**First Presbyterian Church Tucumcari**

**Worship 11:00AM**

**Sunday, September 22, 2019, Twenty-Fifth Sunday in Ordinary Time**

**RH 446 Morning Has Broken Marjorie McKenzie, Accompanist**

**BH 426 Lord, Speak to Me, That I May Speak**

**BH 446 Glorious Things of Thee Are Spoken**

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

**Prayer of the Day**

God of Creation,  
all of the world proclaims your praise,  
from the highest heavens to the deepest recesses of the sea.  
Make our voices true and faithful  
as we join the voices of all of creation to sing your praise. **Amen**.

**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 46 (please see bulletin)**

**Prayers of the People**

God most high,  
God with us,  
we praise you with every word we speak  
and with every moment we fall silent.  
You hear our prayer  
and sustain us along with all living things.  
You forgive our sins  
and bring us close  
to live in the goodness of your holy presence.

We pray for your awesome deeds of salvation,  
for us and to all the farthest edges of the earth.  
With the strength that raised mountains,  
calm the roaring seas of conflict;  
calm the waves of violence and oppression;  
draw all nations and peoples close to each other.

We pray for everyone who longs for your joy:  
for those who are sick or in pain from morning to night;  
for those whose grief weighs them down;  
for those who hunger and thirst  
for guidance, righteousness, or food.

Rain down your love once again, O God.  
Soften our hearts, so our lives can bear your fruit.  
Crown our lives with your goodness,  
and let everything we do overflow with blessings for your people.  
We pray in the one who bring us joy,  
Jesus the Christ, who taught us to pray:

*The Lord’s Prayer*

**Time Out For Teaching: Paul’s Pal Timothy**

Timothy was one of Paul’s close friends in service to the Gospel. There are two letters from Paul to Timothy. Those two letters along with the letter to Paul’s other good friend, Titus, make up what we call the “Pastoral Letters.” “Pastor” literally means from Latin “shepherd,” and these letters intend to provide shepherding advice, that is providing counsel and comfort.

The Pastoral letters try to provide just that – shepherding the flock that is the church where Timothy and Titus were at the time.

These letters teach the church how to be organized and orderly. How to select good bishops and deacons, for example.

Timothy was from Anatolia, and while Paul had visited that area many years earlier, he was said to have healed a person crippled since birth. A church began there, in Lystra. Later on, when Paul returned, he met Timothy, who had become an active member of that congregation. Timothy became one of Paul’s most constant companions, along with Silas, and they traveled together preaching and teaching. After a while, Paul began to leave Timothy behind so Timothy could live with new churches and provide additional guidance to them as Paul would go on searching for new places to evangelize.

So, perhaps these letters were not just for Timothy and Titus, but for the churches where they were serving. And I am sure that these letters served as reminders of those values to which they must hold fast, as they had to be strong in faith while leading others.

**Prayer for Illumination**

O God of wisdom,  
you delight in deep truth.  
Let these words of scripture teach our hearts,  
that we may hear your joy and gladness,  
for the sake of Christ, your wisdom for us. Amen.

**1 Timothy 2:1-7**

1First of all, then, I urge that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings be made for everyone, 2for kings and all who are in high positions, so that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and dignity. 3This is right and is acceptable in the sight of God our Savior, 4who desires everyone to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth. 5For there is one God; there is also one mediator between God and humankind, Christ Jesus, himself human, 6who gave himself a ransom for all-this was attested at the right time. 7For this I was appointed a herald and an apostle (I am telling the truth, I am not lying), a teacher of the Gentiles in faith and truth.

**Gospel Luke 16:1-13**

1Then Jesus said to the disciples, "There was a rich man who had a manager, and charges were brought to him that this man was squandering his property. 2So he summoned him and said to him, 'What is this that I hear about you? Give me an accounting of your management, because you cannot be my manager any longer.' 3Then the manager said to himself, 'What will I do, now that my master is taking the position away from me? I am not strong enough to dig, and I am ashamed to beg. 4I have decided what to do so that, when I am dismissed as manager, people may welcome me into their homes.' 5So, summoning his master's debtors one by one, he asked the first, 'How much do you owe my master?' 6He answered, 'A hundred jugs of olive oil.' He said to him, 'Take your bill, sit down quickly, and make it fifty.' 7Then he asked another, 'And how much do you owe?' He replied, 'A hundred containers of wheat.' He said to him, 'Take your bill and make it eighty.' 8And his master commended the dishonest manager because he had acted shrewdly; for the children of this age are more shrewd in dealing with their own generation than are the children of light. 9And I tell you, make friends for yourselves by means of dishonest wealth so that when it is gone, they may welcome you into the eternal homes.

10"Whoever is faithful in a very little is faithful also in much; and whoever is dishonest in a very little is dishonest also in much. 11If then you have not been faithful with the dishonest wealth, who will entrust to you the true riches? 12And if you have not been faithful with what belongs to another, who will give you what is your own? 13No slave can serve two masters; for a slave will either hate the one and love the other, or be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and wealth."

**Sermon: Property of: God**

To whom do you belong? Whose property are we and whose property are we in charge of? You know what I’m going to say.

We are God’s property, if we understand God to be maker of heaven and earth. We belong to God, in life and in death, for we were bought with his love.

It became popular in my high school to wear fashionable sweat shirts which said, “Property of:…Athletic Department…” then it started coming out with the names of popular clothing labels, “Property of: Hilfiger… Victoria’s Secret, etc.” At the time, I figured it was one of the cheaper ways of declaring your fashion sense, a way to avoid buying their expensive labels by just wearing the name brand. “Property of:” indicated your allegiance, as shallow as it might have been, to a certain label or brand.

So, who owns you? Your morning coffee fixed just the way you like it? A certain clothing label? A type of ketchup? Ford or Chevy? It seems absurd, but have your ever caught yourself becoming owned by material things? I have. Without trying too hard or without even realizing it at first, we can easily become slaves to the material world, or enslaved by certain philosophies of this world. But if we take seriously our position as managers in God’s household, the ideas and things of this world pale in importance, compared to the importance of how we manage them.

Just take look at Jesus’ parable. The manager was probably a slave. In those times there quite a lot of highly-educated people who had become slaves – either to pay off a debt, or because they had been taken as prisoners in war. And those educated people could write and do math, manage a plantation – were usually given the more complex jobs like managing a household with much attention to detail. The parable Jesus tells was a pretty familiar setting to them. A head of the household who puts a lot of trust in his slave. The head of the household would have gone away a lot, if he owned more than one property.

But now, the servant’s job was in jeopardy. He was squandering the property. Since he assumed he was already fired, he decided to save his skin. He was too old to do physical labor, so he went to the people who owed the boss something, made a deal so they would pay up right away at a discount. That was his way of winning friends and influencing people, just in case he might need to rely on them later.

I admit to you, this is a pretty confusing story. On the surface it flies in the face of what we might normally think about concerning stewardship. We are taught traditionally to tend all that God entrusts to us, both material possessions and money, as well as the goodness and grace God gives and wishes us to share. We are supposed to be honest and hardworking, accountable for our actions, unselfish. This servant is out to save his own skin. Fear is what kicked him into action and to go to such lengths, finally embracing his job and authority as a manager. But, even if his motives were self-serving, he became a shrewd manager who helped his boss get back much of what was owed. What he did, and what I think is our work as Christians, is he made contact with those who owed the boss, made the boss look good in the process, and gained new friends.

So this servant showed us that a person can actually change when he or she realizes what’s at stake – and that he or she is actually Property of: God. And all that is in our charge is not ours but also Property of: God. We cannot serve two masters, Jesus says. But in all we do and say, we have to remember it’s for God. Riches and property are not our masters, nor are they evil. What matters is what we do with God’s property, that we manage it with faith and grace. And if we can use God’s property to make new friends for God, then that’s a good thing.

This clever servant made new friends by giving them a break on what they owed the master. Jesus says it himself when he says, “make friends by means of unrighteous mammon, so that when it fails they may receive you into eternal habitations…If you have not been faithful in the unrighteous mammon, who will entrust to you the true riches?” What Jesus seems to say is it is to ours and to God’s benefit that we give someone else a break on what they owe God. For all of us owe God much, much more than we shall ever be able to repay.

Our Rummage Sale is a place where just this kind of transaction happens. We receive 4goods to sell and we seek to sell them faithfully at a good price, for this is a part and parcel of being stewards of what belongs to God. A transaction also happens with each person we meet, involving an element of grace and welcome. We are the economists of all that belongs to God. We are the visible dispensers of grace. We are Property of: God. Amen.

**Announcements:**

**Rummage Sale is coming!** We need your help in the way of donations, and to take some time out to help us get ready for the sale. Do you know where we send our “leftovers” after the sale? Ministry of H.O.P.E. The Sale is October 4-5 from 9AM-3PM.