**First Presbyterian Church Tucumcari**

**Worship 11:00AM**

**Sunday, June 9, 2019, Pentecost**

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

**Prayer of the Day**

On this day we remember your gifts, O Lord,

Remind us that we are not alone, sliding through a mystery with no guidance.  
We do not pray alone, worried about “getting it right” or being heard.  
We do not work alone for the healing of the world.  
We are born of water and fire, adopted into the family of God.  
We are a people of bountiful gifts and many connections.

Help us to live into this every day, and worship you today as we grow in faith and knowledge of your love.

**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 104:24-34, 35b (please see bulletin)**

**Prayers of the People**

God of our awakening…

we have named our fears;  
we have named those things  
that hold us back  
and keep us from moving beyond  
where we are.

You have taken our fears…  
our inhibitions…  
and our complacencies…  
and you have invited us  
uninhibited…courageously…  
passionately and COMpassionately  
to fly on the wings of your Spirit.

We look to the sky…  
we look on the streets…  
we look in the alleyways…  
we look in our homes…  
we look to the mountains and the rivers…  
the valleys and the seas…  
we look into the eyes of one another…  
those we know,  
and those we are meeting for the first time…  
we look at individuals,  
we look into communities…  
we look throughout your whole creation…  
and we see potential.

Where there is despair…we see the potential for hope.  
Where there is hunger…we see the potential for satisfaction.  
Where there is war…we see the potential for peace.  
Where there is prejudice…we see the potential for fellowship.  
Where there is oppression…we see the potential for justice.

This list could go on…  
but when we dare to look at the world through your eyes…  
when we make enough room for your Spirit to enter in…  
when we have the audacity  
to trust your perfect vision for creation…  
all there is to see is potential.

So inspire us…  
in the midst of hatred and destruction,  
abuse and neglect,  
natural disasters and human-generated disasters…  
inspire us with the stories of loving and building up,  
respecting and caring,  
helping and sharing and repairing…  
so we may cling to your Spirit  
as she leads us beyond where we are  
into a way of life that reflects your goodness…

just as Jesus prayed…

OUR FATHER…

**Time Out For Teaching: Our Advocate and Our Comfort**

Today we celebrate the birth of the church, but moreover, we celebrate the gift of the Holy Spirit, who first visited the apostles on that special festival day called Pentecost.

Pentecost was one of three most important festivals on the Jewish calendar, when Jews had to come to Jerusalem for special feast and sacrifice days.

Pentecost took place in between the barley and wheat harvests and was to celebrate the upcoming wheat harvest. It was the time when people offered the first fruits of their harvest to Yahweh. Before doing this, they were to also make a profession of faith. See Deuteronomy 26:5-10. A portion of those first fruits were contributed to the priests for their support. Jeremiah refers to Israel as the “first fruits” of Yahweh’s harvest. See Jeremiah 2:3.

Pentecost was a celebration of the Israelite’s productivity as agrarian people. This means they were farmers of the land, and they knew that their productivity was dependent on God’s providence. They celebrated this by giving to God the first fruits of their work.

Before the Babylonian exile, there were many farmers – “agropastoralists” in Israel and the land was fairly open and free to them. After the invasion and exile to Babylon, they were forced in captivity to take up new professions – like banking and trade – which did not require owning real estate. When they returned home to Israel, the land was harder to get. Those who did get land to return to their agrarian lifestyle were often considered “rabble” by the Rabbis and other “higher” levels of society, for these were “people of the land,” the “am ha’aretz.” T

This view was carried on during New Testament times. For, people of the land, by virtue of the fact that they were tied to their work on the land, had a harder time abiding by the Torah (see John 7:49)

**Prayer for Illumination**

**Gospel John 14:8-17 (25-27)**

8Philip said to him, "Lord, show us the Father, and we will be satisfied." 9Jesus said to him, "Have I been with you all this time, Philip, and you still do not know me? Whoever has seen me has seen the Father. How can you say, 'Show us the Father'? 10Do you not believe that I am in the Father and the Father is in me? The words that I say to you I do not speak on my own; but the Father who dwells in me does his works. 11Believe me that I am in the Father and the Father is in me; but if you do not, then believe me because of the works themselves. 12Very truly, I tell you, the one who believes in me will also do the works that I do and, in fact, will do greater works than these, because I am going to the Father. 13I will do whatever you ask in my name, so that the Father may be glorified in the Son. 14If in my name you ask me for anything, I will do it.

15"If you love me, you will keep my commandments. 16And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Advocate, to be with you forever. 17This is the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees him nor knows him. You know him, because he abides with you, and he will be in you.

25"I have said these things to you while I am still with you. 26But the Advocate, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you everything, and remind you of all that I have said to you. 27Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled, and do not let them be afraid."

**Genesis 11:1-9**

1Now the whole earth had one language and the same words. 2And as they migrated from the east, they came upon a plain in the land of Shinar and settled there. 3And they said to one another, “Come, let us make bricks, and burn them thoroughly.” And they had brick for stone, and bitumen for mortar. 4Then they said, “Come, let us build ourselves a city, and a tower with its top in the heavens, and let us make a name for ourselves; otherwise we shall be scattered abroad upon the face of the whole earth.” 5The Lord came down to see the city and the tower, which mortals had built. 6And the Lord said, “Look, they are one people, and they have all one language; and this is only the beginning of what they will do; nothing that they propose to do will now be impossible for them. 7Come, let us go down, and confuse their language there, so that they will not understand one another’s speech.” 8So the Lord scattered them abroad from there over the face of all the earth, and they left off building the city. 9Therefore it was called Babel, because there the Lord confused the language of all the earth; and from there the Lord scattered them abroad over the face of all the earth.

**Sermon: Undoing Babel**

When I was in 9th grade and a member of my church’s youth group, I was in a production of a musical called “The Clown.” It featured a bunch of us younger kids pretending to be caterpillars who were in a race to climb to the top of a “caterpillar” pillar. We caterpillars (and I was one of them) thought we had to step on one another, and compete for the top spot on the pillar, where we would become butterflies. The Clown was the “Jesus” figure who arrived on the scene and observed that, whether we were on the top or on the bottom, we all would become butterflies one day. The Clown, played by the kid who took drama in high school, reminded us that no matter how high we try to reach for greatness, it is really our Lord and Savior who makes us all great.

And climbing as high as we can will not bring us any closer to God than God has already come to us.

The people in Babel believed that if they could just build a tower high enough, then they would eventually get close enough to God. They had a similar mistake in thinking for their own sakes that getting close to God would be better. This story is about a people who all spoke the same language and conspired together to secure their own spiritual and physical safety, by taking matters into their own hands. They did not understand, for the said, “Let us make a name for ourselves, lest we be scattered across the earth.” So, they built their city and their tower to heaven out of the wish to make a name for themselves, and out of fear for becoming nobodies. To put them back in their places, God caused them to speak different languages, so they could no longer cooperate in this vain building project.

This story may seem disconcerting to us. It could seem odd that God would do this to people, causing us to be unable to understand each other, confusing us instead of drawing us together closer. But, this was a building project God did not approve of, and the idea of climbing into heaven was really absurd. Just as the caterpillars, who all believed that they could become butterflies by fighting their way to the top, the people building this tower to God believed that they could achieve this greatness without God’s help, thinking that securing their own fate was a better choice than letting God help them. And then God caused them to speak in new languages, no longer able to understand each other, nor cooperate with each other.

This happens to us all today. We build for ourselves towers of strength and protection, we generally prefer to surround ourselves with like-minded friends. And we live in a day where there are even more voices, languages, speaking styles than ever before. We are surrounded by babble from opposing viewpoints on radio, TV, and social media. It’s easy to get caught up in the many voices and we feel it’s our position in society to align ourselves with the voices we think are most right, and which fit our own way of thinking.

Let this story of Babel be a reminder to us that we are still a lot like those people God confounded with foreign tongues. And remember that on this day of Pentecost, we can be assured that confusion is not God’s ultimate goal for us. Pentecost was an undoing of Babel, a reversal of confusion, a gift from God’s Holy Spirit who brings us together despite our different styles of communication. And our hope is that the Spirit of God can help us to interpret and understand together what God’s will is for the world.

Yesterday I attended a 1-hour meeting in Roswell with other Presbyterians. There have been some proposed amendments to part 2 of our constitution, the Book of Order. One minister stood before the rest of us, a mixture of pastors and elders from various churches, big and small. And, he presented each amendment, explaining to us what each one meant. These things are always exactly cut and dried. It took discussion, explaining, putting our heads together and seeking understanding. We voted nearly unanimously on most of the amendments and we found ourselves laughing at the times when there was confusion. This is just one example of what the Undoing of Babel has provided us. A way to joyfully communicate and understand one another, while seeking God’s will. This is God’s gift for the church – the undoing of Babel. We are just the people to cut through the babble of this world, and reveal to each other and true fellowship and courage comes from God’s Spirit. Thanks be to God for this day and every Pentecost. Amen.

**Announcements**

In the Spirit of Trinity Sunday, we will be welcoming new members next Sunday, followed by a Fathers’ Day potluck supper. Be sure to be there and bring a dish to share at potluck.

Elders, we have a Session Meeting Tuesday, June 11th at 5:30PM in the Library.