**First Presbyterian Church, Tucumcari**

*The Church With the Holy Spirit Window*

**April 11, 2021 2nd Sunday in Easter 11:00 a.m.**

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

RH 46 O Splendor of God’s Glory Bright

RH 235 Breathe on Me, Breath of God

RH 213 Crown Him with Many Crowns

**Call to Worship**

Christ is risen!
**Now what?**
The disciples clung to each other. They huddled in the upper room, waiting.
**Would the authorities come to take them, too?**
Instead, Jesus himself appeared, despite the locked door.
**What next?**
Next came doubts and questions, assurances and instructions, and a last word:
**“Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have come to believe.”**
Christ is risen! Now what?
**Now we come together to wait for him.**
May the risen Christ bless us as we worship what we have not seen, yet believe.

**Opening Prayer**

God of new life, move through the locked doors of our hearts. Open us to your love moving in the world. Instruct us as you taught the disciples. Make a new church of us, a blessed place where we live in unity. Help us to learn from those first believers who prayed as we do, using the words Jesus taught, etc.

**Call to Confession**

God doesn’t call us to a blind faith…
but to a faith that is eye-opening and mind-expanding.
But we often find it more beneficial for ourselves
if we pretend we cannot see or understand God’s vision for creation.

So please join me in the prayer of confession…

**Prayer of Confession**

**Loving God, you created all things to work together in your kingdom, and you call us to live as one Body. We confess we often prefer to go our own way, and our unwillingness to love when we don’t understand put us at odds with your creation. We pursue our own individual success and we miss the chance to celebrate your gift of community. Forgive us. Open our ears to hear you speaking, and our hearts to embrace your purpose.**~silence~ **Amen.**

**Assurance of Pardon**

This is Good News:

God does not mock us when we fail to trust,
but invites us into a deeper, more intimate relationship.

*Put your finger here. Look at my hands. Put your hand in my side. Trust me!*

God does not shame us when our faith waivers,
but challenges us to be strengthened by God’s promises.

*Happy are those who don’t see…and yet trust!*

God’s purpose is not to tear us down…but to build us up…
forgiven…refreshed…and renewed!

So let’s sing…and let’s give thanks to God!

Friends, in the name of the Jesus Christ, you and I are forgiven!
**Thanks be to God! Amen!**

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 133:1-3 (Unison)**

**How very good and pleasant it is
          when kindred live together in unity!
It is like the precious oil on the head,
          running down upon the beard,
     on the beard of Aaron,
          running down over the collar of his robes.
It is like the dew of Hermon,
          which falls on the mountains of Zion.
For there the LORD ordained his blessing,
          life for evermore.**

**Prayers of the People**

We give you praise, O God,
because you are eternally victorious over death.
In faithfulness you have raised up Christ for us,
and your mercy knows no end.

God of life, we pray for those who are bowed down
under the weight of hunger, injustice, uncertainty, or despair.
You who provide every good thing,
uphold your people.
Open your hands wide
and satisfy the needs of every living thing.

God of hope, we trust in your righteousness
and depend on your love.
Be near to those on whose behalf we call upon you;
to those who face sorrow, illness, injury, or death.
Fulfill our longings for wholeness, healing, and new life;
hear and answer all who cry out to you.

Steadfast God, preserve us in your love,
that we might speak your praise
and bless you forever
in the name of the holy one, the Risen Christ,
who teaches us to pray as we say:
*The Lord’s Prayer*

**Offering**

**Time out for Teaching: One Heart, One Mind**

The first reading today is going to be from Acts 4:32-35. It says the believers were of one heart and one soul. They did not claim to have any private ownership but all held our possessions in common with everyone else. No one, we are told, was in need. All who came to believe brought their possessions to the disciples and those possessions were distributed to each as needed.

This was their response to the news of the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

What is your response to the resurrection of Jesus our Lord?

What do you think SHOULD be our response?

**Prayer for Illumination**

Draw us from our tombs…
from the dark, self-imposed prisons of knowing-it-all…
into the light of your unflinching good news.
Use our encounters with the stories of scripture
to unbind us from our fascination with the status quo…
so that we may cling to your heart,
and see the world through your eyes.
Amen.

**Acts 4:32-35**

32Now the whole group of those who believed were of one heart and soul, and no one claimed private ownership of any possessions, but everything they owned was held in common. 33With great power the apostles gave their testimony to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and great grace was upon them all. 34There was not a needy person among them, for as many as owned lands or houses sold them and brought the proceeds of what was sold. 35 They laid it at the apostles’ feet, and it was distributed to each as any had need.

**1 John 1:1-2:2**

1:1We declare to you what was from the beginning, what we have heard, what we have seen with our eyes, what we have looked at and touched with our hands, concerning the word of life — 2this life was revealed, and we have seen it and testify to it, and declare to you the eternal life that was with the Father and was revealed to us — 3we declare to you what we have seen and heard so that you also may have fellowship with us; and truly our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ. 4We are writing these things so that our joy may be complete.

5This is the message we have heard from him and proclaim to you, that God is light and in him there is no darkness at all. 6If we say that we have fellowship with him while we are walking in darkness, we lie and do not do what is true; 7but if we walk in the light as he himself is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus his Son cleanses us from all sin. 8If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. 9If we confess our sins, he who is faithful and just will forgive us our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness. 10If we say that we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us.

2:1My little children, I am writing these things to you so that you may not sin. But if anyone does sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous; 2and he is the atoning sacrifice for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the sins of the whole world.

**Gospel John 20:19-31**

19When it was evening on that day, the first day of the week, and the doors of the house where the disciples had met were locked for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood among them and said, “Peace be with you.” 20After he said this, he showed them his hands and his side. Then the disciples rejoiced when they saw the Lord. 21Jesus said to them again, “Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, so I send you.” 22When he had said this, he breathed on them and said to them, “Receive the Holy Spirit. 23If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained.”

24But Thomas (who was called the Twin), one of the twelve, was not with them when Jesus came. 25So the other disciples told him, “We have seen the Lord.” But he said to them, “Unless I see the mark of the nails in his hands, and put my finger in the mark of the nails and my hand in his side, I will not believe.”

26A week later his disciples were again in the house, and Thomas was with them. Although the doors were shut, Jesus came and stood among them and said, “Peace be with you.” 27Then he said to Thomas, “Put your finger here and see my hands. Reach out your hand and put it in my side. Do not doubt but believe.” 28Thomas answered him, “My Lord and my God!” 29Jesus said to him, “Have you believed because you have seen me? Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have come to believe.”

30Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book. 31But these are written so that you may come to believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that through believing you may have life in his name.

**Sermon “So That We May Believe” Rev. Amy Pospichal**

“In the bulb there is a flower; in the seed, an apple tree; in cocoons, a hidden promise: butterflies will soon be free! In the cold and snow of winter there's a spring that waits to be, unrevealed until its season, something God alone can see.” (GTG #250)

I came across this quote from the newest Presbyterian Hymnbook, Glory to God. It is a beautiful reminder of what God can see but what we cannot. We cannot see with our eyes the flower within a bulb, the tree inside of an apple seed. We know the potential for it is there, but we cannot see it. Nor do we have the power to give life to it to make it grow. But in hope, we water it, we give it good soil and we have to believe that life shall burst forth, unfolding its leaves and putting out buds. We are seeing it now, this week, our back yards are beginning to put forth their first leaves, the lilac bushes are starting to bloom their powerful scent. Life is beginning to reawaken, in a way.

This week, our Elders had their first actual meeting since February, since our Annual Election of new officers. There is something really lovely about living into at least part of that promise of new life. We eagerly attacked the work at hand, people were very engaged in trying to make sure we had certain things right. We listened, we worked at understanding. There is a certain amount of trust and hope that we have to have in order to engage in the Resurrection life. We can see the seed and trust that there is an apple in there. Life can be brought about from nothing and in Jesus life can be brought about from the dead. We can believe the words of Scripture – that the first disciples had seen and heard Jesus come to be with them. And where there are two or more witnesses with the same story, then we have corroboration. Like in journalism. Or in court.

Thomas the Twin was willing to put Jesus on trial. He had trouble believing even after other disciples had told him Jesus had been to visit them. Even though that would mean at least 10 people had seen Jesus alive after death, that was still not enough evidence for Thomas. He refused to believe until he saw and touched Jesus for himself. Traditionally we have been led to think of Thomas as a real stick in the mud, a kill joy, a guy who dug his heels in unless he had data pointing to proof. Traditionally, Thomas was seen as the guy who lacked faith, was not willing to just trust what his fellow brothers and sisters were telling him about Jesus.

Maybe Thomas was a budding scientist, who needed empirical data. Maybe he felt like the sample size to give proof was just not large enough. The Reverend Martin Luther during the Reformation even said the same in his 95 Theses, one of which is councils and committees can make mistakes (“Councils may err.”). Maybe Thomas wanted to have his own impression and discern this for himself. But is that not also what you and I are like sometimes? It is not easy to trust in the resurrection hope. Just one week out from Easter Sunday, we return to our regular lives, and it may feel like nothing has really changed since that day of Easter. Living with doubts is not that awful anyways. And admitting what we do not know for certain isn’t such a bad thing. It’s the honest thing.

After all, this is not a game that Jesus is playing with us. The goal is for us to believe. If you go to the end of the gospel according to John, you will read these very interesting words. “Now Jesus did many other things which are not written in this book. But these are written so that you may come to believe.” God is not setting us up to fail, but setting us up to believe. Just as when Jesus returns to the disciples. He has already appeared to everyone but Thomas. So his return is specifically for Thomas. So that even the skeptic Thomas will believe. Jesus seems to chide Thomas for not believing, “Blessed are those who do not see, yet believe!” but Jesus also invites Thomas to find out for himself. The Assurance of Pardon we used earlier today speaks to this:

God does not mock us when we fail to trust,
but invites us into a deeper, more intimate relationship.

God does not shame us when our faith waivers,
but challenges us to be strengthened by God’s promises.

God’s purpose is not to tear us down…but to build us up…
forgiven…refreshed…and renewed!

So let’s sing…and let’s give thanks to God!

Let this reminder that God is building us up with trust and hope – let this reminder be the thing that fills our hearts and actions – the resurrection joy that God is calling us closer, help us believe, and help others believe. Live and believe the good news of the resurrection, which can make us one in service. Amen.

**\*Benediction**