**First Presbyterian Church, Tucumcari**

*The Church With the Holy Spirit Window*

**Sunday, July 5, 2020 14th Sunday in Ordinary Time**

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

**RH 26 O Worship the King, All Glorious Above**

**RH 442 Here, O My Lord, I See Thee Face to Face**

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

**Call to Worship**

Friends, be strong and do not fear, for we are in the presence of God.  
**Waters shall break forth in the wilderness, and streams in the desert.**  
The burning sand shall become a pool, and the thirsty ground springs of water.  
**God brings forth abundance where before there was scarcity.**  
There is nothing that is impossible with God.  
**We are gathered to share God’s blessings with one another.**  
Come, let us worship God.

**Prayer of the Day**

**With joy and gratitude we come before you, Lord, to worship you with all our heart, all our minds, all our bodies and all our souls. Our hearts are full, our hands lifted up, and we bring you all we have and all we are. May we bless your name in our worship today and let it overflow from this place into the world beyond these walls. In the name of Jesus Christ our Lord, who is our all in all! Amen.**

**Call to Confession**

We know what is good,  
but we often do what is not.  
So please join me in the prayer of confession…

**Prayer of Confession (by Rev. Scott Cervas, Meadowthorpe Presbyterian Church, Lexington, KY)**

**God…sometimes, there is nothing more freeing than to utter those six innocent words…The Devil Made Me Do It! Life is so much easier when we can avoid the blame for our own mistakes. The sooner we can turn everyone’s attention away from our weaknesses, the better. That’s what we think, anyway. We don’t like to be accused. We don’t like to be wrong. And we certainly don’t like to be guilty. So we pass the blame, and fail to get to the heart of the issue. Help us to claim our mistakes, to learn from them, to grow out of them, and to be transformed by your vision for our lives…** (silence) Amen.

**Assurance of Pardon**

Listen to the good news!  
Though we know what is good,  
and often do what is not,  
God frees us from our guilt  
so that we might be renewed  
to accept our potential as part of God’s very good creation.  
So let’s sing and give thanks to God!

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.**

**Song of Solomon 2:8-13**

8   The voice of my beloved!  
          Look, he comes,  
     leaping upon the mountains,  
          bounding over the hills.  
9   My beloved is like a gazelle  
          or a young stag.  
     Look, there he stands  
          behind our wall,  
     gazing in at the windows,  
          looking through the lattice.  
10  My beloved speaks and says to me:  
          “Arise, my love, my fair one,  
          and come away;  
11  for now the winter is past,  
          the rain is over and gone.  
12  The flowers appear on the earth;  
          the time of singing has come,  
          and the voice of the turtledove  
          is heard in our land.  
13  The fig tree puts forth its figs,  
          and the vines are in blossom;  
          they give forth fragrance.  
     Arise, my love, my fair one,  
          and come away.”

**Presentation of Offering and Offertory**

**Time out for Teaching: Looking into Romans 7**

We are about to hear some very moving words from Paul’s letter to the Romans. Remember that Romans was written by Paul to the believers in Rome. He had not yet met them in person, so this letter is kind of his way of introducing himself to them. And in today’s section of his letter, chapter 7, he both laments and rejoices in Christ. He laments that he will never be able to measure up to the Law of God. He, Paul, a Pharisee, also a citizen of Rome, intelligent and educated. He cannot fulfill the commands of God, for they are perfect and he is not.

Paul then exclaims, “Wretched man that I am!” He says, “I do not understand my own actions. For I do not do what I want, but I do the very thing I hate. 16Now if I do what I do not want, I agree that the law is good. 17But in fact it is no longer I that do it, but sin that dwells within me.” Paul laments the fact that even though he understands the Law of God, celebrates that it is a part of his life, it is almost like a natural law that he begins to do the very opposite of what God’s law dictates. He says that he wants to do good but keeps on doing bad.

This is a major confession for Paul to make to a people he has never met. To admit to them that he isn’t perfect. Not only that, he is greatly distressed, maybe even disgusted with himself. He expresses a deep grief and frustration that he cannot, no matter how much he wants it, achieve the perfection that God’s commands have dictated. It is because he cannot ever achieve it, that he feels the great sinfulness that threatens his own sense of belonging to God.

Except…that alienation he feels is resolved. Because of the righteousness of God, Jesus removed that alienation because of sin. Paul realizes this and he rejoices in it!

**Prayer for Illumination**

As we come to your word this day, O God, make peace in our hearts so that we may truly hear you, and follow you, for it is in serving you that we find life abundant. Amen.

**Psalm 45:10-17**

10  Hear, O daughter, consider and incline your ear;  
          forget your people and your father’s house,  
11       and the king will desire your beauty.  
     Since he is your lord, bow to him;  
12       the people of Tyre will seek your favor with gifts,  
          the richest of the people 13with all kinds of wealth.

     The princess is decked in her chamber with gold-woven robes;  
14       in many-colored robes she is led to the king;  
          behind her the virgins, her companions, follow.  
15  With joy and gladness they are led along  
          as they enter the palace of the king.

16  In the place of ancestors you, O king, shall have sons;  
          you will make them princes in all the earth.  
17  I will cause your name to be celebrated in all generations;  
          therefore the peoples will praise you forever and ever.

**Gospel Matthew 11:16-19, 25-30**

16“But to what will I compare this generation? It is like children sitting in the marketplaces and calling to one another,  
17  ‘We played the flute for you, and you did not dance;  
          we wailed, and you did not mourn.’  
18For John came neither eating nor drinking, and they say, ‘He has a demon’; 19the Son of Man came eating and drinking, and they say, ‘Look, a glutton and a drunkard, a friend of tax collectors and sinners!’ Yet wisdom is vindicated by her deeds.”

25At that time Jesus said, “I thank you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because you have hidden these things from the wise and the intelligent and have revealed them to infants; 26yes, Father, for such was your gracious will. 27All things have been handed over to me by my Father; and no one knows the Son except the Father, and no one knows the Father except the Son and anyone to whom the Son chooses to reveal him.

28“Come to me, all you that are weary and are carrying heavy burdens, and I will give you rest. 29Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me; for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. 30For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.”

**Romans 7:15-25a**

15I do not understand my own actions. For I do not do what I want, but I do the very thing I hate. 16Now if I do what I do not want, I agree that the law is good. 17But in fact it is no longer I that do it, but sin that dwells within me. 18For I know that nothing good dwells within me, that is, in my flesh. I can will what is right, but I cannot do it. 19For I do not do the good I want, but the evil I do not want is what I do. 20Now if I do what I do not want, it is no longer I that do it, but sin that dwells within me.

21So I find it to be a law that when I want to do what is good, evil lies close at hand. 22For I delight in the law of God in my inmost self, 23but I see in my members another law at war with the law of my mind, making me captive to the law of sin that dwells in my members. 24Wretched man that I am! Who will rescue me from this body of death? 25Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord!

**Sermon: “Basket Cases” Rev. Amy Pospichal**

On the famous comedy, “Seinfeld,” a show that was supposedly about “nothing” at all, they poke fun at some of the most common things of life. In one episode, Jerry’s friend Elaine is having trouble when she goes to a restaurant. The waiter brings her her meal, and says, “Careful. This plate is extremely hot.” Automatically, Elaine touches the plate and says, “Thank you. Ow!” The waitress asks, “Why did you just touch it when I told you it was hot?” Elaine said, “I just wanted to find out what your idea of ‘hot’ was.” Her boyfriend then walks in and she forgets, touching it again. “Ow!” And then her boyfriend touches it, “Ow!” I can certainly say that has happened to me too. We do the opposite of what we are told, even when we know it’s for our own good. Why? Just to be difficult. Maybe because we doubt what we’re being told. We want to test it, like Elaine, to see how hot it is. Or we just forget.

Paul laments the same kind of thing in his letter to the Romans. He is upset about the Law of God. Not because it is a bad thing. He wants to follow God’s Law. He knows it’s holy and wants to follow it. It’s for his own good, after all. The Law was not for God’s own good, but for us all. But the problem is, like Elaine who is forgetful about the hot plate, or wanting to test out how hot it is, Paul too grows frustrated. It’s almost as if the more he knows about God’s Law, the more Paul is tempted to break it.

It’s not as if he does not love God’s Law. Many Jews in the ancient world viewed the Torah as God’s of keeping them holy. Jewish scholars traditionally called the Law a “fence” around Israel to protect them from the harms of evil. But, Paul says, it is almost as if because the Law tells him what not to do, he is tempted to break it. This is not so much a confession of sin, but an expression of his own heartbreak. “Wretched man that I am! Who will rescue me from this body of sin!” He talks about his own inner nature however, and that his own nature is somehow at war within him against the nature of God who is expressed through the Law. He wishes he could understand it. For if we know Paul, we may be confident that he would do whatever he could to fix it.

I think about the times when I have failed to do God’s will. There are plenty of times, some small and some bigger. And sometimes we are able to backtrack over our mistakes and figure out what we did wrong. But not all of it we are able to understand. Our state of sin and weakness can be like a wound that we always have, but sometimes we forget about our weakness… and the wound is reopened. Like a cold sore - and just when we are really enjoying a good nosh – we accidently bite down on it again, sending pain to our nerve centers! It gets so irritated that we just keep on biting down, making it worse! Wretched and forgetful we can be! Just when we are trying to avoid it, we hurt ourselves more.

This why grace is so very important and why God has sent us that gift in his son Jesus Christ. Because sometimes we just cannot help ourselves. And God wants us to be holy people. That’s why God gave the Law to the Israelites, so that they have a link to God. The Law was their hotline to God. But for us and the rest of the world, we have the fulfillment of God’s gracious law, in Jesus Christ. He is our balm, our relief when we’ve become basket cases. When we have fallen apart or temporarily lost our ability to remember the hot plate in front of us and keep on touching it.

On a cooking and travel show called “Uncharted,” with the British chef Gordon Ramsey, he travels to Vietnam in order to meet people who cook local authentic Vietnamese cuisine. He goes so far as to go out with the squid fishermen and they let him try to row their boat. I tell you what – if there was ever a more humbling job to do, one that reminds us of what it can feel like to battle temptation to sin – there aren’t many more than rowing a squid boat. They were using a very large, round basket, not much bigger than for 2 men. The big round basket was covered with a blue tarp, to prevent leaks.

To make matters even more difficult, this “basket boat” was round and had only one oar. Trying to row a boat with one oar is hard enough. Try rowing a round boat in a straight line. It’s exhausting, requires your constant attention to which way you’re going, and you are also expected to catch something while you’re out there. Chef Ramsay had better not quit his day job. He looked like a basket case. He grew frustrated, but then could laugh about it.

Wretched people we are! Basket cases sometimes. It can feel like we’re not getting anywhere, and are also supposed to catch fish. But this is again the reminder that even when we feel like we’re just a mess, grace shines through so that we can get back up, dust ourselves off and get back to trying again.

This is the sustenance that God’s Holy Spirit wants to give us when we need that kind of encouragement. As we approach the communion meal today, taste the sweet juice and chew the bread, remember the sustenance God gives us when we are a mess. This mess is blessed by grace, and grace alone is what we need to rise above our wretchedness. Amen.

**Service of Holy Communion**

**Invitation**

**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.**

It is truly right and our greatest joy to give you thanks and praise, O God.

We praise you, O God,  
who raised your voice and sang your Spirit over the chaos of creation  
to make all that is beautiful and good and precious in your sight.

We rejoice in you, O God,  
who gave songs to the prophets,  
melodies to the people who you saved from flood and fire and famine.

We celebrate you, O God,  
who David delighted in dance and poetry,  
who Miriam gave glory with cymbal and drum.

We worship you, O God,  
with all saints and angels from every time and place,  
gathering our hearts and voices to sing to the glory of your name.

Holy Holy…

From the melodies in our hearts and the songs in our souls,  
we give thanks and praise to our savior Jesus the Christ.

Cooing into silent nights, Jesus entered the world amongst the lowly.  
Chanting songs of freedom, Jesus proclaimed good news to the captive.  
Calling forth from the tombs, Jesus granted new life to people claimed by death.  
Wailing and weeping, Jesus understood the stress and sorrow of a broken world.  
Frolicking around wells and streams, Jesus opened hearts to Living Water.  
Dancing through death, Jesus invites us to proclaim life in death’s bitter sting.

So we come to this table with deep joy and humble gratitude, for we know that:

Breaking bread, Jesus feeds us with a hunger for justice.  
Pouring cup, Jesus invites us to join into the song of salvation.

Come, Holy Spirit, and stir in our hearts,  
for the one who called us to the table calls us to sing and dance.  
Teach us the music, guide us in the footsteps,  
empower us to join in the celebration and invite all we see to do the same.

Through Christ, with Christ, in Christ,  
through the power of the Holy Spirit,  
may all glory and honor be yours, O Lord of the Dance,  
who taught us to pray by saying,

**Our Father…**

**Distribution of the Elements**

**Prayer After Communion**

**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.

**No Rummage Donations Yet.** The Session also requests that we hold off on donations to the Rummage Sale for the time being.

**Session Meeting:** Session meets again on Sunday, July 14th, following worship for our next regularly-scheduled meeting.