**First Presbyterian Church, Tucumcari**

The Church With the Holy Spirit Window

**Sunday, February 7, 2021 Fourth Sunday in Ordinary Time**

**Rev. Amy Pospichal, Pastor Accompanist, Marjorie McKenzie**

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

**Morning Prayer**

Dear Jesus, Almighty and Powerful Lord, we praise you and thank you for giving your life for us. Today, help us to hear your message of truth and power. Help us to heed the call to also give our lives to you. Please make it so. In name of the Creator, Redeemer and Sustainer of all life. Amen.

**Call to Confession** Our Lord is faithful and just. We belong to Him, because of the gift of Jesus Christ who came to save. Therefore, let us be unafraid to approach the throne of grace, praying for his forgiveness. Let us pray together and in silence.

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

**Assurance of Forgiveness**

Friends, in the name of the Jesus Christ, you and I are forgiven!
**Alleluia!  Amen!**

The peace of the Lord be with you.

**And also with you.**

**Psalm 147:1-11, 20c (please see bulletin)**

**Presentation of Offering and Offertory**

**Time out for Teaching: “Great is the Lord – what is ‘Sovereignty’”**

Do you know what “sovereignty” means? Ruler of all. And what is implied with the word is also that this “Ruler” has complete autonomy and agency over everything else. Queen Elizabeth has been called a “sovereign” because she is the ruler over the entirety of the British Empire. But even she is subject to our Lord, the true Sovereign.

There is an interesting Greek word used in ancient art to describe Jesus as Sovereign. The word is “pantockrator.” Panto means “all” or “everything.” “Krator” means “mighty.” In artwork displaying Jesus, such as in Greek icons, Jesus sits above all creation, enthroned, with his hand upon all things. This is how the ancient people pictured him. He is not divorced from the world, for His hand is still upon all the world.

**Isaiah 40:21-31**

21  Have you not known? Have you not heard?
          Has it not been told you from the beginning?
          Have you not understood from the foundations of the earth?
22  It is he who sits above the circle of the earth,
          and its inhabitants are like grasshoppers;
     who stretches out the heavens like a curtain,
          and spreads them like a tent to live in;
23  who brings princes to naught,
          and makes the rulers of the earth as nothing.

24  Scarcely are they planted, scarcely sown,
          scarcely has their stem taken root in the earth,
     when he blows upon them, and they wither,
          and the tempest carries them off like stubble.

25  To whom then will you compare me,
          or who is my equal? says the Holy One.
26  Lift up your eyes on high and see:
          Who created these?
     He who brings out their host and numbers them,
          calling them all by name;
     because he is great in strength,
          mighty in power,
          not one is missing.

27  Why do you say, O Jacob,
          and speak, O Israel,
     “My way is hidden from the LORD,
          and my right is disregarded by my God”?
28  Have you not known? Have you not heard?
     The LORD is the everlasting God,
          the Creator of the ends of the earth.
     He does not faint or grow weary;
          his understanding is unsearchable.
29  He gives power to the faint,
          and strengthens the powerless.
30  Even youths will faint and be weary,
          and the young will fall exhausted;
31  but those who wait for the LORD shall renew their strength,
          they shall mount up with wings like eagles,
     they shall run and not be weary,
          they shall walk and not faint.

**Prayer for Illumination**

Lord Jesus Christ, we are hungry to hear a good word from you. This past week we have been busy, maybe all too busy to listen for you. Speak now to us and refresh us with your word – for our sakes and for the sake of your world. Amen.

**Mark 1:29-39**

29As soon as they left the synagogue, they entered the house of Simon and Andrew, with James and John. 30Now Simon’s mother-in-law was in bed with a fever, and they told him about her at once. 31He came and took her by the hand and lifted her up. Then the fever left her, and she began to serve them.

32That evening, at sundown, they brought to him all who were sick or possessed with demons. 33And the whole city was gathered around the door. 34And he cured many who were sick with various diseases, and cast out many demons; and he would not permit the demons to speak, because they knew him.

35In the morning, while it was still very dark, he got up and went out to a deserted place, and there he prayed. 36And Simon and his companions hunted for him. 37When they found him, they said to him, “Everyone is searching for you.” 38He answered, “Let us go on to the neighboring towns, so that I may proclaim the message there also; for that is what I came out to do.” 39And he went throughout Galilee, proclaiming the message in their synagogues and casting out demons.

**Sermon: “Even the Demons” Rev. Amy Pospichal**

 Even the demons know Jesus. So, why do so many humans not know Him?

Recently I was talking to a Southern Baptist. We were talking about the importance of giving our lives to Christ.

 Presbyterians have a lot that we can learn from Baptists. They just seem to put things very plainly and clearly. We hem and haw, when perhaps we should be a little more direct. Presbyterians tend to over intellectualize some things. John Calvin, after all, was an attorney. I love our Presbyterian heritage, especially as an intellectual one. One of the signers of the Declaration of Independence, Rev. John Witherspoon, was a Presbyterian. Presbyterians have always been committed to service and participating in this world of changing needs. But sometimes we need to stop overthinking stuff and remember, like my friend said: We have to give our lives to Christ.

 What does that mean?

 First, everything that we are and all that baggage we bring along into a life of faith – everything belongs to Christ anyways. Second, it means that God wants our true hearts. God isn’t trying to steal our souls. God wants us to want Him. Third, Jesus has already given His life for us. And it is in our giving and in His giving that we find a relationship to God.

 In a way, I envy those demons in the gospel reading today. They recognize God in the flesh more readily than the humans do. Perhaps because they are of a spiritual world, having some extra awareness of holiness of God’s power. And we, in all of our problems, and distractions, can easily overlook the presence of God. The demons of the Biblical stories considered the cause of illness. Jesus, time and again, has been called the “Great Physician,” has mastery over all things, even over evil itself.

 This Gospel story from Mark is a summary of a whole bunch of days and events during which Jesus starts his ministry, his baptism. He did a lot of different things and met a lot of people. It’s like when you are starting a new job and go around doing a meet and greet, and find out who’s who. Jesus makes the rounds, and he is recognized – not by other humans, for they need a proper introduction. He is recognized most readily by the evil he is casting out.

 The 20th century theologian, Karl Barth describes evil as “nothingness,” which is against God’s will. God’s will is to create, make life and bring salvation. Evil on the other hand, rejects God’s will to do and be more. Nothingness is directly contrary to God our Creator.

Jesus displays this, as He approaches, touches and heals the sick. The demons are silenced within those he touches. The early believers had an idea that because they were silenced, the demons causing their illness could not speak and were sent away. God’s sovereignty over all creation, even those things that deny God’s true will to save and create, shows through Jesus’ actions in this story.

The poetry of Isaiah speaks of the same thing:

21  Have you not known? Have you not heard?
          Has it not been told you from the beginning?
          Have you not understood from the foundations of the earth?
22  It is he who sits above the circle of the earth,
          and its inhabitants are like grasshoppers;
     who stretches out the heavens like a curtain,
          and spreads them like a tent to live in;

Nothing compares to the power of God – and it is displayed through the salvific touch of Jesus our Lord. Jesus, the ruler of all nature, Jesus the one who has mastery over evil and even death itself, and who gave His life for us, Jesus is the one to whom we must give our lives. For our lives already belong to him. We might as well relent to his will.

I have a story to tell you. Household of Faith Family Worship Church International in New Orleans, Louisiana, raised a combined total of $125,000 to help local residents pay their electricity bills. The pastor’s wife explained that God told them to do it. "Our prayer was how can we help those who are hurting, and He said to donate $100 towards Entergy bill. Our hope is to encourage the community to never give up and when you think there’s no help, out of the blue help steps in." So, their reasoning was to not only give concrete help out of compassion, but to also show them that God is a part of it. God asks us to do something small and God, in His desire to create and make new life, can bless it and multiply it. It is the opposite of Evil and Nothingness. It is Sacred and Good.

Friends, sometimes we become fearful and short-sighted about what God can truly do through us. Sometimes we think we are supposed to do it all ourselves. We may even be overwhelmed with the problems of this world. But if even the demons know about God’s goodness in Jesus Christ, let their testimony be a sign to us of God’s power to multiply and save. Thanks be to God for the new life we have in Him. Keep your hearts open, Friends, to how God is speaking to you. Amen.

**Service of Holy Communion**

**Invitation**

At this table we can find the bridge between heaven and earth. The one who serves us at this table is our Savior and Lord Jesus Christ, who once said, “I came not to be served, but to serve.” Let us all join our hearts to Him, and receive the fruits of God’s creation, for we need refreshment and renewal.

**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.**

With our whole hearts, we praise you, Lord.
We lift up our alleluias as people who gather to sing and proclaim,
As people who gather to confess and to remember Your redeeming work
As people who gather to read and tell of your mighty works,
of your faithfulness and
of your grace.

All glory belongs to you, God.
You are gracious and compassionate.
You provide for us all that we need,
Remembering your promise to hear when we call,
To answer when we knock, and
To reveal yourself when we seek you.

You have revealed your power to us in so many ways:
You heal the sick
You calm the frightened
You bring peace to the grieving
You change the course of our lives

We ask that you reveal your power again today for those on our hearts and minds….

We lift these names to you. To you they are much more than names-
They are your precious children
They are yours. You know every detail of their lives, far better than we do.
You know their needs.

We can trust you with our prayers,
not only because we know you have the power to answer,
but because we have seen that you are faithful and just.
The promises we claim today are the same as those your
people have claimed across the generations

Through your Son, you have redeemed your people.
You bring beauty and good from what we -in our brokenness and ignorance –
have intended for evil.
And in time, you will redeem the world,
Bringing an end to death
And the beginning of an eternity of worship
When every tribe, tongue and nation will sing songs of praise

Until then, we wait.

Help us not to spend our days looking up at the sky.
Send your Spirit that we might see the world as you do,
Fill us with your compassion for those in need
Of shelter, of a friend, or of an advocate
Send us to the brokenhearted, the discarded
and those who are hungry for the transformation only you can bring.

While our hearts cry Come Lord Jesus,
let our hands reveal your presence in the world we inhabit.

We ask these things in the name of Jesus, who taught us to pray saying
Our Father, who art in heaven….

**Words of Institution**

**Receiving the Elements**

**Prayer after Communion**

God of mercy,

Thank you for meeting us at this table,

For being just what we need

For your sustenance in and through all things.

Strengthen us now with your holy gifts

So that we are encouraged to listen to your call

And follow your mission into the world. Amen.

**THE LIFE OF THE CHURCH**

**Social Distancing and Personal Protection.** Please respect one another’s space, observing the 6-foot distancing between one another. Please remember to wash your hands on the way out today. If you need a protective face covering, please notify the pastor and she can help you.