**First Presbyterian Church Tucumcari**

**Sunday, November 17, 2019 33rd Sunday in Ordinary Time**

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

**Prayer of the Day**

We are sometimes a fearful people, Holy One.  
But today, we place our trust, our hope and our faith in you.  
Use us for the creation of your Reign on earth,  
not in some distant future but today.  
We give thanks.  
Amen.

**Call to Confession**

Let us gather to lament what is broken in our lives and ask God to forgive us.

**Confession (please see bulletin)**

**Assurance of Pardon**The Psalmist reminds us:  
Happy are those whose help is in God, whose hope is in the Lord.  
Friends, God has heard our cry and has forgiven us our sins.  
Friends, Believe the Good News of Jesus Christ.

**In Jesus Christ we are forgiven!**

The Lord be with you.

**And also with you.**

**Isaiah 12 (please see bulletin)**

**Prayers of the People**

We exalt you, O God our Sovereign,  
and we bless your name forever and ever.  
Every day proclaims your blessing,  
and lifetime after lifetime sings praise to your name.  
To you, whose greatness never ends,  
we lift these prayers for your beloved people.

We pray for children and generations yet to come,  
that they may know and praise your works with joy.  
We pray for elders who ponder your glorious splendor,  
that they may rejoice in your marvelous works.  
We pray for those who have little to depend on except your might,  
that all your people may have everything they need.  
We pray for those who are sick, suffering, or grieving,  
that their lives might bear the mark of your great goodness  
and that, healed and whole, they may sing of your righteous deeds.

We pray to you, for you are gracious and full of compassion,  
slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love.  
We pray to you, in the name of the risen Christ,  
in whom we pray together:  
***The Lord’s Prayer***

**Time out for Teaching: One Spirit, Many Gifts**

Today we celebrate the Sacrament of Baptism. In a little while, we will be praying, making promises before God and each other, and remembering the gift of grace we receive from Jesus Christ our Lord. Baptism is the entryway into a new life. It marks the day we have acknowledged that God is at work on us, and we are conscious of this truth. This is why some theologians say that baptism is the “outward sign of an inward grace.” The signs of water, washing, and prayers to mark the occasion, so we never forget our response to this great day.

To mark that day, we answer three important questions:

After baptism, when we have committed ourselves to that new life, we have many choices to make. The questions we have promised should lead us to think of ourselves as redeemed, our lives made new. And it means that as new people, full of gratitude for belonging to God, we can do just about anything to serve him, especially using our gifts and talents.

We become, therefore, free to serve God in spite of our imperfections. We become admitted to the Family of God so we can become useful to God’s Kingdom. So how have you seen yourself become useful to God’s Kingdom, as you participate in the life and mission of this Church?

**Prayer for Illumination**

**Old Testament Isaiah 65:17-25**

17For I am about to create new heavens and a new earth; the former things shall not be remembered or come to mind. 18But be glad and rejoice forever in what I am creating; for I am about to create Jerusalem as a joy, and its people as a delight. 19I will rejoice in Jerusalem, and delight in my people; no more shall the sound of weeping be heard in it, or the cry of distress. 20No more shall there be in it an infant that lives but a few days, or an old person who does not live out a lifetime; for one who dies at a hundred years will be considered a youth, and one who falls short of a hundred will be considered accursed. 21They shall build houses and inhabit them; they shall plant vineyards and eat their fruit. 22They shall not build and another inhabit; they shall not plant and another eat; for like the days of a tree shall the days of my people be, and my chosen shall long enjoy the work of their hands. 23They shall not labor in vain, or bear children for calamity; for they shall be offspring blessed by the LORD-and their descendants as well. 24Before they call I will answer, while they are yet speaking I will hear. 25The wolf and the lamb shall feed together, the lion shall eat straw like the ox; but the serpent-its food shall be dust! They shall not hurt or destroy on all my holy mountain, says the LORD.

**Gospel Luke 21:5-19**

5When some were speaking about the temple, how it was adorned with beautiful stones and gifts dedicated to God, he said, 6"As for these things that you see, the days will come when not one stone will be left upon another; all will be thrown down."

7They asked him, "Teacher, when will this be, and what will be the sign that this is about to take place?" 8And he said, "Beware that you are not led astray; for many will come in my name and say, 'I am he!' and, 'The time is near!' Do not go after them.

9"When you hear of wars and insurrections, do not be terrified; for these things must take place first, but the end will not follow immediately." 10Then he said to them, "Nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom; 11there will be great earthquakes, and in various places famines and plagues; and there will be dreadful portents and great signs from heaven.

12"But before all this occurs, they will arrest you and persecute you; they will hand you over to synagogues and prisons, and you will be brought before kings and governors because of my name. 13This will give you an opportunity to testify. 14So make up your minds not to prepare your defense in advance; 15for I will give you words and a wisdom that none of your opponents will be able to withstand or contradict. 16You will be betrayed even by parents and brothers, by relatives and friends; and they will put some of you to death. 17You will be hated by all because of my name. 18But not a hair of your head will perish. 19By your endurance you will gain your souls.

**Sermon: Non-perishable**

About a year ago, Lavone Bond raised her hand in a PW meeting and said, “I volunteer to organize the Travelers’ Pantry.” After a few weeks, the windows were lined with lovely printed paper and inside the products had been updated and organized neatly into rows, new paper bags on the bottom. All were ready to be filled and provided to the people in need who come to our church. She organized it, beautified the outside of it and updated its usefulness. I often take pride in seeing something that seems to have been forgotten or ignored, and then made useful again. The pantry, by the way, is full of non-perishable foods. However, even though they are non-perishable, the still need tender loving care. All of the God’s ministries need some TLC, lest we forget about their importance.

Sometimes we feel completely validated by the fruits of our labors. We are satisfied to see the talents God has given us used to God’s glory. Some of us enjoy being participants in God’s church because worship can help strengthen our faith, so we become more useful. Being in God’s family gives us a chance to learn how to do new things, even serve in some capacity that forces us to get better at something. Like singing or playing an instrument, reading or speaking in public. Organizing committees or leading meetings. Connecting with others and talking about faith in ways we never did before. Taking care of offerings, property, or visiting the sick. I have often thought it was a great way for young people to try different kinds of things, learn new skills, and that a church was a way for them to learn about who they are, what they like to do and who they believe God wants them to become.

A church has always been and still is, a place to grow and learn about who God wants us to be. In old Augustinian and Calvinist language, the church has been referred to before as “the Mother,” and this is true for a reason. It is indeed a place where we find out, in a sense, who we are, as beloved children of God. It is the place we grow in faith after our baptism.

As early Christians, they understood their baptism as their means towards being witnesses. The word for “witness” in the Greek is “marturion” – or “martyr,” as we call it. These people were ready to give their lives so that the Gospel story would be told to others. Not all of them died. However, if you were to go read early Church literature, such as “The Martyrs” you will see the most terrifying stories of Christian women and men being killed. The beginning of the book admonishes the readers however. “It says that one should not be willing to die, just as the means to proclaiming the gospel….”

In our reading from Luke today, Jesus also gives his witnesses a caution. In Luke’s reading, Jesus tells them that they should come to expect such possibilities. And if not killed for their faith, they might experience a separation from others they loved. And while this is not fun, it raises up in importance that our identity as children of God, bound by the blood of Christ is stronger than anything else. It is the new normal. Because we have in our baptisms died to the ways of sin and death, committed ourselves to the power and grace of Jesus Christ, sealed by the Holy Spirit. So that whether we live or die, we belong to God. Jesus tells us that this new membership, our identity as redeemed children of God, drives all that we do, it is our “new normal.”

It is also our joy, for it marks the day we embrace God, for God has embraced us with Jesus’ grace. We conscientiously choose this new way of life. And it is the joy of the People of God to know one more has affirmed her faith in God. We celebrated that, in Christ, we are no longer perishable, but imperishable. And the good works we do in His name are also imperishable.

Have you ever written your own obituary? As an exercise for a class one time, I had to write my own obituary. I even located a photo of myself and inserted it into the paper. To write your own obituary, you have to think about all the people who are closest to you. Who would you mention in your own obituary? What do you want others to remember most about you? There are good reasons for writing your own obituary. First, it can actually be sort of fun. Second, it could be helpful to those you love, so they know what you would want said.

Dr. Alfred Nobel, inventor of dynamite, one day read his own obituary. His brother had just died, but people thought that Alfred was the one who died. It said, “The merchant of death is dead. Dr. Alfred Nobel, who became rich by finding ways to kill more people faster than ever before, died yesterday.” To be fair, dynamite was invented for mining. But that said, Nobel was taken aback by reading that this was how the world was going to remember him.

It’s believed that this moment was what pressed him to set aside the bulk of his estate to establish the Nobel Foundation.  Today, Nobel is not remembered as the merchant of death, but as the creator of the Nobel Prizes for major cultural and scientific advances, and, consequently, a great humanitarian. Reading his own obituary while he was still alive was for Nobel a wake up call. A chance to start new.

Baptism is our chance to start anew. It can spur us to renew **OUR** commitment to God’s Kingdom, using the gifts God has given each of us to serve in His church. Do not be just a witness to today’s baptism, but let it be a participatory moment for us, to review our lives, consider again what we would want known about us in years to come.

Let your baptism, and the remembrance of water on the forehead, the day of joy from the family who surround you – let that be what presses you forward in life. Let it be your guiding light to choose between good and evil from this day forward, confident of God’s love in all circumstances. Let it be a part of your everyday life and the claim God has made on yours. Let God use you to His glory. Amen.

**Baptism and Reception of New Member, Lavone Bond**

Obeying the word of our Lord Jesus, and confident of his promises, we baptize those whom God has called. In baptism God claims us, and seals us to show that we belong to God. God frees us from sin and death, uniting us with Jesus Christ in his death and resurrection. By water and the Holy Spirit, we are made members of the church, the body of Christ, and joined to Christ’s ministry of love, peace, and justice.

Let us remember with joy our own baptism, as we celebrate this sacrament.

**Elder:** On behalf of the session, I present Lavone Bond to receive the sacrament of Baptism.

Lavone, do you desire to be baptized?

**Lavone:** I do.

Do you, as members of the church of Jesus Christ, promise to guide and nurture Lavone, by word and deed, with love and prayer, encouraging them to know and follow Christ and to be faithful members of his church?

**Congregation:** We do.

**PROFESSION OF FAITH**

Through baptism we enter the covenant God has established. In that covenant God gives us new life; we are guarded from evil and nurtured by the love of God and God’s people. In embracing that covenant, we choose whom we will serve, by turning from evil and turning to Jesus Christ.

I ask you, therefore, to reject sin, to profess your faith in Christ Jesus, and to confess the faith of the church, the faith in which we baptize.

**RENUNCIATIONS**

Trusting in the gracious mercy of God, do you turn from the ways of sin and renounce evil and its power in the world?

**Lavone:** I do.

Who is your Lord and Savior?

**Lavone:** Jesus Christ is my Lord and Savior.

Will you be Christ’s faithful disciple, obeying his Word and showing his love?

**Lavone:** I will, with God’s help.

**PROFESSION**

With the whole church, let us confess our faith.

Do you believe in God, the Father almighty?

**I believe in God, the Father almighty, creator of heaven and earth.**

Do you believe in Jesus Christ?

**I believe in Jesus Christ, God’s only Son, our Lord, who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, and was buried; he descended to the dead. On the third day he rose again; he ascended into heaven, he is seated at the right hand of the Father, and he will come to judge the living and the dead.**

Do you believe in the Holy Spirit?

**I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy catholic church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting. Amen.**

Will you be a faithful member of this congregation, share in its worship and ministry through your prayers and gifts, your study and service, and so fulfill your calling to be a disciple of Jesus Christ?

**Lavone:** I will, with God’s help.

The Lord be with you.

**And also with you.**

Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

**It is right to give our thanks and praise.**

Eternal and gracious God, we give you thanks. In countless ways you have revealed yourself in ages past, and have blessed us with signs of your grace.

We praise you that through the waters of the sea, you led your people Israel out of bondage, into freedom in the land of your promise. We praise you for sending Jesus your Son, who for us was baptized in the waters of the Jordan, and was anointed as the Christ by your Holy Spirit.

Through the baptism of his death and resurrection, you set us free from the bondage of sin and death, and give us cleansing and rebirth. We praise you that in baptism you give us your Holy Spirit, who teaches us and leads us into all truth, filling us with a variety of gifts that we might proclaim the gospel to all nations and serve you as a royal priesthood.

Pour out your Spirit upon us and upon this water, that this font may be your womb of new birth. May all who now pass through these waters be delivered from death to life, from bondage to freedom, from sin to righteousness. Bind them to the household of faith, guard them from all evil. Strengthen them to serve you with joy until the day you make all things new. To you be all praise, honor, and glory; through Jesus Christ our Savior, who with you and the Holy Spirit, lives and reigns forever. Amen.

**Baptism:**

Lavone Bond, I baptize you in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

**LAYING ON OF HANDS**

O Lord, uphold Lavone Bond by your Holy Spirit. Give her the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and the fear of the Lord, the spirit of joy in your presence, both now and forever. Amen.

Lavone, child of the covenant, you have been sealed by the Holy Spirit in baptism, and marked as Christ’s own forever. Amen.

As members of the household of God, God has called them to serve Christ in the world. Let us welcome them to this ministry.

**With joy and thanksgiving we welcome you to share with us in the ministry of Christ, for we are all one in him.**

**Announcements:**

**Sunday Potluck Dinner:**  Today Fellowship Dinner after church. Please stay and break bread with us!

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