**First Presbyterian Church Tucumcari**

**Worship 11:00AM**

**Sunday, August 11, 2019, Nineteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time**

**RH 265 Sing Them Over Again to Me June Greenfield, Accompanist**

**RH 307 O Jesus, I Have Promised**

**BH 411 Arise, Your Light is Come!**

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

**Prayer of the Day**

God of life,

We praise you!

Thank you for your good creation,

And for counting us among your people.

Refresh our hearts today for the stories of your saints

Strengthen us for discipleship in this hour

And send us to serve you in our daily lives.

This we pray in the name of your son our Lord, Jesus Christ.

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 50:1-8, 22-23 (please see bulletin)**

**Time Out For Teaching: The Sacrifice of Thanksgiving**

Our two Old Testament readings, the Psalm and the Isaiah reading you’re about to hear, each of them address something similar. They address the fact that Israel makes sacrifices in the Temple to God, as part of their worship. They brought a variety of types of sacrifices, for different purposes. Sometimes it was animal sacrifice, sometimes it was a cereal offering. Not all were burnt, although some were. The Bible lists out different types of sacrifices/offerings for different purposes, such as for God’s atonement, or in celebration of the first fruits of the harvest.

The Psalm talks about how important it is that Israel’s greatest offering should be thanksgiving.

Isaiah addresses the sacrifice issue in a different way. God speaks through Isaiah to Israel. It declares to Israel that God is weary of all the festivals, the blood of animals, incense, and all the trappings of their worship. God is weary of them because God can see right through them that they are not genuine in feeling. God tells them, “I cannot endure solemn assemblies with iniquity,” which is a way of saying that they are in a state of sin.

We have read other places in Scripture where God tells us that we have to consider our own status before participating in certain types of worship. For instance, remember the teaching of Jesus, who taught that when you go to present your offering and you do so without first making amends with someone. If you need to go reconcile with your sister or brother, says Jesus, you must first go to him or her before you present your offering.

Nowadays, you will notice that we have a prayer of confession early on in the worship service. We don’t really hear the Scriptures read, nor do we have a sermon, nor holy communion nor baptisms until we have prayed a prayer of confession. In the Presbyterian Book of Confessions, part 1 of our constitution, we have a statement which essentially boils down to the importance of getting our hearts right before God before we are ready to receive anything else.

From your own experience, have you ever thought of why this matters?

**Prayers of the People**

O Lord, we lift up our souls to you.
We trust in you, because you are always faithful to your covenant.
You never leave your people alone.

So we pray for the people on our hearts who are in need.
We pray for those who are sick,
for those who suffer or struggle,
and especially for those who are lonely or hopeless.
We pray for those we have lifted up by name…

We also pray for a successful booth at the county fair, that your message of renewing grace be made evident to all who visit, and that it be good for this church.
O Lord, we put our hope in you.

Teach us to serve you, loving God,
and make us faithful to your call.
Open our hearts and minds to know your truth,
and shape our actions to live into your covenant.
Hold us gently, in your eternal mercy.
Set us free from sin and look at us only with your love.

We dedicate our efforts, skills, and interests to your work,
in this congregation and everywhere we go.
Let our lives show your good news to the world, O Lord.
Let us feed, serve, and lift up your people in need.
Bind us to each other as your beloved people,
called together in Jesus’ name.
We pray together as he taught us, saying:
*The Lord’s Prayer*

**Prayer for Illumination**

**Isaiah 1:1, 10-20**

1The vision of Isaiah son of Amoz, which he saw concerning Judah and Jerusalem in the days of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah, kings of Judah.

10Hear the word of the LORD, you rulers of Sodom! Listen to the teaching of our God, you people of Gomorrah! 11What to me is the multitude of your sacrifices? says the LORD; I have had enough of burnt offerings of rams and the fat of fed beasts; I do not delight in the blood of bulls, or of lambs, or of goats. 12When you come to appear before me, who asked this from your hand? Trample my courts no more; 13bringing offerings is futile; incense is an abomination to me. New moon and sabbath and calling of convocation-I cannot endure solemn assemblies with iniquity. 14Your new moons and your appointed festivals my soul hates; they have become a burden to me, I am weary of bearing them. 15When you stretch out your hands, I will hide my eyes from you; even though you make many prayers, I will not listen; your hands are full of blood. 16Wash yourselves; make yourselves clean; remove the evil of your doings from before my eyes; cease to do evil, 17learn to do good; seek justice, rescue the oppressed, defend the orphan, plead for the widow.

18Come now, let us argue it out, says the LORD: though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be like snow; though they are red like crimson, they shall become like wool. 19If you are willing and obedient, you shall eat the good of the land; 20but if you refuse and rebel, you shall be devoured by the sword; for the mouth of the LORD has spoken.

**Gospel Luke 12:32-40**

32"Do not be afraid, little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom. 33Sell your possessions, and give alms. Make purses for yourselves that do not wear out, an unfailing treasure in heaven, where no thief comes near and no moth destroys. 34For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

35"Be dressed for action and have your lamps lit; 36be like those who are waiting for their master to return from the wedding banquet, so that they may open the door for him as soon as he comes and knocks. 37Blessed are those slaves whom the master finds alert when he comes; truly I tell you, he will fasten his belt and have them sit down to eat, and he will come and serve them. 38If he comes during the middle of the night, or near dawn, and finds them so, blessed are those slaves.

39"But know this: if the owner of the house had known at what hour the thief was coming, he would not have let his house be broken into. 40You also must be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an unexpected hour."

**Hebrews 11:1-3, 8-16**

1Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen. 2Indeed, by faith our ancestors received approval. 3By faith we understand that the worlds were prepared by the word of God, so that what is seen was made from things that are not visible.

8By faith Abraham obeyed when he was called to set out for a place that he was to receive as an inheritance; and he set out, not knowing where he was going. 9By faith he stayed for a time in the land he had been promised, as in a foreign land, living in tents, as did Isaac and Jacob, who were heirs with him of the same promise. 10For he looked forward to the city that has foundations, whose architect and builder is God. 11By faith he received power of procreation, even though he was too old-and Sarah herself was barren-because he considered him faithful who had promised. 12Therefore from one person, and this one as good as dead, descendants were born, "as many as the stars of heaven and as the innumerable grains of sand by the seashore."

13All of these died in faith without having received the promises, but from a distance they saw and greeted them. They confessed that they were strangers and foreigners on the earth, 14for people who speak in this way make it clear that they are seeking a homeland. 15If they had been thinking of the land that they had left behind, they would have had opportunity to return. 16But as it is, they desire a better country, that is, a heavenly one. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God; indeed, he has prepared a city for them.

**Sermon: Presbyopia**

 Do you know what “presbyopia” is? It is not a Presbyterian term. It is the technical term for farsightedness. People usually develop presbyopia as they grow older, which is why I have been wearing bifocals for the last 3 years! Presbyopia is when middle aged and older people lose the ability to focus so well on objects close to us, such as reading text messages or small print. Do you have presbyopia?

 I am struck by how odd it is now to have to hold something farther away from me in order to read it!

 Our vision is important in so very many ways. It helps to create our reality. Having a friendship with someone who is blind you really discover that. I was friends with a couple in Austin from my church there. They lived several miles away from our church, as the crow flies. Both of them were completely blind. They each had their own seeing eye dogs. They primarily used the city bus around Austin to church, to restaurants and more. He was an elder in our church. I will always be amazed at all they did. Not only that, I was amazed at Audley’s extraordinary memory, his immense body of knowledge, for he read voraciously – in Braille, and books on tape. And, he had a wisdom beyond his years.

 Compared to him, I always believed he was an “old soul,” one of those people who had a vision much greater and wiser, one more entrenched in Scripture, and able to see beyond the moment to some greater goal which comes only to those who wait. Audley was one who approached all things with a wise sense of humor too.

 Today’s reading from the Letter to the Hebrews sums up a special type of vision. “Faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen.” Faith, in other words, is exactly that. It’s living with conviction for what we cannot see. But Hebrews goes on to remind us that it was the vision of the saints, some whose names we remember but many whose names we don’t, who have run this race of faith and because of whom we worship in a church of Jesus Christ today. We have many ways of describing that vision. One way was in the letter to the Romans, where we read that we should be “in the world but not of the world…” It’s an assurance that though we live here, we are a part of something meant to redeem the world, and sees bigger than we imagine. Similarly, where today’s Psalm speaks of the old ways of making sacrifices for God’s favor, but it says to us our greatest gift to God, one that finds God’s greatest favor, is the gift of a grateful heart. Faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen.

 Now, while it’s good to have that long-distance vision, let’s not forget that it’s okay also to be short-sighted sometimes. Sometimes we have to name what we see in front of us. There is a call for us to also be practical, especially as stewards of God’s gifts. But let our pragmatism be guided by the bigger vision, lest our pragmatic ways stray from our assurance of things unseen. Let not our faith become weakened and atrophied by too much practicality. If fear is our model for decisionmaking, our ways can become stale.

 Hebrews charges its readers to lift their eyes, look higher and farther, for we are all talking about the same God of all. Hebrews reminds us of Abraham, who trusted God through the years, leading Abraham through. Summing up the lives of all the saints, it says, “All of these died in faith without having received the promises, but from a distance they saw and greeted them. They confessed that they were strangers and foreigners on the earth, for people who speak in this way make it clear that they are seeking a homeland. If they had been thinking of the land that they had left behind, they would have had opportunity to return.  But as it is, they desire a better country, that is, a heavenly one.” The desire and belief in a better world, a Kingdom of God, was the vision of these people, and though they had not yet seen it, they strove for it.

 At 12:52:00 UTC on July 20, Buzz Aldrin and Neil Armstrong entered Eagle and began preparations to land on the moon. Michael Collins, that third astronaut, remained alone aboard Columbia. I have wondered about Collins, the astronaut who didn’t land on the moon, but who had to remain in the capsule. He has been interviewed and told this story so many times. He said for an entire day he flew solo around the moon, but he never felt lonely. He felt solitude.

 He wrote in his autobiography, "this venture has been structured for three men, and I consider my third to be as necessary as either of the other two". During the 48 minutes of each orbit he was out of radio contact with Earth; the feeling he reported was not loneliness, but rather "awareness, anticipation, satisfaction, confidence, almost exultation".

 Michael Collins had quite a different perspective on distance vision, didn’t he? He did not get to what we would have considered “the ultimate goal,” of landing on the moon. But he had a longer perspective. Maybe knowing that we are a part of this big vision, we can feel more awareness, anticipation, satisfaction, confidence, even maybe exultation. Our part of God’s mission is not second or third in importance compared to the work of the saints before us either. Ours now is just as important, just as necessary as those others. Even better, we all shall get to see that culmination of God’s plan, not just in part, but clearly one day. Thanks be to God. Amen.

**Announcements:**