**First Presbyterian Church, Tucumcari**

*The Church With the Holy Spirit Window*

**Sunday, March 15, 2020 3rd Sunday in Lent**

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

**Welcome and Announcements**

**Prelude Surely the presence of the Lord is in this place.**

**I can feel His mighty power and His grace.**

**I can feel the brush of angels’ wings, I see glory on each face.**

**Surely the presence of the Lord is in this place.**

**Surely the presence of the Lord is in this place.**

**Call to Worship**

Come those who ​thirst for living water.

​**God is speaking to us.**

Come to worship in spirit and truth

​**God is speaking to us.**

Come and know what you have heard from others

​**God is speaking to us.**

**Prayer of the Day**

Speak, O Lord, for your servants are listening. This is your day and we are your people. Emerging from our homes for a brief service to worship you, we ask that you keep us mindful of those who are staying home, and help us to keep mindful of one another in this space. Help us today to not judge those remaining home. Help us today to remember them in our prayers. Help us to also be calm and open to your powerful hand at work in the world. Fill us anew with strength and courage, as we worship you with our hearts and voices. Through the Lord our Savior Jesus Christ we all pray, Amen.

**\*Opening Hymn RH#195 “In the Cross of Christ I Glory”**

**Call to Confession**

**Prayer of Confession**God, it’s so easy…  
**so easy to hear the many voices that are louder than yours.**  
God, it’s so easy…  
**so easy to forget who you created and called us to be, to lose ourselves in the piles of wants and worries, checklists and crises.**  
God, it’s so easy…  
**and yet so hard—to slow down, to listen, to turn and repent and come to you. Help us to take that risk, that leap of faith, to turn and be healed.** (silence) **Amen.**

**Assurance of Pardon**

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.**

**Unison Reading Psalm 23**

**The LORD is my shepherd, I shall not want.  
He makes me lie down in green pastures;  
he leads me beside still waters;  
he restores my soul.  
He leads me in right paths  
for his name’s sake.**

**Even though I walk through the darkest valley,  
I fear no evil;  
for you are with me;  
your rod and your staff —  
they comfort me.**

**You prepare a table before me  
in the presence of my enemies;  
you anoint my head with oil;  
my cup overflows.  
Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me  
all the days of my life,  
and I shall dwell in the house of the LORD  
my whole life long.**

**Hymn RH#239 “Come Holy Spirit, Heavenly Dove”**

**Prayers of the People**

Holy One,  
Bridger of Distance,  
Connector of Beings,  
hear our prayer….

In the midst  
of non-stop news stories  
about illness and scarcity,  
press conferences and cancellations…  
grant us quiet in our minds.

In the midst  
of heightened anxiety  
about caregivers and caregiving,  
about health and hygiene,  
grant us calm in our hearts.

In the midst  
of opposing views:  
close doors or stay open,  
reach out or hunker down…  
grant us peace in our spirits.

In the midst  
of distance  
in our families, our faith communities,  
in all our relationships with others…  
grant us connection in our separation.

In the midst  
of our lives:  
our gratitude and concerns,  
our hopes and longings…  
grant us an abiding sense of Your Comfort.

We lift high our prayers of concern and gratitude.

For Kurt Goldston

For Sharon

For Glenda

For peace to prevail on our world.

For those who are sick, and those who are providing health care.

For those who have suffered financially during this time of fear and disease: business owners, those who have lost their jobs or cut their hours

For those who are creating new opportunities out of necessity

For those who are sharing their livelihoods with those less fortunate, we give thanks.

And now we pray to you in silence:

In the name of the Lord of all Creation, who speaks a word of peace, and reminds us to pray by saying, “Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed by thy name. Thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread and forgive us our debt as we forgive our debtors. For thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen.”

**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 “Bad Things/Good People”**

Have you ever heard the phrase, “bad things happen to good people?” It became the topic of a book by a Rabbi whose son died of a rare genetic disease. He struggled with the grief he felt, and the unanswered questions he had. As a Jewish man, he doted on his son. He questioned how God would allow such a bad thing to happen.

It’s the ultimate question for us all, isn’t it? There is a technical word for that, and it is called “theodicy,” which is the theology of evil. It is our human attempt to explain the presence of evil. “How could God allow it to happen?” is the question it seeks to answer.

So, let’s make a list together out loud of the sorts of evils we can think of.

There is the evil of human suffering – from disease. How do you think that is evil? The Rabbi’s son, for instance, who was born with this genetic disorder, didn’t do anything to deserve it. The Rabbi wondered if there was something that he had done wrong in life to deserve losing his son. But yet, the true suffering was not his alone, but also his son’s. This didn’t make any sense, in light of the God who promises the good life if we try to live a good life.

There is the evil of our own doing, however too. The evils we are warned about in Scripture – we know what those are: lying, stealing, killing, etc. Those are evils humans do, motivated by whatever is there in our hearts. God lets us get away with those things too, at least it seems like He does.

Then there is another kind of evil that is maybe harder for us to pinpoint its origin. The evils that happen to be out there, which affect us and others, but seem like they are just too big for us to overcome. Those big bad evils may be of some human making, or not, but now are so big we ourselves are kind of encircled by them. You might consider environmental dangers as one example, pollution, etc.

With the recent outbreak of the COVID-19 virus, a lot of other evils are happening as a result. Bad things are happening to many good people. We could list out all of what we see right now, and find out that it is much bigger than we are. Here are a few evils that I picture:

The suffering and death of many people, and more of them who have had to experience the suffering. Fortunately there are people who appear to be recovering from it.

The evils of misinformation that gets spread so easily about this disease. Misinformation is the same is bearing falsehood, even if the persons spreading it believe it is the truth. In the words of Pontius Pilate himself, “What is truth?” With a disease that is very new to the body of knowledge we have about epidemiology, and new information emerging each day about it, it is our responsibility to be vigilant and humble about this, and careful in how we talk to one another. Some of us love to weigh in on things that we are not trained to really teach others about.

And of course, the evil of fear. Fear is infectious, and maybe even more dangerous than some actual diseases. Fear can lead us to do other evils.

**1 Samuel 16:1-13**

1The LORD said to Samuel, “How long will you grieve over Saul? I have rejected him from being king over Israel. Fill your horn with oil and set out; I will send you to Jesse the Bethlehemite, for I have provided for myself a king among his sons.” 2Samuel said, “How can I go? If Saul hears of it, he will kill me.” And the LORD said, “Take a heifer with you, and say, ‘I have come to sacrifice to the LORD.’ 3Invite Jesse to the sacrifice, and I will show you what you shall do; and you shall anoint for me the one whom I name to you.” 4Samuel did what the LORD commanded, and came to Bethlehem. The elders of the city came to meet him trembling, and said, “Do you come peaceably?” 5He said, “Peaceably; I have come to sacrifice to the LORD; sanctify yourselves and come with me to the sacrifice.” And he sanctified Jesse and his sons and invited them to the sacrifice.

6When they came, he looked on Eliab and thought, “Surely the Lord’s anointed is now before the LORD.” 7But the LORD said to Samuel, “Do not look on his appearance or on the height of his stature, because I have rejected him; for the LORD does not see as mortals see; they look on the outward appearance, but the LORD looks on the heart.” 8Then Jesse called Abinadab, and made him pass before Samuel. He said, “Neither has the LORD chosen this one.” 9Then Jesse made Shammah pass by. And he said, “Neither has the LORD chosen this one.” 10Jesse made seven of his sons pass before Samuel, and Samuel said to Jesse, “The LORD has not chosen any of these.” 11Samuel said to Jesse, “Are all your sons here?” And he said, “There remains yet the youngest, but he is keeping the sheep.” And Samuel said to Jesse, “Send and bring him; for we will not sit down until he comes here.” 12He sent and brought him in. Now he was ruddy, and had beautiful eyes, and was handsome. The LORD said, “Rise and anoint him; for this is the one.” 13Then Samuel took the horn of oil, and anointed him in the presence of his brothers; and the spirit of the LORD came mightily upon David from that day forward. Samuel then set out and went to Ramah.

**Gospel John 9:1-41**

1As he walked along, he saw a man blind from birth. 2His disciples asked him, “Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?” 3Jesus answered, “Neither this man nor his parents sinned; he was born blind so that God’s works might be revealed in him. 4We must work the works of him who sent me while it is day; night is coming when no one can work. 5As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world.” 6When he had said this, he spat on the ground and made mud with the saliva and spread the mud on the man’s eyes, 7saying to him, “Go, wash in the pool of Siloam” (which means Sent). Then he went and washed and came back able to see. 8The neighbors and those who had seen him before as a beggar began to ask, “Is this not the man who used to sit and beg?” 9Some were saying, “It is he.” Others were saying, “No, but it is someone like him.” He kept saying, “I am the man.” 10But they kept asking him, “Then how were your eyes opened?” 11He answered, “The man called Jesus made mud, spread it on my eyes, and said to me, ‘Go to Siloam and wash.’ Then I went and washed and received my sight.” 12They said to him, “Where is he?” He said, “I do not know.”

13They brought to the Pharisees the man who had formerly been blind. 14Now it was a sabbath day when Jesus made the mud and opened his eyes. 15Then the Pharisees also began to ask him how he had received his sight. He said to them, “He put mud on my eyes. Then I washed, and now I see.” 16Some of the Pharisees said, “This man is not from God, for he does not observe the sabbath.” But others said, “How can a man who is a sinner perform such signs?” And they were divided. 17So they said again to the blind man, “What do you say about him? It was your eyes he opened.” He said, “He is a prophet.”

18The Jews did not believe that he had been blind and had received his sight until they called the parents of the man who had received his sight 19and asked them, “Is this your son, who you say was born blind? How then does he now see?” 20His parents answered, “We know that this is our son, and that he was born blind; 21but we do not know how it is that now he sees, nor do we know who opened his eyes. Ask him; he is of age. He will speak for himself.” 22His parents said this because they were afraid of the Jews; for the Jews had already agreed that anyone who confessed Jesus to be the Messiah would be put out of the synagogue. 23Therefore his parents said, “He is of age; ask him.”

24So for the second time they called the man who had been blind, and they said to him, “Give glory to God! We know that this man is a sinner.” 25He answered, “I do not know whether he is a sinner. One thing I do know, that though I was blind, now I see.” 26They said to him, “What did he do to you? How did he open your eyes?” 27He answered them, “I have told you already, and you would not listen. Why do you want to hear it again? Do you also want to become his disciples?” 28Then they reviled him, saying, “You are his disciple, but we are disciples of Moses. 29We know that God has spoken to Moses, but as for this man, we do not know where he comes from.” 30The man answered, “Here is an astonishing thing! You do not know where he comes from, and yet he opened my eyes. 31We know that God does not listen to sinners, but he does listen to one who worships him and obeys his will. 32Never since the world began has it been heard that anyone opened the eyes of a person born blind. 33If this man were not from God, he could do nothing.” 34They answered him, “You were born entirely in sins, and are you trying to teach us?” And they drove him out.

35Jesus heard that they had driven him out, and when he found him, he said, “Do you believe in the Son of Man?” 36He answered, “And who is he, sir? Tell me, so that I may believe in him.” 37Jesus said to him, “You have seen him, and the one speaking with you is he.” 38He said, “Lord, I believe.” And he worshiped him. 39Jesus said, “I came into this world for judgment so that those who do not see may see, and those who do see may become blind.” 40Some of the Pharisees near him heard this and said to him, “Surely we are not blind, are we?” 41Jesus said to them, “If you were blind, you would not have sin. But now that you say, ‘We see,’ your sin remains.”

**Sermon: “ “ Rev. Amy Pospichal**

It has been quite a wild several weeks, hasn’t it?

We are trying to adjust to a new thing, this coronavirus which has swept the world into a panic. The word “pandemic” immediately brings to mind some kind of end of the world as we know it. Panic happens when large numbers of people lose their calm, and allow fear to dictate their decisions. Fear of getting sick, fear of someone who might later want to sue a business for allowing them to become sick in their place of work. Panic could be a temporary loss of faith, in God or each other, or in ourselves, because uncertainty becomes the overpowering factor.

And uncertainty is definitely a part of the coronavirus pandemic. New information unfolds every day. Not all information we receive is well-proven, as it can take weeks, months and years to better understand the virus.

Faith and science, I have always believed, go hand in hand. Our understanding of the natural world, including viruses, comes through scientific knowledge, a body of knowledge that is always growing with every human experience. Faith tells us that we have nothing to fear, for in life and in death, we belong to God, body and soul. Faith also tells me that God gave us the gift of intelligence and we should use it to the full extent for God’s purposes.

There lived a theologian named Friedrich Schleiermacher during the Age of Enlightenment. He said that faith and science are two different languages to talk about God’s world. This means that they talk about some similar things, but have different ways of saying it. But where faith looks through the lens of what God wants for us, science seeks to understand God’s world, including that which is we think seems “unnatural” to our imaginations, only because it’s new and different.

Jesus healed that blind man with his powers over nature. For He is Lord of all creation. Remember that society had distanced themselves from that man, having labeled him a sinner, unworthy of even speaking to Pharisees. People had assumed this man had been judged a sinner by God, which is why he was blind. But Jesus refused to accept what tradition had said about the blind man. He took mud mixed with some saliva and put it on the man’s eyes. Then, he sent him to wash in the pool of Siloam. There was no more social distancing for this man. Jesus astounded everyone with his healing sign. Jesus showed that His will for this man to have relief, receive sight, and that was stronger than the will of society.

This man had a new life now, but part of his new life would involve overcoming the prejudices of society. But more importantly, he could see that Jesus is the Messiah, for whom everyone had been waiting.

John’s gospel refers to these healing moments not as “miracles,” but “signs.” For, each time Jesus performed such “signs” they signified He is the Messiah. Healing the blind man served as more than a merciful act. It served to show that Jesus is the Messiah, in the flesh. And the Messiah decided to show the world that just because a bad thing happens to someone, it doesn’t mean that he or she should be ignored.

In fact, those who refused to accept him, were probably more the sinners for not being open to hearing what he had to say about Jesus. They refused to hear the good news.

They missed out on a chance to hear some very good news – that the Messiah had come. When we refuse to hear new information, then we miss out on the chance to receive news we could use. News that would alter our perspectives, if we are willing to hear it. Maybe this is why Jesus used to say, “Let those who have ears, hear…”

We live in an age of uncertainty, about the health of ourselves and our neighbors. We don’t really know what will happen next. We will have to rely on faith and practice calmly evaluating all new information that comes our way. Jesus has already demonstrated for us that God’s grace can help us to overcome much.

Faith and Science are both concerned with understanding what we do not yet understand. They call for us to be mindful about all information that we receive. Let us proceed through our week with wisdom and calm, trusting God is at work. And, remember to look for signs of good in the world, to balance the bad. For it is in the worst of times that heroes emerge, and these are the times when we see God’s power to heal. Thanks be to God.

**Closing Hymn RH#46 “O Splendor of God’s Glory Bright”**

**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!**

**Please,**

**Pray for peace in the Middle East, including Iraq and Afghanistan**

**Pray for a safe return of daughters and sons from combat**

**Pray for our global community and those in the midst of disaster**

**Pray for America and her enemies, that all would seek peace!**

**Pray for all the people and leaders in our local community**

**Pray for those who are seeking a deeper spiritual life.**

**Pray for all first responders**

**Pray for our church, national and local**

**Pray for our Presbytery and our pastor**

**PRAYER REQUESTS FOR COMFORT AND HEALING**

Shay – requested by Julie Sursa

Jenna Morris, knee problems

Jim Enriquez & family - medical problems

Emma Lowther, Lou Sims’ great niece – ongoing heart trouble

Reagan Kenyon - more health problems

Gloria (Teresa Gallegos-Brake’s sister) – still having health problems

Sharon McCauley – awaiting surgery

Gene Kelly (Friend of Schusters’) – leaky heart valve

Ruth Johnson – physical problems

Cheryl Brewer – cancer hospice

Karen Foster – chemo for cancer

Sonia (Betty Faye’s daughter) recovering from stroke

Stacie (Glenda’s friend) – medical problems

Gracie Whitson – still recovering

Glenda Coles – broken foot and injured knee

Sharon Huffman – continued health problems

Tom Anderson – chemotherapy and side effects

Sheila Martinez – Heart Trouble, diabetes, vision problems

Konnor (grandson of the Bonds) – at sea in the Navy

Misty Tompkins – stiff person syndrome

Levi Mericle – thyroid cancer

Ida Macias – broken femur

Kaylie McKnight and her family

Betty (Glenda’s sister) – awaiting a diagnosis

Nancy Sallee – two health problems

Julie Sursa – difficulty walking