**First Presbyterian Church, Tucumcari**

*The Church With the Holy Spirit Window*

**November 28, 2021 First Sunday in Advent**

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

**RH 473 Blessed Be the Tie that Binds**

**RH 302 Have Thine Own Way, Lord**

**BH 322 Spirit of the Living God (Prayer for Illumination)**

**RH 151 Come, Thou Long-Expected Jesus**

**Lighting the Candle of Hope**

Today we light the candle of hope. As the flame begins to burn on this first candle of Advent, we are reminded how far we’ve come. From our ancestors of the faith who walked in the wilderness for 40 years, to the year that we have all experienced together. Hope does not come from instant gratification. Instead, it comes from a longing inside of us that knows things can be different. And yet, this year we have learned how to wait and hope at the same time.

As we light the candle of hope, we acknowledge a longing inside of all of us. We acknowledge the tension between waiting and hoping. We acknowledge the stubborn hope that holds us in one with each other as we begin our journey through Advent.

**Prayer:** Holy God, we thank you for the gift of hope that we find in Christ Jesus. Remind us of your presence as we live another week of hoping and longing. Amen.

**Call to Worship**

Show us your ways, O Lord! Lead us in your truth, and teach us.

**Open our eyes, minds, and hearts to know your will and to follow it.**

Reveal your vision for us and keep us focused and faithful to what you would have us do.

**Bring us together to worship and work for your purpose, and move us forward into your future!**

**Opening Prayer**

**Call to Confession**

We are called to lift up our souls to God.
Often, we would prefer only to lift up the parts of our soul that we are proud of.
But it is equally important that we lift up to God our sins as well.
Let us do so together with honesty and courage.

**Confession
We are told to be on guard, to be prepared for your coming.**
**We confess, merciful God, that too often we are lazy**
**and do not trouble ourselves with the prayerful sabbath**
**that is required on this Advent road.**
**Help us to be alert at all times,**
**to be aware of your presence in our lives.**
**Make us to know your ways, O Lord;**
**teach us your paths and lead us in your truth.**
**This pray in your holy and merciful name.***~silence~* **Amen.**

**Assurance of Pardon**The prophet Jeremiah reminds us
that the days are surely coming
when God will fulfill the promise God made to us.
A righteous branch is springing up!

Friends, Believe the good news of the Gospel.

**In Jesus Christ we are forgiven.**

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.**

**Psalm 25:1-10**

To you, O LORD, I lift up my soul.

O my God, in you I trust;

**do not let me be put to shame;**

**do not let my enemies exult over me.**

Do not let those who wait for you be put to shame;

**let them be ashamed who are wantonly treacherous.**

Make me to know your ways, O LORD;

teach me your paths.

**Lead me in your truth, and teach me,**

**for you are the God of my salvation;**

**for you I wait all day long.**

Be mindful of your mercy, O LORD, and of your steadfast love,

for they have been from of old.

**Do not remember the sins of my youth or my transgressions;**

**according to your steadfast love remember me,**

**for your goodness' sake, O LORD!**

Good and upright is the LORD;

therefore he instructs sinners in the way.

**He leads the humble in what is right,**

**and teaches the humble his way.**

All the paths of the LORD are steadfast love and faithfulness,

**for those who keep his covenant and his decrees.**

**Prayers of the People (Responsive:** Gracious God, **be mindful of your mercy.)**

God of our beginning and our end,
we confess to you that we live in a world that needs your mercy now more than ever.
As we celebrate joyfully in anticipation of your coming son,
we recognize that joy does not come as easily to everyone’s lips.
So many people are using their lips to cry out for healing in a broken world.
Gracious God, **be mindful of your mercy.**

We pray this day especially for children in places of violence,
who struggle to find happiness and fulfillment,
who hunger for love and compassion.
Gracious God, **be mindful of your mercy.**

We pray for women and men who are the victims of domestic violence,
who endure pain and physical abuse,
who long for peace and healing.
Gracious God, **be mindful of your mercy.**

We pray for people who suffer from alcoholism and substance abuse,
who seek an escape from that which they cannot solve by themselves,
who despair at seeing no way out.
Gracious God, **be mindful of your mercy.**

We pray for worshiping communities of all faiths that seek to heal the world,
who preach love in the face of hate and welcome the stranger as a friend,
who work to better themselves and share their blessings with others.
Gracious God, **be mindful of your mercy.**

We pray for those dear to us who struggle with cancer and other illnesses,
who desire comfort in the face of constant pain,
who wait for healing and peace.
Gracious God, **be mindful of your mercy.**

We pray for those who will call Maureen’s Haven their home this winter,
who shiver in the cold and fear the unknown,
who search for people to acknowledge them as human.
Gracious God, **be mindful of your mercy.**

We pray for those who have lost loved ones recently,
who grieve the loss of children and parents and other family and friends,
who find the holidays a difficult time where joy is hard to find.
Gracious God, **be mindful of your mercy.**

We pray for those who we lift up to you in silence or out loud…
(personal petitions may be made here)
Gracious God, **be mindful of your mercy.**

We trust that you are a God of righteousness, mercy, and steadfast love.
We hope for the day when you will wipe away every tear
and death and pain will be no more.
Until that day comes, be mindful of your mercy and forget not your children.
This we pray in you holy and merciful name. **Amen.**

**Offering**

**Prayer for Illumination BH 322 Spirit of the Living God**

**Time out for Teaching: Our Righteousness**

In Jeremiah’s reading today, he speaks of righteousness. Let’s read it now, in fact…

**Jeremiah 33:14-16**

14The days are surely coming, says the LORD, when I will fulfill the promise I made to the house of Israel and the house of Judah. 15In those days and at that time I will cause a righteous Branch to spring up for David; and he shall execute justice and righteousness in the land. 16In those days Judah will be saved and Jerusalem will live in safety. And this is the name by which it will be called: "The LORD is our righteousness."

I love this reading because it says God plans to fulfill His promise. His promise is to save Israel and provide safety to Jerusalem. The promise is to cause a “righteous Branch to grow up from the house of David – that righteous branch of which Jeremiah speaks is the hope for Israel who is in exile. What is “righteousness” anyways? Anyone want to try and define it?

Righteousness is something that God imputes to us by grace. God is the only one righteous enough to follow through with God’s promises to us. Righteousness is a manner of being an upright and faithful person, someone who tries to do right at all times. But unlike we, who make mistakes every so often, even those of us who try not to, we still need God’s righteousness. For God is our Redeemer, who in the person of Jesus Christ has come to set right the things that we cannot do ourselves.

**1 Thessalonians 3:9-13**

9How can we thank God enough for you in return for all the joy that we feel before our God because of you? 10Night and day we pray most earnestly that we may see you face to face and restore whatever is lacking in your faith.

11Now may our God and Father himself and our Lord Jesus direct our way to you. 12And may the Lord make you increase and abound in love for one another and for all, just as we abound in love for you. 13And may he so strengthen your hearts in holiness that you may be blameless before our God and Father at the coming of our Lord Jesus with all his saints.

**Gospel Luke 21:25-36**

25"There will be signs in the sun, the moon, and the stars, and on the earth distress among nations confused by the roaring of the sea and the waves. 26People will faint from fear and foreboding of what is coming upon the world, for the powers of the heavens will be shaken. 27Then they will see 'the Son of Man coming in a cloud' with power and great glory. 28Now when these things begin to take place, stand up and raise your heads, because your redemption is drawing near."

29Then he told them a parable: "Look at the fig tree and all the trees; 30as soon as they sprout leaves you can see for yourselves and know that summer is already near. 31So also, when you see these things taking place, you know that the kingdom of God is near. 32Truly I tell you, this generation will not pass away until all things have taken place. 33Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away.

34"Be on guard so that your hearts are not weighed down with dissipation and drunkenness and the worries of this life, and that day catch you unexpectedly, 35like a trap. For it will come upon all who live on the face of the whole earth. 36Be alert at all times, praying that you may have the strength to escape all these things that will take place, and to stand before the Son of Man."

**Sermon “Reckoning” Rev. Amy Pospichal**

 Every year about this time, our Elders prepare for the end of year and the beginning of the next. It’s a time of reckoning. We gather information for an annual report to the congregation. We report on what we have done, and what we hope to do in the coming year. We report on where the church funds went. We remember those who have died in the past year. It’s a time of reckoning. We settle our accounts. We admit where we fell short. We celebrate the victories and thank God for helping us. We determine where we have been. And the hope is that when we remember where we’ve been, we also remember that God was with us through it all. It’s a time of reckoning.

 I think it’s good to take a little time out for a little reckoning. Take stock of where you’ve been this year. Have you been good or bad? Santa does have that naughty or nice list! But jokes aside, I think it is a good thing to take a pause, prepare for God’s reckoning by doing it for ourselves first. With each Advent season, we are encouraged by the words of Scripture to know that such reckoning shall take place. But we are being put on notice. Luke’s gospel tells us to be alert, be ready and watchful for the arrival of Jesus Christ, for there shall be a reckoning.

 Now, for those of us who struggle with awful feelings of anxiety, don’t think for a moment that God is out to get you. Luke’s reading for our first week of Advent is supposed to be a message of hope. We are simply being reminded to pay attention to what God is doing. Look for the signs, he says. Are we paying attention to what God is doing? Do we even know what to look for? And if we don’t know what God is doing, how do we know what we are supposed to do?

 Jeremiah’s message tells us, in brief, what God is indeed doing. Short as our reading is today, it assures us that “14The days are surely coming, says the LORD, when I will fulfill the promise I made to the house of Israel and the house of Judah. 15In those days and at that time I will cause a righteous Branch to spring up for David; and he shall execute justice and righteousness in the land. 16In those days Judah will be saved and Jerusalem will live in safety. And this is the name by which it will be called: "The LORD is our righteousness." Jeremiah’s message gives assurance that God’s righteousness shall be activated in every corner of God’s world. And if we are not on the side of God’s plan for righteousness, then it behooves us to take stock, do a little reckoning. And pay attention to where God has been with us and to what God is doing now. God is already making good on His promise. What are we doing?

 It’s hard to do that reckoning. It’s a little like finally growing up and admitting where we are now, so we can finally know where we are going. Anne Lamott writes about how she finally grew up in her book Traveling Mercies, in a chapter called “Thirst.” She begins the chapter with the statement, “I knew by the time I was twenty that I was an alcoholic, even though I was not quite sure what that meant.” She relates to a couple of times when she woke up so hung over she felt glued to the bed by her own drool. How she kept on denying the fact that she needed to quit and went through all of the usual mental contortions – ‘loopholes’ she called them - to pretend she had everything under control. Until two of her friends committed suicide. That got her attention. She sobered up. But that didn’t make things much easier. So she began attending meetings to help her through staying sober. The people there annoyed her. She felt like a battered explorer trying to find her way home. Eventually, the anger started to wear off as she continued to attend this group of oddball people. She wondered why they cared so much about her. But she kept on coming back and says, “they loved me and helped me become one of them when I grew up. Sometimes I feel that they’re like the clumsy deadpan kids in the Peanuts, with their sayings and slogans – like Pig Pen, blinky and dense, or Linus and Schroeder. But I love to listen to them tell their stories of ruin; I’m a sucker for a good resurrection story.”

 In her reckoning of her own life, she ended up becoming a witness to the lives of others, and found relationships to people she never imagined she would call friends. But there she found unconditional love. It’s truly amazing what we might all find if we are able to finally take stock of our lives before God does it for us. This life we have been given to live is too short not to live it to the fullest. Advent is a time of hope. Hope that comes when we reckon our lives to God. Embrace this season of Advent for what it was meant to be. Take stock of where your life has been going, witness how God has been a part of it, repent of your mistakes. This is the key to growing up and knowing of God’s unconditional love and righteousness. Amen.

**\*Benediction**

**Prayer Requests:**

Amy (Glenna Gray’s daughter) chronic medical issues
Betty (Alzheimer’s) and Dolores (paralyzed) – Glenda’s sisters
Dorothy Randals’ Family in their loss

Elmer Schuster - leg pain

Fay Birch – stage 4 cancer
Glenda Coles – awaiting shoulder surgery (early December)
Gloria Martinez (Teresa Gallegos’ sister) – healing after leg surgery

Lucy Jasper – Alzheimers/Dementia
Misty Tompkins and her family – stiff person syndrome, seeking experimental program

People seeking jobs, and people seeking employees
Ruth Johnson – for general health
Sarah Hittson's daughter Marie - surgery
Schools, students, teachers and families
Sharon and Wayne Huffman – general health
Shay – Julie Sursa’s daughter

Susie – still seeking a car, planning for EMS school
Tommy Morris – for health and strength
Travelers
All those suffering from COVID19

**Announcements:**

**Bible Study** will resume Wednesday, December 1st at 5:15PM. We are presently thinking of looking at the letter from James. Ask Amy 575-708-0860, if you have any questions.

**Decking the Halls:** We will be having a hanging of the greens afternoon on Tuesday this week at 5:15. If you want to share a pizza or a bowl of soup, let’s do after a little while!