**First Presbyterian Church, Tucumcari**

*The Church With the Holy Spirit Window*

**Sunday, March 1, 2020 1st Sunday in Lent**

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

**Welcome and Announcements**

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

**Prayer of the Day**

Thank you, Lord, for making us whole. Thank you for making us, giving us a world to live in and to love. Thank you for helping us through the wildernesses of our lives and for walking with us when we can no longer walk on our own. Strengthen the words we say and sing today. Guide our thoughts towards hope. Embolden our worship of you today, joining our words with the choirs of angels and saints. In the name of the one person who you knew we need, Jesus the Christ. Amen.

**\*Opening Hymn RH#338 “He Leadeth Me: O Blessed Thought!”**

**Call to Confession**

God is slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love, and God’s mercy endures to all generations. When we confess our brokenness, God’s grace offers us a glimpse of healing. Trusting in the gracious mercy of God, let us confess with open and honest hearts our failure to live up to God’s call. Let us pray.

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

**Assurance of Pardon**

In the beginning, God breathed life into being, and every morning God’s mercies are new. Know that you, child of God, made in God’s image, are forgiven, loved and free. Believe and live the good news:

**In Jesus Christ we are forgiven! Thanks be to God!**

The peace of the Lord be with you.

**And also with you.**

**\*Gloria Patri** **Glory be to the Father, and to the Son and to the Holy Ghost.**

**As it was in the beginning, is now and ever shall be, world without end, Amen, Amen.**

**Responsive Reading Psalm 32 (please see bulletin)**

**Hymn RH#271 “Rock of Ages, Cleft for Me”**

**Presentation of Offering and Offertory**

**\*Doxology Praise God from whom all blessings flow. Praise Him all creatures here below. Praise Him above ye heavenly hosts. Praise Father, Son and Holy Ghost. Amen.**

**\*Dedication of the Offering**

**\*Congregational Response We give Thee but Thine own. Whatever the gift may be;**

**All that we have is Thine alone, A trust, O Lord, from Thee. Amen**

**Time out for Teaching “Free Gifts”**

In Paul’s letter to the Romans, Paul refers to a “free gift.” In the Greek it is a single word, “dorean.” “Dora” means “gift” and “dorean” means “free gift.” More accurately, the meaning is “freely-given gift.”

In just a word, it tells us of God’s freedom to give. It speaks of God’s utter freedom, which is a mark of God alone, who exercises freedom to do whatever is God’s will. We cannot put limitations on God, only limitations on our imaginations.

So, when we are told that God is freely gifting us with eternal life and hope in Jesus Christ, it is saying that God never runs out of grace and power. And even after all the ways God has helped humans in the past to reach out to them, God never tires. God still chose to pour himself out into human form and became for us what we need to find our own way to freedom from sin and brokenness.

So, God used God’s own freedom to lead us to freedom for us. But a price comes with that freedom. What do you think that price is?

Paul wrote: “If, because of the one man’s trespass, death exercised dominion through that one, much more surely will those who receive the abundance of grace and the free gift of righteousness exercise dominion in life through the one man, Jesus Christ.”

This means those who receive the abundance of grace and free gift of righteousness will exercise dominion in life through Jesus Christ. Those who are ready to receive that free gift can take it in, and use it throughout life. This is the life to which we are called, to exercise that free gift. What does that look like to you?

**Old Testament Genesis 2:15-17, 3:1-7**

2:15The LORD God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to till it and keep it.16And the LORD God commanded the man, “You may freely eat of every tree of the garden;17but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall die.”

3:1Now the serpent was more crafty than any other wild animal that the LORD God had made. He said to the woman, “Did God say, ‘You shall not eat from any tree in the garden’?” 2The woman said to the serpent, “We may eat of the fruit of the trees in the garden; 3but God said, ‘You shall not eat of the fruit of the tree that is in the middle of the garden, nor shall you touch it, or you shall die.’” 4But the serpent said to the woman, “You will not die; 5for God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.” 6So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was to be desired to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate; and she also gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate. 7Then the eyes of both were opened, and they knew that they were naked; and they sewed fig leaves together and made loincloths for themselves.

**Epistle Romans 5:12-19**

12Therefore, just as sin came into the world through one man, and death came through sin, and so death spread to all because all have sinned — 13sin was indeed in the world before the law, but sin is not reckoned when there is no law.14Yet death exercised dominion from Adam to Moses, even over those whose sins were not like the transgression of Adam, who is a type of the one who was to come.

15But the free gift is not like the trespass. For if the many died through the one man’s trespass, much more surely have the grace of God and the free gift in the grace of the one man, Jesus Christ, abounded for the many.16And the free gift is not like the effect of the one man’s sin. For the judgment following one trespass brought condemnation, but the free gift following many trespasses brings justification.17If, because of the one man’s trespass, death exercised dominion through that one, much more surely will those who receive the abundance of grace and the free gift of righteousness exercise dominion in life through the one man, Jesus Christ.

18Therefore just as one man’s trespass led to condemnation for all, so one man’s act of righteousness leads to justification and life for all. 19For just as by the one man’s disobedience the many were made sinners, so by the one man’s obedience the many will be made righteous.

**Sermon: “One Man“ Rev. Amy Pospichal**

It only took one person – a man in a garden – to start the domino effect of condemnation. (actually, one man, one woman and one serpent) It only took one man – the Son of Man – to start the cascade of grace and justification. A cascade which continues through us today.

We might look at the story of humanity’s fall into sin as a myth. Some look at it literally, as a story of two people who were the father and mother of all human beings. Whichever way you understand it, it is a story about our relationships – between each other and between us and God.

First, let’s take note of the fact that our reading from Genesis jumps over a few key parts of the story. We began with a few sentences from chapter 2, where God sets the man in the garden, tells him that he can have anything there he wants, except for the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. He is told that he will die if he eats of it. Then Eve is made.

The rest of chapter 2, which you didn’t hear, describes, in the words of Rev. Dr. Andrew Dearman, Adam’s “radical surgery” in order to make Eve. God plainly states that it was because “It is not good for man to be alone.”

So, God freely gave Adams a garden, freely gave him a helper, and after all these good gifts, Adam and his helpmate Eve freely chose to disobey God by eating the forbidden fruit. In God’s complete freedom to give, Adam and Eve took, and took more than they deserved.

Their freely gifts came with just one commandment. One man, one woman, and one commandment. It shouldn’t have been hard to follow. Eat all that you want from the garden, except from that one tree!

And yet, they could not. They just had to try it. The temptation was more powerful than the strength they needed to resist. For they began to question God’s authority, and were drawn to the power of being able to know good and evil, believing what the serpent said to them over God’s Word. After gaining that knowledge of good and evil, they became ashamed, and they were no better for having their new knowledge. As the saying goes, “Be careful with what you wish for.” You just might get it.

This is a story of us all, and of one man who came to save us all.

We aren’t a whole lot better than the one man and the one woman who fell from purity and into forever sin. There is no reason why we need speculate about what the one man and one woman must have been thinking, to disobey God. There have been myriads of ways people have questioned this story – most of them boil down to asking why God would create a perfect Eden, and allow bad things to happen there? We will never know and can only trust the Creator is in charge. My own question marvels at our tendency to do the opposite of what God tells us – like when we are given just one thing to do and disobeyed it. The sin was committed, and then it was passed on to Adam, and now they were both ashamed.

They were then told the truth. They were made from dust and to dust they would return.

This is the meaning of Ash Wednesday. That we are mortal. We are imperfect and incomplete without God’s love for us. That the sin we commit is contagious and can spread when it becomes a sin against another. During Lent, we are called to look inside ourselves and see ourselves for who we are, participants in the evils of this world. Even if we are not willing participants. Our work is to repent, and break that cycle of sin and death. Adam and Eve’s story is really our story too. The ashes used in Ash Wednesday are an outward sign of our weakness to resist evil and our reliance on God’s grace to help us. People put ashes on their heads in Old Testament, such as in the book of Jonah, when they became truly sorry and ready to change their ways.

For the faithful, God’s mark is already on us, God’s fingerprints are all over us as His amazing creations, molded from the dust of the earth and stars. He made us, calls us “good,” and therefore, we should not be afraid to put everything - our fears, our mistakes, our shame – onto Him. For while we are unable to bear all of these things alone, God certainly can. Miraculously. For as Paul said in his letter to the Romans, the domino effect of sin happened with one man, one woman and one serpent, with one tree in a garden, spreading to every person in all of Creation. And it took just one man to make us all righteous again. That is, if we repent and put our trust in God. Let us begin with admitting our mistakes and approach this table of grace. Amen.

**Service of Holy Communion**

We gather at this table  
not for God’s benefit but for our own.  
We recall the story of salvation,  
because we are the ones who need to know it again.  
Remember, beloved, the goodness of the One  
who day by day calls the world into being;  
who life by life calls humanity into loving relationship;  
who is always and everywhere faithful.  
Rejoice, children of God, in the life of Jesus Christ,  
who is born into our lives;  
who teaches us the way of righteousness;  
who walks with us through the gates of suffering and death;  
who is our resurrection life.  
Gather at this table  
to share in these gifts of bread and cup;  
to receive the Holy Spirit;  
to be made new and united with all God’s people,  
the redeemed of every time and place.  
At this table and in all our lives,  
Jesus is yet with us – even to the end of the age.

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.**

On the night that he was betrayed, Jesus took the bread, broke it, and gave it to his disciples saying, “Take and eat, this is my body broken for you. Do this in remembrance of me.”

After his disciples were finished eating, he took the cup, blessed it, and gave to them, saying, “This is the cup of the new covenant shed in my blood for the forgiveness of sins. Drink this in remembrance of me.”

With thanks and praise, we remember your many gifts, O Lord. For sending us prophets and saints to declare your worth. For sending us ordinary men and women of faith to show us how to live in your grace. For sending us a savior for the world, who taught and walked among your creatures, the one man it took to lead us all back to you.

In silence, we now lift our prayers to you…

Thanking and praising you, we trust that God knows all our needs.  
There is nothing else to say,  
so let us join in the prayer Jesus taught:  
*The Lord’s Prayer*

**Prayer after Communion**

God of glory, in this holy meal  
you show us your will for every meal.  
In Christ’s strength, let us live and work  
for the day when all tables are filled with your abundance  
and surrounded by your people in peace.  
In Jesus’ name. Amen.

**Closing Hymn RH#298 “Lord, Speak to Me, that I May Speak”**

**THE LIFE OF THE CHURCH**

**Potluck Hosts needed:** April 19th and June 21st are Potluck Sundays at our church. However, we do not have hosts to for those days. Please consider being host, or sharing that responsibility with another person. It makes all the difference in the world!