**First Presbyterian Church Tucumcari**

**Worship 11:00AM**

**Sunday, August 26, 2018, 21st Sunday in Ordinary Time**

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

**Prayer of the Day**

How lovely is your dwelling place, O God!

Here, may we drink from your fountain of grace

Renew us and refresh us for the week ahead.

Keep us and guide us with new visions of faith

Feed us with your Word that is the Bread of Life.

As we go out and come into your dwelling place again,

We sing your name in our words and our work throughout this week.

In the name of the one who is our dwelling place, Jesus the Messiah.

Amen.

**Call to Confession**

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

**Assurance of Pardon**

Let yourself live and believe this good news:  
**In Jesus Christ we are forgiven!**

The Lord be with you.

**And also with you.**

**Psalm 84:1-12 (please see bulletin)**

**Prayers of the People**

To you, O Lord, we call out for help,

for you are our rock and our fortress.

Listen to the prayers we raise before you today.

Rescue those who are under the power of injustice and cruelty,

and cleanse our hearts of the desires that do violence against your people.

O God our protector: **Be our rock of refuge.**

Protect and nurture the young,

who are just learning the promise of your constant presence;

keep them safe and cover them with your gracious love.

O God our protector: **Be our rock of refuge.**

Let your mercy surround those who are old,

especially those whose health or mind or family fail them;

let your strength lift them up, and let your praises be on their lips.

O God our protector: **Be our rock of refuge.**

Stand with all who seek to serve you faithfully.

Give them steadfast hope by the power of your Holy Spirit,

and let them celebrate the righteous acts you do through them day after day.

O God our protector: **Be our rock of refuge.**

Reveal yourself in family and community gatherings this week,

that as loved ones gather together for Thanksgiving,

each generation may tell another about the wonders of your love.

Bless and watch over all who travel.

O God our protector: **Be our rock of refuge.**

Revive and comfort those who face trouble and calamity among us,

and let your healing presence be with all who are ill (especially \_\_\_).

Bring your people up from the depths, to your honor.

O God our protector: **Be our rock of refuge.**

Show your faithfulness to those who face death or walk in the shadow of grief (especially \_\_\_).

Strengthen your people to sing your praises even in the darkness,

and watch over the souls of all who rest in you.

O God our protector: **Be our rock of refuge.**

God our rock, we call to you now and always,

trusting in the name of Jesus the Christ,

who taught us to pray as we say together:

**Time out for Teaching: The Pursuit of Happiness**

**Prayer for Illumination**

**1 Kings 8:(1, 6, 10-11) 22-30, 41-43**

1Then Solomon assembled the elders of Israel and all the heads of the tribes, the leaders of the ancestral houses of the Israelites, before King Solomon in Jerusalem, to bring up the ark of the covenant of the LORD out of the city of David, which is Zion.

6Then the priests brought the ark of the covenant of the LORD to its place, in the inner sanctuary of the house, in the most holy place, underneath the wings of the cherubim.

10And when the priests came out of the holy place, a cloud filled the house of the LORD, 11so that the priests could not stand to minister because of the cloud; for the glory of the LORD filled the house of the LORD.

22Then Solomon stood before the altar of the LORD in the presence of all the assembly of Israel, and spread out his hands to heaven. 23He said, "O LORD, God of Israel, there is no God like you in heaven above or on earth beneath, keeping covenant and steadfast love for your servants who walk before you with all their heart, 24the covenant that you kept for your servant my father David as you declared to him; you promised with your mouth and have this day fulfilled with your hand. 25Therefore, O LORD, God of Israel, keep for your servant my father David that which you promised him, saying, 'There shall never fail you a successor before me to sit on the throne of Israel, if only your children look to their way, to walk before me as you have walked before me.' 26Therefore, O God of Israel, let your word be confirmed, which you promised to your servant my father David.

27"But will God indeed dwell on the earth? Even heaven and the highest heaven cannot contain you, much less this house that I have built! 28Regard your servant's prayer and his plea, O LORD my God, heeding the cry and the prayer that your servant prays to you today; 29that your eyes may be open night and day toward this house, the place of which you said, 'My name shall be there,' that you may heed the prayer that your servant prays toward this place. 30Hear the plea of your servant and of your people Israel when they pray toward this place; O hear in heaven your dwelling place; heed and forgive."

41"Likewise when a foreigner, who is not of your people Israel, comes from a distant land because of your name 42 — for they shall hear of your great name, your mighty hand, and your outstretched arm — when a foreigner comes and prays toward this house, 43then hear in heaven your dwelling place, and do according to all that the foreigner calls to you, so that all the peoples of the earth may know your name and fear you, as do your people Israel, and so that they may know that your name has been invoked on this house that I have built."

**John 6:56-69**

56"Those who eat my flesh and drink my blood abide in me, and I in them. 57Just as the living Father sent me, and I live because of the Father, so whoever eats me will live because of me. 58This is the bread that came down from heaven, not like that which your ancestors ate, and they died. But the one who eats this bread will live forever." 59He said these things while he was teaching in the synagogue at Capernaum.

60When many of his disciples heard it, they said, "This teaching is difficult; who can accept it?" 61But Jesus, being aware that his disciples were complaining about it, said to them, "Does this offend you? 62Then what if you were to see the Son of Man ascending to where he was before? 63It is the spirit that gives life; the flesh is useless. The words that I have spoken to you are spirit and life. 64But among you there are some who do not believe." For Jesus knew from the first who were the ones that did not believe, and who was the one that would betray him. 65And he said, "For this reason I have told you that no one can come to me unless it is granted by the Father."

66Because of this many of his disciples turned back and no longer went about with him. 67So Jesus asked the twelve, "Do you also wish to go away?" 68Simon Peter answered him, "Lord, to whom can we go? You have the words of eternal life. 69We have come to believe and know that you are the Holy One of God."

**Ephesians 6:10-20**

10Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his power. 11Put on the whole armor of God, so that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. 12For our struggle is not against enemies of blood and flesh, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers of this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places. 13Therefore take up the whole armor of God, so that you may be able to withstand on that evil day, and having done everything, to stand firm. 14Stand therefore, and fasten the belt of truth around your waist, and put on the breastplate of righteousness. 15As shoes for your feet put on whatever will make you ready to proclaim the gospel of peace. 16With all of these, take the shield of faith, with which you will be able to quench all the flaming arrows of the evil one. 17Take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.

18Pray in the Spirit at all times in every prayer and supplication. To that end keep alert and always persevere in supplication for all the saints. 19Pray also for me, so that when I speak, a message may be given to me to make known with boldness the mystery of the gospel, 20for which I am an ambassador in chains. Pray that I may declare it boldly, as I must speak.

**Sermon: Body Armor**

Do you believe that there are cosmic and spiritual forces of a “present” darkness?

I didn’t use to believe such things exist. I used a rational mind to think that only we humans – flesh and blood – could care evil in this world and there was no other explanation. I believed primarily that there was a “rational” explanation for evil.

But this is not what the letter of Ephesians really talks about. It says the real struggle is not against human enemies. It says that the real struggle is actually a cosmic one, a “present darkness.” Then, Ephesians lists out different parts of body armor, and what they represent in faith, to cover oneself from all angles. The belt of truth to protect one’s stomach, a pretty vulnerable spot. The breastplate of righteousness, obviously to cover the heart and lungs. The shoes for the feet. The helmet for the head, the shield. This famous place of Scripture suggests that the weapons of evil could hit you anywhere, and will hit you in your most vulnerable spots. Because that’s how evil works. Whether it is created by human hands, or truly flung from Satan’s Hell is beside the point. The point is it comes at us from any direction and will affect us in our most tender spots. The way the daily news affects our moods, the way a neighbor treats us that tempts us to lash out at someone. The way a trusted friend or colleague turns on us. The confusion and temptations that await us when we’ve received bad news from a doctor.

When our church and the Methodist church were broken into last fall, I thought I had myself covered with the spiritual body armor. After all, it was meant to be a day of celebration. We had a little morning reception planned, you guys toasted me with orange juice and coffee and made me cry for our very first Pastor Appreciation Sunday. And with all the love and attention that you showed me that day, I was determined not to allow the broken glass in Fellowship Hall ruin our enjoyment and worship. I thought I had myself covered with that body armor of God. I think it was only because I wanted to appear strong for you that I left myself vulnerable to other arrows to my heart. In fact, I know I wasn’t as strong as I thought I was.

Perhaps you have felt like that too. If not about that particular day, maybe it was a different arrow of misfortune, a bad marriage, a bad day, a bad diagnosis, bad grief, a bad heart. The arrows come from any and all directions, even when we’re not looking out for them. Maybe you thought you had it all well in hand, were able to stand up with the breastplate of righteousness only to get an arrow in the foot. Now you realize you are suffering from multiple wounds. Let me tell you, “You are normal.”

Hence the reason why Ephesians wants us to be fully armed against the present darkness. That body armor might not look like anything more than blue jeans. The weapons might not be flaming arrows or spears pointed at us. They might instead look like surgical scars, emotional pain, disappointment or addictions. And we might use those to perpetuate suffering instead of learn from them. And there is only one weapon – The Spirit of God which is the Word of God.

The only way to be prepared is to wear the whole armor of God. But it helps to be prepared with others who are also wearing that armor. Not to build walls between one another but to share in mutual protection. As the Body of Christ we are equipped to face the arrows of misfortune together. All of the nouns and verbs in this passage are plural, meaning we do this together. So, if Ephesians was written to a bunch of Texans, it would read something like this:

“Ya’ll, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his power. Put on the whole armor of God, so that all ya’ll may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil…”

All Ya’ll. This sacred armory to which God has entrusted us is our calling in Christ, a joint venture of care and protection against how evil happens to us all. We have a prayer tree. We have gifts we can give to help the poor in this community. We have a wisdom and compassion which seems to know no bounds for one another. We are stronger as the Body of Christ, armor-clad against evil when we hold each other up, pray for one another and are willing to fight evil together. Evil comes from every direction, and hits us where we are vulnerable. This is why God gave us one another. Amen.

**Announcements:**