where we have turned our eyes away,
choosing instead only to see what we think we already know
call us once again back to your way and your truth.
May your justice spring up in the desert like a river,
your love grow as tall as the trees,
until your whole creation thrives in your kingdom.

We come today bearing the hurts of the world,
seeking your forgiveness,
seeking your healing,
seeking to know your presence with us as we walk this journey.
Walk with us, Lord, and speak.
Walk with us, and show us your transforming grace at work in places we have left behind,
in people we have dismissed, in action and word together.
Walk with us, and then sit down at table
and open our eyes in the breaking of bread.

We pray now, O God,
that you would pour out your spirit again on us
and on these gifts of bread and wine,
that they might be for us the rich feast of life
and that we might be transformed once again into your people,
joined with your body all around the world,
fed with the bread of grace
and the wine of your everlasting love.
As we are fed and nourished,
send us forth as people of grace–
people who answer the call to build
your kingdom on this earth.

**The Lord’s Prayer**

We pray all these things in the name of Christ, who taught us to pray together…

**Breaking of Bread**

Because there is one loaf, we, many as we are, are one body; for it is one loaf of which we all partake.

When we break the bread, is it not a sharing in the body of Christ?

When we give thanks over the cup, is it not a sharing in the blood of Christ?

**Distribution of the Elements**

**Prayer after Communion**

Gracious God, may we who have received this sacrament live in the unity of your Holy Spirit, that we may show forth your gifts to all the world. We ask this in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen

**Announcements:**

**Green Chile Gals** meet *tomorrow* in Fellowship Hall! We gather there at 5:45PM. Please bring a dish to share.

**Next Sunday is Palm Sunday!**