**First Presbyterian Church, Tucumcari**

*The Church With the Holy Spirit Window*

**Sunday, July 12, 2020 15th Sunday in Ordinary Time**

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

**RH 195 In The Cross of Christ I Glory**

**RH 198 When I Survey the Wondrous Cross**

**RH 390 Open My Eyes, That I May See**

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

**Prayer of the Day**

God of Light and Love,
help us this day to worship you
with all of our hearts, minds, and bodies.
Shower us with the grace of your Spirit
that we might joyfully receive
the message you have for us today. **Amen**.

**Call to Confession** (Romans 8:1-2)

There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set you free from the law of sin and of death. Confident in this promise, let us confess our sin to God and before one another. Let us pray.

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

**Assurance of Pardon**

The mercy of the Lord is from everlasting to everlasting. From before the beginning until long beyond our imagination, God’s love endures. Know that you are forgiven, loved and free.

**Thanks be to God! Amen.**

The peace of the Lord be with you.

**And also with you.**

**Responsive Reading Psalm 119:105-112 (please see bulletin)**

**Prayers of the People**

God most high,
God with us,
we praise you with every word we speak
and with every moment we fall silent.
You hear our prayer
and sustain us along with all living things.
You forgive our sins
and bring us close
to live in the goodness of your holy presence.

We pray for your awesome deeds of salvation,
for us and to all the farthest edges of the earth.
With the strength that raised mountains,
calm the roaring seas of conflict;
calm the waves of violence and oppression;
draw all nations and peoples close to each other.

We pray for everyone who longs for your joy:
for those who are sick or in pain from morning to night;
for those whose grief weighs them down;
for those who hunger and thirst
for guidance, righteousness, or food.

Rain down your love once again, O God.
Soften our hearts, so our lives can bear your fruit.
Crown our lives with your goodness,
and let everything we do overflow with blessings for your people.
We pray in the one who bring us joy,
Jesus the Christ, who taught us to pray:

*The Lord’s Prayer*

**Presentation of Offering and Offertory**

**Time out for Teaching: “In Christ”**

We say this a lot as people of God. “In Christ…” We end our prayers with “In Christ we pray…” We sign of letters or emails to fellow Christians with “In Christ…” or something like that. But what does it mean for us to be “In Christ?”

Our New Testament writings also use this expression a lot, particularly the letters of Paul. “Anyone who is in Christ is a new creation… the past is gone and a new life has begun. In the name of Jesus Christ, you are forgiven!” Heard that one before?

What do you think it means, to be “In Christ?”

Paul speaks of this a lot. He speaks of it in our reading from Romans 8:1-6 this morning. He says “1There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. 2For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set you free from the law of sin and of death. 3For God has done what the law, weakened by the flesh, could not do: by sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and to deal with sin, he condemned sin in the flesh, 4so that the just requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not according to the flesh but according to the Spirit. 5For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit set their minds on the things of the Spirit. 6To set the mind on the flesh is death, but to set the mind on the Spirit is life and peace.”

What does that say to you about being “In Christ?” Paul writes to the Corinthian church on this subject in 1:30, first letter: “But God chose the foolish things of the world to shame the wise; God chose the weak things of the world to shame the strong. **28**God chose the lowly things of this world and the despised things—and the things that are not—to nullify the things that are, **29**so that no one may boast before him. **30**It is because of him that you are in Christ Jesus, who has become for us wisdom from God—that is, our righteousness, holiness and redemption. **31**Therefore, as it is written: “Let the one who boasts boast in the Lord.”

**Prayer for Illumination**

Lord Christ, you teach in parables, telling stories in ways that draw us in and reveal God’s will. As we crowd around you this day, eager to hear your word to us, we ask for the ears to hear and not only hear, but understand and not only understand, but act on that which you long for us to know in the depths of our being. Amen.

**First Reading Genesis 25:19-34**

19These are the descendants of Isaac, Abraham’s son: Abraham was the father of Isaac, 20and Isaac was forty years old when he married Rebekah, daughter of Bethuel the Aramean of Paddan-aram, sister of Laban the Aramean. 21Isaac prayed to the LORD for his wife, because she was barren; and the LORD granted his prayer, and his wife Rebekah conceived. 22The children struggled together within her; and she said, “If it is to be this way, why do I live?” So she went to inquire of the LORD. 23And the LORD said to her,
     “Two nations are in your womb,
          and two peoples born of you shall be divided;
     the one shall be stronger than the other,
          the elder shall serve the younger.”
24When her time to give birth was at hand, there were twins in her womb. 25The first came out red, all his body like a hairy mantle; so they named him Esau. 26Afterward his brother came out, with his hand gripping Esau’s heel; so he was named Jacob. Isaac was sixty years old when she bore them.

27When the boys grew up, Esau was a skillful hunter, a man of the field, while Jacob was a quiet man, living in tents. 28Isaac loved Esau, because he was fond of game; but Rebekah loved Jacob.

29Once when Jacob was cooking a stew, Esau came in from the field, and he was famished. 30Esau said to Jacob, “Let me eat some of that red stuff, for I am famished!” (Therefore he was called Edom.) 31Jacob said, “First sell me your birthright.” 32Esau said, “I am about to die; of what use is a birthright to me?” 33Jacob said, “Swear to me first.” So he swore to him, and sold his birthright to Jacob. 34Then Jacob gave Esau bread and lentil stew, and he ate and drank, and rose and went his way. Thus Esau despised his birthright.

**Second Reading Romans 8:1-11**

1There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. 2For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set you free from the law of sin and of death. 3For God has done what the law, weakened by the flesh, could not do: by sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and to deal with sin, he condemned sin in the flesh, 4so that the just requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not according to the flesh but according to the Spirit. 5For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit set their minds on the things of the Spirit. 6To set the mind on the flesh is death, but to set the mind on the Spirit is life and peace. 7For this reason the mind that is set on the flesh is hostile to God; it does not submit to God’s law — indeed it cannot, 8and those who are in the flesh cannot please God.

9But you are not in the flesh; you are in the Spirit, since the Spirit of God dwells in you. Anyone who does not have the Spirit of Christ does not belong to him. 10But if Christ is in you, though the body is dead because of sin, the Spirit is life because of righteousness. 11If the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, he who raised Christ from the dead will give life to your mortal bodies also through his Spirit that dwells in you.

**Gospel Matthew 13:1-9, 18-23**

1That same day Jesus went out of the house and sat beside the sea. 2Such great crowds gathered around him that he got into a boat and sat there, while the whole crowd stood on the beach. 3And he told them many things in parables, saying: “Listen! A sower went out to sow. 4And as he sowed, some seeds fell on the path, and the birds came and ate them up. 5Other seeds fell on rocky ground, where they did not have much soil, and they sprang up quickly, since they had no depth of soil. 6But when the sun rose, they were scorched; and since they had no root, they withered away. 7Other seeds fell among thorns, and the thorns grew up and choked them. 8Other seeds fell on good soil and brought forth grain, some a hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty. 9Let anyone with ears listen!”

18“Hear then the parable of the sower. 19When anyone hears the word of the kingdom and does not understand it, the evil one comes and snatches away what is sown in the heart; this is what was sown on the path. 20As for what was sown on rocky ground, this is the one who hears the word and immediately receives it with joy; 21yet such a person has no root, but endures only for a while, and when trouble or persecution arises on account of the word, that person immediately falls away. 22As for what was sown among thorns, this is the one who hears the word, but the cares of the world and the lure of wealth choke the word, and it yields nothing. 23But as for what was sown on good soil, this is the one who hears the word and understands it, who indeed bears fruit and yields, in one case a hundredfold, in another sixty, and in another thirty.”

**Sermon: “Wasted Words” Rev. Amy Pospichal**

 Our God is a gardener, who sows Jesus among us. But God doesn’t garden like we do. As we see in this morning’s parable, the Gardener tosses seed all over the place. God the Gardener throws His Word, His Wisdom, all about. It seems that our God is anything but cautious about where that seed lands. Even though our God knows that the seed cannot grow on rocks, in thorny brambly weeds, nor where other hungry creatures want to eat it up. We are blessed by this reading because it is one of the few parables Jesus interprets for us. He tells us of four different types of situations where the Master Gardener has sown seeds, and then explains what each one represents for us. The message is that we should become like that fertile and good soil, free of weeds, rocks and thieves. But many of us might wonder – why did the Master Gardener throw seeds everywhere, instead of just where He knew they would grow? Those of us who garden are much choosier about where to plant. We only pick the best soil, with enough moisture, and protect our plants the other critters.

 Traditionally we look at the parable of the sower as on that teaches us to spread the Word of God wherever we can, and hope that it lands on the “good” kind of soil. It might instruct us to judge very carefully where we sow that precious Word, targeting what we have determined is the “proper” soil. Unlike our Master Gardener, we believe ourselves limited in our energy, time and money. Some of us might believe that God’s Word is too precious to waste on someone whom we is not the “proper” soil. Or maybe we worry what God might think if we mix with some of that “bad soil.” After all, that’s how we garden in our own backyards. It’s an economic decision for us, about sustainable living, conservation of our own resources, so we don’t waste seeds.

 But God uses an economy of grace and abundance, leaving the seeds to either grow or not. As you can see in this parable, the Master Gardener is quite free with how He shares His Word and Wisdom. God is not afraid of running out of resources. For God is the First Sower, the one who planted His own Son among us. Jesus, like that freely-scattered seed, moved amongst many people and places, some with hardened hearts, some whose hearts were softened and ready to meet Him. He talked to anyone who came to him – children, lepers, menstruating women, Pharisees and Sadducees, prostitutes, untouchables, the blind, the crippled, the criminals, the mentally ill, Gentiles, and Roman soldiers. He moved amongst those who hated him, as well as amongst those who loved him. He was pursued by persons who just wanted to touch his garment. I believe it was because Jesus loved all of them, even though they didn’t know it yet. And he died, rose from the dead, all so that more may finally see and understand what He had been talking about all that time.

 His parable begins with “Listen!” and ends with “Let anyone who has ears, listen!” Heeding His words means heeding God’s Word and Wisdom. This is an important thing for us to remember, perhaps now more than ever. We see examples all around us of the power of OUR words. How easily we can twist our own or others. How easily we can hurt with words. The expression “The pen is mightier than the sword,” is true, in a way, for just a wrong word can break a relationship, or cause lies to spread faster than wildfire. To heed the words of another, we must first be able to trust that person. I have my issues with much (but not all) of the media today, for I think the online and major news sources today are at war with each other, slanting their own words, making it difficult to know who to believe.

 But this message from God is of a different way of looking at all of those, whether we can trust them or not. For the Master Gardener is involved in all of these persons’ lives. For as the brothers and sisters of Jesus Christ, we are the seeds of His Word in this world. We have been scattered about God’s planet to be and do His Word. God’s words are freely given, and none are wasted if we heed them. Nor are we wasted, if we listen to them, and live them. For God has said and done what He promised, and does not waste words at all. The Master Gardener has shared His Word with us, and in Christ, we get to be the apprentice sowers of Christ in the world. Unlike the Master, we do not always know from looking at a person who is the rocky soil and who is the fertile soil.

 The Master Gardener who has planted His Word in you did so without holding anything back. He is never going to run out. He has chosen people of every color, every type, and in every condition to live amongst them. His grace is abundant. His mercy from everlasting to everlasting. He generously shared Himself, sending Jesus out there to live among us, promising him to be cast far and wide. I ask you, as the Master Gardener’s apprentice, how far can you throw? 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.

**Session Meeting Today.** After church, our Session will be meeting for one of our regularly-scheduled monthly meetings.

**Next Sunday is Potluck Sunday!** Please remember that next week is our Fellowship Dinner. It’s a great time to catch up with each other and invite a friend to church.