**First Presbyterian Church Tucumcari**

**Worship 11:00AM**

**Sunday, June 23, 2019, Twelfth Sunday in Ordinary Time**

**Marjorie McKenzie, Accompanist**

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

**Prayer of the Day**

We enter into your presence, mighty God, thankful for your constant love.

Enable our worship today to be one of Spirit and truth.

Empower us to hear your Word and Abide in you

Strengthen us in faith as your holy people,

For we need your power to do your will.

Guide and keep all who feel apart from you,

So as we worship, the whole world may find you again.

Amen.

**Call to Confession**

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

**Assurance of Pardon**

Friends, Believe the Good News of Jesus Christ.

**In Jesus Christ we are forgiven!**

The Lord be with you.

**And also with you.**

**Psalm 42 (please see bulletin)**

**Prayers of the People**

My God, my God, come close to your people!

You come to us to rescue us from powers that are too great for us.

Come to the help of all who face trouble or danger today.

O Lord, you bind us together as brothers and sisters, beloved in Christ.

Fill our hearts, our lives, and our voices with your praise,

and make us bold to proclaim your name to all people.

O Lord, we lift up those who are close to us who face trouble,

especially those who are sick, sorrowing, or confused.

Send forth your healing and restoring love.

O Lord, we pray for those who are poor, hungry, or homeless,

who are closer to us than many of us realize.

Open our hands to share what we have,

and open our hearts to share in relationship.

O Lord, we pray for all who are entrusted with power

over nations, corporations, and the powers of the world,

that their decisions might honor you and seek the welfare of all people.

O Lord, we pray for all the generations:

with thanksgiving for those who have gone before us and enjoy your eternal rest;

and with hope for those who will follow us, to whom we must still proclaim your salvation.

Keep your church faithful in every age.

Keep us faithful to you, O Lord,

and teach us to serve you,

as we pray together with Jesus, saying:

*The Lord’s Prayer*

**Time Out For Teaching: Perspectives on Confession**

Today we will be hearing the story of the great prophet, Elijah, and the last things he does in life before he passes the mantle to Elisha, his successor. Something interesting happens towards the end of our story. Elijah’s life is in danger. He’s done all sorts of amazing signs (“miracles”) as a way of proclaiming the difference between right and wrong in Israel. He’s in hot water with King Ahab and his wife Jezebel. And he just seems like he’s running out of steam. This prophet work is tiring after all.

So he flees for his life to Horeb, where there is the famous Mount Horeb, lies down to sleep under a broom tree. And an angel of the Lord bakes bread for him on a stone near his head. God wakes him up and tells him to eat. After Elijah eats and rests a little more, two times, the Lord asks Elijah, “What are you doing here, Elijah?” And each time, Elijah says, “I have been very zealous for the LORD, the God of hosts; for the Israelites have forsaken your covenant, thrown down your altars, and killed your prophets with the sword. I alone am left, and they are seeking my life, to take it away."

He sounds like he’s at a loss. He is ready to die. He is grieving the fact that his own nation of Israelites forsook the covenant of the Lord – that is with worship of false idols. Elijah confesses to the Lord what is troubling his heart.

I believe this is at the very heart of confessing to God our sin. There are a couple of ways we can approach the prayer of confession. One way is when we pray to God, confessing our sins, is to think of it as a personal prayer. *(“I” did this and “I” left this undone…Please forgive me, Lord.)* Another way is to remember that our prayers are a reflection on the sin and brokenness of an entire people – a church, a community, a nation, a civilization.

So, when you pray in church together in unison, using the prayer of confession, think next time: “Is this just about me and my own sin? Or might this prayer be also on behalf of others?” And, “How can I change the culture around me, by praying for us all?”

While we cannot control the choices others make, we can certainly pray a similar prayer to what Elijah says to God in the story today – I’m trying, but I’m living in a world that is exceedingly troubled. Help me, Lord.

**Prayer for Illumination**

God, you have come to us again and again,

Calling us to listen

And follow you.

We face many fearful things in this life

And you continue to bear us up

Like on eagles’ wings.

Bear us up again

With the strength and staff of your holy Word.

Amen.

**Gospel Luke 8:26-39**

26Then they arrived at the country of the Gerasenes, which is opposite Galilee. 27As he stepped out on land, a man of the city who had demons met him. For a long time he had worn no clothes, and he did not live in a house but in the tombs. 28When he saw Jesus, he fell down before him and shouted at the top of his voice, "What have you to do with me, Jesus, Son of the Most High God? I beg you, do not torment me"-29for Jesus had commanded the unclean spirit to come out of the man. (For many times it had seized him; he was kept under guard and bound with chains and shackles, but he would break the bonds and be driven by the demon into the wilds.) 30Jesus then asked him, "What is your name?" He said, "Legion"; for many demons had entered him. 31They begged him not to order them to go back into the abyss.

32Now there on the hillside a large herd of swine was feeding; and the demons begged Jesus to let them enter these. So he gave them permission. 33Then the demons came out of the man and entered the swine, and the herd rushed down the steep bank into the lake and was drowned.

34When the swineherds saw what had happened, they ran off and told it in the city and in the country. 35Then people came out to see what had happened, and when they came to Jesus, they found the man from whom the demons had gone sitting at the feet of Jesus, clothed and in his right mind. And they were afraid. 36Those who had seen it told them how the one who had been possessed by demons had been healed. 37Then all the people of the surrounding country of the Gerasenes asked Jesus to leave them; for they were seized with great fear. So he got into the boat and returned. 38The man from whom the demons had gone begged that he might be with him; but Jesus sent him away, saying, 39"Return to your home, and declare how much God has done for you." So he went away, proclaiming throughout the city how much Jesus had done for him.

**1 Kings 19:1-4 (5-7) 8-15a**

1Ahab told Jezebel all that Elijah had done, and how he had killed all the prophets with the sword. 2Then Jezebel sent a messenger to Elijah, saying, "So may the gods do to me, and more also, if I do not make your life like the life of one of them by this time tomorrow." 3Then he was afraid; he got up and fled for his life, and came to Beer-sheba, which belongs to Judah; he left his servant there.

4But he himself went a day's journey into the wilderness, and came and sat down under a solitary broom tree. He asked that he might die: "It is enough; now, O LORD, take away my life, for I am no better than my ancestors." 5Then he lay down under the broom tree and fell asleep. Suddenly an angel touched him and said to him, "Get up and eat." 6He looked, and there at his head was a cake baked on hot stones, and a jar of water. He ate and drank, and lay down again. 7The angel of the LORD came a second time, touched him, and said, "Get up and eat, otherwise the journey will be too much for you." 8He got up, and ate and drank; then he went in the strength of that food forty days and forty nights to Horeb the mount of God.9At that place he came to a cave, and spent the night there.

Then the word of the LORD came to him, saying, "What are you doing here, Elijah?" 10He answered, "I have been very zealous for the LORD, the God of hosts; for the Israelites have forsaken your covenant, thrown down your altars, and killed your prophets with the sword. I alone am left, and they are seeking my life, to take it away."

11He said, "Go out and stand on the mountain before the LORD, for the LORD is about to pass by." Now there was a great wind, so strong that it was splitting mountains and breaking rocks in pieces before the LORD, but the LORD was not in the wind; and after the wind an earthquake, but the LORD was not in the earthquake; 12and after the earthquake a fire, but the LORD was not in the fire; and after the fire a sound of sheer silence. 13When Elijah heard it, he wrapped his face in his mantle and went out and stood at the entrance of the cave. Then there came a voice to him that said, "What are you doing here, Elijah?" 14He answered, "I have been very zealous for the LORD, the God of hosts; for the Israelites have forsaken your covenant, thrown down your altars, and killed your prophets with the sword. I alone am left, and they are seeking my life, to take it away." 15Then the LORD said to him, "Go, return on your way to the wilderness of Damascus; when you arrive, you shall anoint Hazael as king over Aram.

**Sermon: Passing the Mantle**

This is the second to last story about Elijah before he passes the mantle to Elisha, the next great prophet.

They were dangerous times. Elijah’s life is in danger. Jezebel the Phoenician princess, wife of King Ahab of Israel, has already told him, “May the same happen to you that happened to the other prophets.” Chilling words. This is spiritual warfare between the gods of the Canaanites and the God of Israel and Elijah has been fighting this fight for a long time now. But Jezebel, the powerful queen, tells Elijah that she’s had the other prophets killed and she can make sure it happens to him too. Ahab and Jezebel decided, in order to please the foreigners living in Israel, to set up altars to Jezebel’s gods and this was an offense to the God of Israel. So, Elijah, the last prophet in Israel, openly criticizes them and does what he can to prove that the power of God is greater than all others. But he is now in danger.

These were dangerous times. Israel had been invaded time and again by foreign nations, having taken them as prisoners and ruling over them. And that’s who King Ahab and Jezebel are – non-Jews ruling over Israel.

Elijah fought hard against the growing trend of idolatry. Worship of idols is one of the gravest offenses, one of the Ten Commandments. But, although Elijah was on the side of the Lord, he was now on the run, for his life hung in the balance.

Elijah was one of the last prophets standing. He did many great signs as a powerful prophet, showing that he had the power of God with him. He did many things almost on par with what Jesus himself did. But he bore a very heavy mantle, especially because as a prophet of the Lord he was an endangered species. And in our story today, we see just how heavy a mantle it was. Great man that he was, Elijah was only human. He was tired. He was afraid to lose this fight, and likely afraid to give up. But when the Lord asks, “What are you doing here, Elijah?” he sounds scared, filled with grief, and feeling a bit like a failure: “I have been very zealous for the LORD, the God of hosts; for the Israelites have forsaken your covenant, thrown down your altars, and killed your prophets with the sword. I alone am left, and they are seeking my life, to take it away."  He confessed he was ready to die.

Elijah is about as far down as he could be. He is ready to let go, and ready to pass the mantle.

According to Biblical archaeologists, Elijah’s mantle was a special kind. His mantle was not just any type of cloak worn by your regular Joe. His mantle had a special name which indicated his holiness as a prophet of the Lord. The mantle of the prophet had been used in other ways, such as in giving a healing touch to the sick. Elijah’s mantle symbolized a holy authority which was recognized by others. But even prophets get tired.

And that brings us around to God’s grace in this story. For I believe Elijah was a perfectionist and he strove to do his duty serving the Lord, even at his own peril.

Some of us can probably relate to this. The overachievers. The “we can do anything” people. The folks who continually stand up for the vulnerable. The people who show up again and again to serve the Lord with hope and enthusiasm. Saints get tired too. Saints know how it feels to face the dark night of the soul alone. Maybe that’s part of who saints are. They have not only been those overachievers. They have also faced their fears, like Elijah, and found the inner strength to admit defeat. To confess defeat to the Lord can be somewhat freeing.

See what happens when Elijah does this after God finds him in the wilderness. God sends an angel with nourishment. And after some rest and some fresh-baked bread, God questions him twice. “What are you doing here, Elijah?” It’s like an intervention to get Elijah to think about this moment. It’s a moment to contemplate what’s next and for him, it’s time to pass that holy mantle. So, soon after, Elijah appoints a new king over Aram, and he immediately passes his holy prophet’s mantle to the next great prophet Elisha.

I believe that we are always invited to such holy moments. Confessing everything: our zeal for God, our frustrations and fears, are exactly what God wants from us. It’s an invitation to healing, to consider the question, “What am I doing here?” God knows the answer, but wants us to answer it for ourselves. Is it your time to pass the mantle?

Do not be afraid to answer God’s question, “What are you doing here?” It’s an invitation to admit our weakness as Elijah did, while confessing what we believe. God is gracious to allow us to think about such questions. And, no matter how heavy that mantle weighs on us, God eventually provides another to wear it when we are finished. Thanks be to God that we are never alone in service to Him. Amen.

**Announcements**

This Wednesday, Dutch Treat Dames meet at the Cornerstone Deli at noon. Hope to see you Ladies there.