**First Presbyterian Church Tucumcari**

**Worship 11:00AM**

**Sunday, September 23, 2018, 25th Sunday in Ordinary Time**

**Call to Worship**

Praise be to God the Creator, **who breathes life into being.**  
Praise be to God the Redeemer, **who saves us from ourselves.**  
Praise be to God the Sustainer, **who binds us together as one body.**  
Come, children of God, **come worship our and wonderful Maker.**

**Prayer of the Day**

Our Lord and Savior,

Open our hearts’ eyes that we may see and feel

Your presence among us this morning.

While we worship you, strengthen our resolve

To walk in faith, to speak your words of freedom

And to love our neighbor as ourselves.

We adore you and give you thanks this day.

In the Spirit of God we pray,

Amen.

**Call to Confession**

**Prayer of Confession**

**Loving God, you are always speaking, giving us instructions, directing our attention, and telling us your love. We confess that sometimes we are not very good listeners. We aren’t sure what is your voice, and what is ours, and what is just noise. We are easily distracted. We like our own ways. But even when we are too busy, you still call. We admit that we find you difficult to hear, and we ask for your help. Open our minds and hearts. Tune our ears to your voice. Help us to listen to what you have to say, and then help us to follow wherever you lead.** (*Silence*)  
**Thank you, God, for hearing us, and for speaking to us. Remind us of your love and forgiveness, and give us strength to be faithful to you. Amen.**

**Assurance of Pardon**

Let yourself live and believe this good news:  
**In Jesus Christ we are forgiven!**

The Lord be with you.

**And also with you.**

**Psalm 1**

Happy are those

who do not follow the advice of the wicked,

or take the path that sinners tread,

or sit in the seat of scoffers;

**but their delight is in the law of the LORD,**

**and on his law they meditate day and night.**

They are like trees

planted by streams of water,

which yield their fruit in its season,

and their leaves do not wither.

**In all that they do, they prosper.**

**The wicked are not so,**

**but are like chaff that the wind drives away.**

Therefore the wicked will not stand in the judgment,

nor sinners in the congregation of the righteous;

**for the LORD watches over the way of the righteous,**

**but the way of the wicked will perish.**

**Prayers of the People**

Let us pray to God saying:  
Holy and Merciful God, **hear our prayer.**

Today is a Sunday that many Presbyterian Churches  
celebrate and support places of theological education.  
We give thanks for the 10 seminaries of our denomination.  
May these places continue to teach faithfully the future leaders  
of our faith families here and abroad.  
Holy and Merciful God, **hear our prayer.**

Gracious God,  
today’s scripture reminds us that words matter  
and that the way we choose our words  
holds within it the capacity to either harm or heal, to wound or welcome.  
In this time when words are tossed around so casually,  
may our words be used to build up the Body of Christ  
and share love and compassion in a broken and battered world.  
Holy and Merciful God, **hear our prayer.**

Healing God,  
we pray for those who have been hurt by words of late:  
for refugees and immigrants with or without documentation,  
for women and girls who have endured words of sexism,  
for people of color who hear words of racism,  
for people with disabilities who are told they are “less than,”  
for elderly people who are told they are useless,  
for young adults who are told they are entitled, selfish, and irresponsible.  
God of the Living Word, help us speak the truth in love  
and to care for one another with the words we choose to speak.  
Holy and Merciful God, **hear our prayer.**

God of Healing and Wholeness,  
we lift up to you our words of prayer  
for the people near and dear to our hearts  
as we lift them up silently before you…  
Holy and Merciful God, **hear our prayer.**

Triune God,  
we love you for you hear our voice and our supplications.  
We lift these prayers to your ears  
along with the prayer you taught us to pray, saying: **Our Father…**

**Time out for Teaching: Wisdom Literature Proverbs 31**

Did you know that the reading from Proverbs 31 today contains a mnemonic device? Who knows what a mnemonic device even is??

Well, you can’t tell from reading it in English, but if you looked at “A capable wife who can find?” each line begins with consecutive letters, in the order of the Hebrew alphabet. Just like we might use “My Very Educated Mother Just Served Us Nine Pizzas.” What’s that about? (so we can memorize the planets, including poor little Pluto)

This list of Proverbs provides an alphabetical list of things that a “capable wife” does. It gives us a little peek into the sorts of things that were considered valuable in a wife, and as we are about to see, she does all sorts of things, from overseeing the household to making things which she then sells in the marketplace. And she does not neglect ensuring her family is clothed and no one has any worries about getting through the winter. Because this has the alphabet built right into it, it was apparently something used for people to memorize, even have to recite. Many people, remember, were not able to read or write, so if it was something to be taught and remembered, they did.

I don’t probably measure up to that woman of the Proverbs, but it does reflect a woman who is diverse in skills, attends to the needs of her family and is highly resourceful, to the gratitude and admiration of those who love her.

Memorization of the wisdom of teachers was a very common way that students carried forth their teachers’ spirit. An ancient rabbi \_\_\_\_\_ once said “The teacher lives on in the student.” It is one of the reasons why we have so many sayings of Jesus from which the ancient authors were able to write the gospel stories. A disciple customarily memorized what his or her teacher said.

I think memorization has its place, although it is rather a lost art for us modern people. What if we took more to memorizing Jesus’ words instead of always looking them up?

**Prayer for Illumination**

As children welcomed to your presence,  
instill within us a sense of curiosity and wonder  
as we gather to listen to your Word. Amen.

**Proverbs 31:10-31**

10A capable wife who can find?

She is far more precious than jewels.

11The heart of her husband trusts in her,

and he will have no lack of gain.

12She does him good, and not harm,

all the days of her life.

13She seeks wool and flax,

and works with willing hands.

14She is like the ships of the merchant,

she brings her food from far away.

15She rises while it is still night

and provides food for her household

and tasks for her servant-girls.

16She considers a field and buys it;

with the fruit of her hands she plants a vineyard.

17She girds herself with strength,

and makes her arms strong.

18She perceives that her merchandise is profitable.

Her lamp does not go out at night.

19She puts her hands to the distaff,

and her hands hold the spindle.

20She opens her hand to the poor,

and reaches out her hands to the needy.

21She is not afraid for her household when it snows,

for all her household are clothed in crimson.

22She makes herself coverings;

her clothing is fine linen and purple.

23Her husband is known in the city gates,

taking his seat among the elders of the land.

24She makes linen garments and sells them;

she supplies the merchant with sashes.

25Strength and dignity are her clothing,

and she laughs at the time to come.

26She opens her mouth with wisdom,

and the teaching of kindness is on her tongue.

27She looks well to the ways of her household,

and does not eat the bread of idleness.

28Her children rise up and call her happy;

her husband too, and he praises her:

29"Many women have done excellently,

but you surpass them all."

30Charm is deceitful, and beauty is vain,

but a woman who fears the LORD is to be praised.

31Give her a share in the fruit of her hands,

and let her works praise her in the city gates.

**James 3:13-4:3, 7-8a**

13Who is wise and understanding among you? Show by your good life that your works are done with gentleness born of wisdom. 14But if you have bitter envy and selfish ambition in your hearts, do not be boastful and false to the truth. 15Such wisdom does not come down from above, but is earthly, unspiritual, devilish. 16For where there is envy and selfish ambition, there will also be disorder and wickedness of every kind. 17But the wisdom from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, willing to yield, full of mercy and good fruits, without a trace of partiality or hypocrisy. 18And a harvest of righteousness is sown in peace for those who make peace.

4:1Those conflicts and disputes among you, where do they come from? Do they not come from your cravings that are at war within you? 2You want something and do not have it; so you commit murder. And you covet something and cannot obtain it; so you engage in disputes and conflicts. You do not have, because you do not ask. 3You ask and do not receive, because you ask wrongly, in order to spend what you get on your pleasures.

7Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. 8Draw near to God and he will draw near to you.

**Gospel Mark 9:30-37**

30They went on from there and passed through Galilee. He did not want anyone to know it; 31for he was teaching his disciples, saying to them, "The Son of Man is to be betrayed into human hands, and they will kill him, and three days after being killed, he will rise again." 32But they did not understand what he was saying and were afraid to ask him.

33Then they came to Capernaum; and when he was in the house he asked them, "What were you arguing about on the way?" 34But they were silent, for on the way they had argued with one another who was the greatest. 35He sat down, called the twelve, and said to them, "Whoever wants to be first must be last of all and servant of all." 36Then he took a little child and put it among them; and taking it in his arms, he said to them, 37"Whoever welcomes one such child in my name welcomes me, and whoever welcomes me welcomes not me but the one who sent me."

**Sermon: Sauntering to the Holy Land**

Slow down, you move too fast

You got to make the [morning](https://www.definitions.net/definition/morning) last

Just [kicking](https://www.definitions.net/definition/kicking) down the [cobble](https://www.definitions.net/definition/cobble) stones

Looking for fun and feelin' groovy

Hello lamppost, what cha knowing?

I've come to [watch](https://www.definitions.net/definition/watch) your [flowers](https://www.definitions.net/definition/flowers) growing

Ain't cha got no [rhymes](https://www.definitions.net/definition/rhymes) for me?

Doot-in' doo-doo, feelin' groovy

We remember those words well. The Simon and Garfunkel hit tells us that perhaps life isn’t all about taking everything so seriously all of the time. That taking time to kick the cobblestones, saunter and explore isn’t such a bad thing. As long as you don’t actually hear the lamppost answering you back! We should enjoy a nice wander in the backyard, or a stroll through a good book, a little navel gazing can actually do our spirits some good. It’s wise for us to take five and pay close attention to how the sun dapples the east side of your garage, or the shadows cast by clouds on Tucumcari Mountain – or to see that the mountain was actually missing this week because of the mist!

My point is, don’t rush all of the time. Slow down if you’re moving too fast.

Jesus’ disciples were moving too fast. It was as if their minds were already rushing to the next thing as Jesus has just predicted he would be killed and then rise in three days. The disciples’ first mistake, and it was a mistake many of us make, was they didn’t understand what he was saying, but they were afraid to ask him about it. Their second mistake was they begun arguing among themselves who was the greatest, as if to see who would be the leader once Jesus was gone. Talk about putting the cart before the horse! Jesus wasn’t dead yet. And boy did they misunderstand him, because they were afraid to ask about it.

This moment in time is really one of the first in a while that Jesus has the chance to be alone with his disciples. They are no longer being pursued by all those crowds. They are Capernaum, a city near the Sea of Galilee where they have many close friends. They are in a private home. It is finally a chance for Jesus to help his disciples prepare for the journey to the cross. The news Jesus has for them is not exactly for the fainthearted. It takes a while to hear it, allow it to sink in. That’s why he keeps saying it.

This time, they heard it but didn’t understand. It probably scared them. It probably moved them to try and figure out what they’d do after Jesus’ death. It certainly made them anxious, as it would make any of us anxious. And in this situation, it caused them to argue about which one of them was the greatest. Slow down, Disciples, take five. You’re in the presence of Jesus, so you might as well calm down.

I recently read that Henry David Thoreau, in his essay, “Walking,” muses that the word “saunter” might be related to the French word for “Holy Land,” “Sainte Terre” and those who walked on pilgrimages to the Holy Land were called “Saint terrers.” Thoreau imagines that a pilgrimage to the Holy Land would certainly be a saunter in a very good sense.

What’s the rush, when you’re already in the presence of Jesus? Soak up the moment when he has you alone with him and he can show you things about his world that we normally don’t see when we rush about.

Jesus is not in a hurry. His Daddy made time. As we see in this reading, Jesus takes his time with those disciples at that friend’s house, showing them something surprising. To welcome a child is to welcome me, he says. And to welcome me is to welcome the one who sent me. This child, he says - to welcome, to perhaps play with, to talk to, to respect, to get to know - is a key to welcoming God into your heart. This was surprising to them only because children were not really considered for anything except as slave labor and as little people who would one day take over the family fortunes. But while they were small, children were hardly to be seen, let alone heard. But Jesus tells them that knowing a child and welcoming that child is the key to greatness, and way to get closer to God.

Maybe Thoreau had it right. To welcome God as children, we might need to saunter a little more. To meander along in holiness and try to look at the world more like children do from time to time. Jesus’ discussion about the child is also an invitation to think and see a little more like that child. Belonging to God means being God’s child. This life God has given to us to live is not just for us to rush around in, to secure our own futures and proclaim our own greatness. It is much more than that. It is made even greater when we make time to saunter, to play and explore and ponder those small moments when we are alone with God. To remind ourselves that we are always on a pilgrimage, with Jesus as our guide.

This season is a busy one. School is now in full swing. The Rummage Sale coming. Fired Up! is next weekend. We seem to be continually coming and going. So, take time to saunter, linger, and pay attention to the little moments in between. Remember when the unexpected comes our way, slow down, pilgrim. Amen.

**Announcements:**

**World Communion Sunday is in 2 Weeks:** Our Deacon in Charge will be Richard Randals. We will decorate the table and sanctuary with textiles from different nationalities. If you’d like to participate, please bring your cloths to the church no later than 10:30AM, Sunday, October 7th.