**First Presbyterian Church Tucumcari**

**Worship 11:00AM**

**Sunday, August 25, 2019, Twenty-First Sunday in Ordinary Time**

**RH 6 Heaven and Earth, and Sea and Air Marjorie McKenzie, Accompanist**

**RH 287 Lord, Speak to Me, that I May Speak**

**RH 271 Rock of Ages, Cleft for Me**

**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**

The one who knit us together in our mothers’ wombs  
searches us and knows our hearts.  
**There is no hiding our sin from our Creator,**  
**but also no need to hide.**  
For the Lord is gracious and merciful,  
slow to anger and full of love.  
**Trusting in the one who makes us whole,**  
**let us offer our whole selves to God.**

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

**Assurance of Pardon**

Our salvation comes from Jesus Christ and Jesus Christ alone.  
I announce to you this day, our sins are forgiven.

Friends, Believe the Good News of Jesus Christ.

**In Jesus Christ we are forgiven!**

The Lord be with you.

**And also with you.**

**Psalm 71:1-6 (please see bulletin)**

**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…  
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*

**Time Out For Teaching: Who was Jeremiah?**

Jeremiah was one of the major prophets of the Old Testament. Today we will be hearing the “call story” of Jeremiah. A Call Story is a type of story telling us how God called a person. Our calling is our “vocation,” that is, a way God wants us to serve God’s will.

Jeremiah was called by God to be a prophet. A little like Isaiah’s call story, when Isaiah says “O Lord, I am of unclean lips,” meaning “I am not worthy,” here we also have a moment when God argues it out with Jeremiah. Jeremiah’s protest is, “Lord, Truly I don’t not know how to speak for I am only a boy.”

Jeremiah is about the fall of Judah to the Babylonians. Every chapter (52 of them) we are haunted by the siege. It was a national catastrophe. Babylon had already had control over Jerusalem but in 597 BC, Judah revolted against Babylon and this caused an invasion and deportation of King Jehoiachin and other leaders. Babylon installed a puppet King, Zedekiah, but Judah revolted again, and so Babylon breached the walls of Jerusalem and destroyed the Temple.

Some Biblical scholars call Jeremiah “the weeping prophet,” for during his life as a prophet, he wept often for Judah’s destruction. However, when you read the book, you find a ribbon of hope woven through out it. And imagery that we can all still understand today.

Most famous to me in my mind are two favorites:

Jeremiah 18, when God tells Jeremiah that Israel is like clay in the hand of a potter. It can be built up and it can be smashed and then it can be rebuilt again.

Jeremiah 31: “This is the covenant I will make with the people of Israel  
    after that time,” declares the Lord.  
“I will put my law in their minds  
    and write it on their hearts.  
I will be their God,  
    and they will be my people.”

**Prayer for Illumination**

**Jeremiah 1:4-10**

4Now the word of the LORD came to me saying, 5"Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, and before you were born I consecrated you; I appointed you a prophet to the nations." 6Then I said, "Ah, Lord GOD! Truly I do not know how to speak, for I am only a boy." 7But the LORD said to me, "Do not say, 'I am only a boy'; for you shall go to all to whom I send you, and you shall speak whatever I command you, 8Do not be afraid of them, for I am with you to deliver you, says the LORD." 9Then the LORD put out his hand and touched my mouth; and the LORD said to me, "Now I have put my words in your mouth. 10See, today I appoint you over nations and over kingdoms, to pluck up and to pull down, to destroy and to overthrow, to build and to plant."

**Luke 13:10-17**

10Now he was teaching in one of the synagogues on the sabbath. 11And just then there appeared a woman with a spirit that had crippled her for eighteen years. She was bent over and was quite unable to stand up straight. 12When Jesus saw her, he called her over and said, "Woman, you are set free from your ailment." 13When he laid his hands on her, immediately she stood up straight and began praising God. 14But the leader of the synagogue, indignant because Jesus had cured on the sabbath, kept saying to the crowd, "There are six days on which work ought to be done; come on those days and be cured, and not on the sabbath day." 15But the Lord answered him and said, "You hypocrites! Does not each of you on the sabbath untie his ox or his donkey from the manger, and lead it away to give it water? 16And ought not this woman, a daughter of Abraham whom Satan bound for eighteen long years, be set free from this bondage on the sabbath day?" 17When he said this, all his opponents were put to shame; and the entire crowd was rejoicing at all the wonderful things that he was doing.

**Sermon:**

You are children of Abraham, otherwise known as “children of the covenant.” That automatically gives you a very special status because it means God both loves you and disciplines you. Belonging to something special like that means we can experience freedom in forgiveness, because we belong to God. It also means we are to stand up and praise God, and walk in His way. So, when we answer the call to walk in His way, it is both easy and hard. It takes discipline.

Jesus calls this woman a “daughter of Abraham.” This woman who had been suffering from some sort of ailment for 18 years. We don’t know what this ailment was. Maybe it is convenient that we don’t know. All we know is something happened to her which had crippled her, so that she was permanently bent over. Looking into her eyes, Jesus probably knew what had befallen her. It could have been any possible cause: a back condition, a stroke, a devastating accident, or maybe it was an emotionally crippling thing like the loss of a child. His heart probably broke for her and her suffering. And in His compassion, he stopped his teaching, understood her need and set her free.

Now, there are a couple of things we might wonder about. First, the ruler told her she should go away and come back tomorrow. It was the Sabbath after all, and healing was considered work. You don’t work on the Sabbath, according to the 10 Commandments. The ruler probably sounds rather callous to us, telling her to go away. But the logic is there. Why do this now when it is A- the Sabbath, and B- it’s not an emergency. The ruler just wanted to make sure things were according to God’s Law. But if everyone had gone along with the ruler, they would have missed the true teaching about God’s compassion and power. They would have missed seeing her healing miracle. Now the ruler of the synagogue is the student, before the eyes of the other students.

The other thing we might wonder about was whether Jesus even broke the Law of the Sabbath. Do you think He did? If healing someone is considered work, then it is breaking the Sabbath Law. But for Jesus, God in the flesh, I don’t think it was work. It would be hard work for us mere mortals to heal her, but not for God. If we confess that nothing is difficult for God, then healing this woman, would have pure joy. And it culminated in her utter praise of God.

No, I am pretty sure Jesus was pleased, to help her. Plus, why make her suffer one more day like that? She has suffered long enough. She had been a prisoner in her own body.

What does this tell us about God? It tells us that the Sabbath is for good, for rest and freedom, not for allowing further suffering. It tells us that Jesus is Lord of the Sabbath, the fulfillment of the Law and the Prophets, not a slave to the Sabbath. And it is God’s pleasure, not hard work, to free us from what cripples us. Children of Abraham, God’s will for you is freedom, and to show the world what freedom in faith looks like.

So, what does God-given freedom look like to you? If you, daughters and sons of Abraham, are presently imprisoned, what freedom will compel you to stand up and start praising God? Sometimes when we receive a gift, we are still imprisoned because we don’t realize it is a true gift. We become free when we understand that we have been freed for a purpose. Freed in order to show what freedom looks like. I also have met people who have experienced such enormous suffering in life, who may presently have some ailment that we all would think is terrible. And yet some of these people show us what freedom looks like.

Over at Eastern New Mexico University, Presbyterians are starting over again. On the campus of ENMU there is a house for students who can come, spend time together, worship and have dinner. For over a year, since their campus leader left, the house stood quiet and empty. No worship, no meals, no fellowship inside those walls. Our sister church in Portales, closest to campus, no longer had a minister of their own, as he moved to a new position elsewhere. The church there felt crippled for lack of ministers. In my conversations with the elders in Portales, they were sad and worried because they could forfeit the campus house if nothing happened with it. They had the will and the faith but were a bit afraid at the prospect of managing a campus ministry. They knew that if they didn’t start using it, they could lose the building. So we talked about it at every Presbytery meeting last year. No one blamed anyone else for the past. We decided, “If we don’t try, then we’ll never succeed.” Now, about 8 months in, they are holding monthly worship services and meals, welcoming any student in, usually around 10 of them. A couple of these students have also taken on leadership roles.

Friends, this is just one of many ways to show our freedom in Christ. Our freedom has a reason. So that we are not the only ones praising God, but others shall too. Why wait one more day? Amen.

**Announcements:**