**First Presbyterian Church, Tucumcari**

*The Church With the Holy Spirit Window*

**April 24, 2016 Fifth Sunday of Easter**

**11:00 a.m.**

**#5 RH O Lord, Thou Art My God and King**

**#508 RH Oh Holy City, Seen of John**

**#101 RH This is My Father's World**

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

**Prelude**

**Surely the presence of the Lord is in this place.**

**I can feel His mighty power and His grace.**

**I can feel the brush of angels' wings, I see glory on each face.**

**Surely the presence of the Lord is in this place.**

**Surely the presence of the Lord is in this place.**

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

**Opening Prayer**

Silence our busy minds. Open our closed hearts.

Sharpen all our senses.

We are busy people and we need rest in you.

Course your presence through this place,

surround us with your holy movements

that we find you right here and right now.

Through Christ our Savior. Amen.

**\*Opening Hymn**

**Call to Confession**

It is tempting to gloss over our sin and focus on our strengths, but God calls us to focus on the strength of Christ, not ourselves. God, who is faithful and just, offers us a new way to live, and so we join together to confess our faults and failings. Let us pray.

**Prayer of Confession (Please see bulletin)**

**Assurance of Pardon**

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 (Please see bulletin)**

**Pastoral Prayer**

O Lord, hear our prayers,

for we speak on behalf of all who are in trouble.

Incline your ear to us, and answer quickly, we pray.

We pray for all who are anxious about the future,

about endings and changes in their own lives,

and about turmoil or change in the world around us.

Be food and water for all who wander in the wilderness.

Blessed Jesus, **Hear us when we pray.**

We pray for those whose bodies suffer or waste away,

who are ill or unable to eat and drink,

or who anxiously await a diagnosis or treatment.

Surround your people with your steadfast presence.

Blessed Jesus, **Hear us when we pray.**

We pray for the nations of the world,

especially for those places in the grip of violence, famine, or disaster.

Look with favor on those who have no power or security.

Blessed Jesus, **Hear us when we pray.**

We pray for the future,

for families and communities we have not yet known,

but who are already dear to your eternal heart.

May every generation praise the name of the Lord.

Blessed Jesus, **Hear us when we pray.**

We pray for ourselves,

for the needs we hold before you in silence,

and for the gift of your Holy Spirit

to inspire, lead, and empower us in your service.

Blessed Jesus, **Hear us when we pray.**

Hear us, O Lord, for we pray as your people,

joining in the prayer you taught us, saying:

**The Lord’s Prayer**

**Offering**

**Time Out for Teaching: Signs of Life**

**Hymn**

**Prayer for Illumination**

**Revelation 21:1-6**

1Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth; for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more. 2And I saw the holy city, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. 3And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "See, the home of God is among mortals. He will dwell with them as their God; they will be his peoples, and God himself will be with them; 4he will wipe every tear from their eyes. Death will be no more; mourning and crying and pain will be no more, for the first things have passed away."

5And the one who was seated on the throne said, "See, I am making all things new." Also he said, "Write this, for these words are trustworthy and true." 6Then he said to me, "It is done! I am the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end. To the thirsty I will give water as a gift from the spring of the water of life."

**John 13:31-35**

31When he had gone out, Jesus said, "Now the Son of Man has been glorified, and God has been glorified in him. 32If God has been glorified in him, God will also glorify him in himself and will glorify him at once. 33Little children, I am with you only a little longer. You will look for me; and as I said to the Jews so now I say to you, 'Where I am going, you cannot come.' 34I give you a new commandment, that you love one another. Just as I have loved you, you also should love one another. 35By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another."

**Acts 11:1-18**

1Now the apostles and the believers who were in Judea heard that the Gentiles had also accepted the word of God. 2So when Peter went up to Jerusalem, the circumcised believers criticized him, 3saying, "Why did you go to uncircumcised men and eat with them?" 4Then Peter began to explain it to them, step by step, saying, 5"I was in the city of Joppa praying, and in a trance I saw a vision. There was something like a large sheet coming down from heaven, being lowered by its four corners; and it came close to me. 6As I looked at it closely I saw four-footed animals, beasts of prey, reptiles, and birds of the air. 7I also heard a voice saying to me, 'Get up, Peter; kill and eat.' 8But I replied, 'By no means, Lord; for nothing profane or unclean has ever entered my mouth.' 9But a second time the voice answered from heaven, 'What God has made clean, you must not call profane.' 10This happened three times; then everything was pulled up again to heaven. 11At that very moment three men, sent to me from Caesarea, arrived at the house where we were. 12The Spirit told me to go with them and not to make a distinction between them and us. These six brothers also accompanied me, and we entered the man's house. 13He told us how he had seen the angel standing in his house and saying, 'Send to Joppa and bring Simon, who is called Peter; 14he will give you a message by which you and your entire household will be saved.' 15And as I began to speak, the Holy Spirit fell upon them just as it had upon us at the beginning. 16And I remembered the word of the Lord, how he had said, 'John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit.' 17If then God gave them the same gift that he gave us when we believed in the Lord Jesus Christ, who was I that I could hinder God?" 18When they heard this, they were silenced. And they praised God, saying, "Then God has given even to the Gentiles the repentance that leads to life."

**Sermon "Sweet Freedom" Rev. Amy Pospichal**

Peter disovers a new sort of freedom, thanks to the revelation from the Holy Spirit. He had always clung to his traditions of eating kosher foods, and paying attention to remaining ritually pure. But in this vision he is reminded of a law of God much older than the Law God had Moses write down. The one in which God created the heavens and the earth and, all that is in them, God blesses and calls good. For God tells Peter, "What God has made clean, you must not call profane."

But the message of freedom is apparently for a very specific purpose. It is not so one could go off half cocked and do anything they want. Rather, it is a message of freedom, to move about the world, visit and sit down at table with persons much different from ourselves. God gives Peter this freedom for a specific reason: to find those who are lost and those with a growing faith in Jesus, and to bring them into God's fold, even Gentiles!

Peter is granted a kind of freedom, one that works alongside and in service to God's plan to do a new thing. God has been promising a new thing since the Old Testament. But here, the new thing is the expansion of God's mission to redeem Creation through Jesus Christ.

New things don't always sit well with us do they? They can be unnerving, they can make us worry what will happen to us. "What will I have to give up or lose?" or "How will I have to act?" or "Am I going to have to learn something new?"

That IS a little unnerving, but if it is for God's purpose, then it is worth it. The harder part of it is discerning the Spirit.

Notice for Peter, this message of freedom is made good when he is able to connect the dots. He has a vision of all of the animals, and then an opportunity comes along to minister to Gentiles. He isn't just rationalizing a way to take advantage of this freedom. He heard God say "it's all good" and then here's a chance to do something of service for someone else, even if that someone else is not exactly "kosher" to be around. This isn't "woo woo" magical thinking. He makes reasonable connections. It also helped him, I am sure, to recall the many times Jesus minstered to "unclean" persons - from prostitutes to the Syrophoenician woman, to the possessed man in the graveyard and more. Peter makes reasonable connections based on the teachings of Jesus and prayerfully listening to the Spirit.

It just shows us that the Spirit puts us in touch with persons we never imagined we would meet, persons who need to meet us because we carry a message of hope, love and faith. This happens when we discern the Spirit.

So, there are at least two important messages we find in this story of Peter. First, this tells us something about the Holy Spirit. The Spirit of God can sometimes surprise us. And it's our responsibility to discern the Spirit with Scripture and prayerful listening.

Second, the Holy Spirit may make us uncomfortable. It is a message that God's Good News is for you and me, but it is also for those on the outside, those whom we might find rather distasteful, or impure. But that is necessary to God's mission to redeem to every bit of this world He loves so much.

That is one of the wondrous things about our faith. The door is open for new members of God's family. It is about freedom to belong to God, where there is no Jew nor Greek, slave nor free. It means that those whom we always kept at arm's length are actually children of God. It means that we, who have been churched all our lives have to work at making room for the Holy Spirit to be heard in our hearts.

In our 1984 creed, the "Brief Statement of Faith," it says: "We trust in God the Holy Spirit everywhere the giver and renewer of life. The Spirit justifies us by grace through faith, sets us free to accept ourselves and to love God and neighbor, and binds us together with all believers in the one body of Christ, the Church. ... In a broken and fearful world the Spirit gives us courage to pray without ceasing, to witness among all peoples to Christ as Lord and Savior... to hear the voices of peoples long silenced, and to work with others for justice, freedom, and peace. In gratitude to God, empowered by the Spirit, we strive to serve Christ in our daily tasks and to live holy and joyful lives, even as we watch for God’s new heaven and new earth, praying, “Come, Lord Jesus!”

As we await God's new heaven and new earth, God is working through you to enfold all persons into His salvation. This is what the Spirit showed to Peter. It is a message of sweet freedom, for a purpose. Thanks be to God for the hope we have. Amen!

**\*Closing Hymn**

**\*Benediction**

out of ICU not going to do surgery - medicine to dissolve

UNM room #506 Neurology Ward

numbness and "alien hand"

Laurel in Tuc