**First Presbyterian Church, Tucumcari**

*The Church With the Holy Spirit Window*

**April 30, 20173rd Sunday of Easter**

**11:00 a.m.**

**131 Come, Christians Join to Sing;**

**110 There's a Wideness in God's Mercy (first tune);**

**Jesus Loves Me! (Insert)**

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

**Call to Worship (from Psalm 116)**

O LORD, I am your servant;

**You have loosed my bonds.**I will offer to you a thanksgiving sacrifice
**and call on the name of the LORD.**I will pay my vows to the LORD
**in the presence of all his people,**Let us…

**Praise the Lord!**

**Opening Prayer**

Lord, you have in your resurrection hope,

Loosed our bonds,

Set us free -

Not just from sin –

set us free from all that holds us back

From a true relationship to you and one another.

We praise you and promise you

We shall worship and serve you.

Open our eyes to the mysteries and miracles

That make our hearts burn with passion

To follow you.

Through Jesus the Risen Lord we pray,

Amen!

**Call to Confession**

The presence of God shines all around us, and yet our faces are buried in our phones, and our minds are on the tasks that are left undone, oblivious to the miracle of the Holy Spirit that surrounds. Let us together lift up our heads and open our eyes to see the work of God that abounds.

**Prayer of Confession**

God of the snowfall and coming spring,
Spirit of the journey that leads us to the height of the mountain,
**We open our hearts to you and to one another**
**the many ways we fall short to live into the fullness of life in you.**
We create schedules that add to the burden,
And further shelter us from hearing your voice.
**We add to the shadows finding the worst in the world around us,**
**Rather than living as instruments of your hope.**
How quick we add to the discord with one another,
unable to see your face in our neighbor
**in our disagreements we often miss the transference**
**of our own scars, disappointments, and should haves,**
Help us again today to be renewed by your ever flowing grace
and unending love
**Open all of who we are to your holy imagination of who we are yet to become restoring us in your glory. Praise be to God. (silence) Amen.**

**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.**

**Responsive Reading Psalm 116:1-14**

I love the LORD, because he has heard
my voice and my supplications.
**Because he inclined his ear to me,
therefore I will call on him as long as I live.**The snares of death encompassed me;
the pangs of Sheol laid hold on me;
I suffered distress and anguish.
**Then I called on the name of the LORD:
“O LORD, I pray, save my life!”**

What shall I return to the LORD
for all his bounty to me?
**I will lift up the cup of salvation
and call on the name of the LORD,**I will pay my vows to the LORD
in the presence of all his people.
**Praise the LORD!**

**Pastoral Prayer**

God of hope,

We thank you and praise you for the snowfall and moisture we’ve received. We thank you for the growth you give us.

Grow in us new directions to live out our faith – that our faith be shown instead of merely talked about.

Grow in this church new directions to proclaim your gospel -that it be seen by those who have eyes to see, instead of merely symbolized by our presence here.

Make us your hands and feet to serve the world where you send us. Teach us to obey the signs you give to us, help us to discern your true direction, among the many other ideas we ourselves concoct with our imaginations.

Let us be your prophetic voice in the wilderness. Let us be your healers, teachers and helpers. Let the world know you by our love for each other.

We thank you for the small ways you use us to meet the needs of your people. Help us to celebrate small victories, for they are not insignificant.

We celebrate and thank you for the blessings you have provided.

We lift our prayers high to you for those who are in need.

For those who are without shelter today, that they may find warmth and dryness.

For those who suffer from addictions.

For those who struggle to fight illness in their bodies or minds.

For people who wait for news.

For those who witness violence.

For those who perpetuate violence and fear.

Open our eyes to see you in our midst O Lord.

Teach us why our hearts burn within us – that they burn with the same things for which your heart breaks.

Teach us to love as you love,

To see others as you see them,

To forgive others as we have been forgiven.

These things we pray in the name of the one who taught his disciples to pray saying, “Our Father, who art in heaven…Amen.”

**Offering**

**Time out for Teaching: Atonement 2 – Christ the Victor**

I also described how this blood shed might be a powerful message for persons who have endured much and can feel like Jesus – who also suffered much – can be their ally and friend in times of suffering.

Today I want to touch on another perspective on atonement – one called Christus Victor. Remember what atonement means? “At-One-Ment” – the journey from being separated from God to becoming one with God. As the Scriptures say, “Anyone who is in Christ is a new creation. The past is gone and a new life has begun.”

Think about a person – maybe even you – who feels helpless. Maybe they feel like their troubles are so big they feel overwhelmed and unable to know how to move forward.

They need a Superman to swoop in and pick them up, save them from falling anymore. Jesus is that Superman.

His victory over death sends the message that He is all-powerful and able to save us, no matter how bad our circumstances. He is the King who has battled the worst form of evil, and won. He can take anything that comes our way. This is the basis for the Christus Victor atonement. It tells a person that no matter how badly they have messed up their lives, Jesus fought for their salvation and has won.

There are criticisms of this theory. While it is a powerful message of salvation for those in trouble, it might also encourage us to remain helpless. For example, someone who has made serious mistakes and feels a great deal of guilt – they might get the wrong idea and think that they don’t have to do anything in response to this Superman-like salvation. In other words, we are called to more than just waiting on Superman to save us. God calls for our faithful and grateful response to grace. Otherwise, we might surmise, this forgiveness loses its power over us and we might continue on in our state of separation from God, instead of “At-One-Ment.” What do you think?

**Prayer for Illumination**

Risen Christ,
you opened the scriptures to your disciples
and made their hearts burn within them.
Open our eyes, our ears, and our hearts,
so we might recognize you once again
in these words of scripture,
by the power of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

**Exodus 3:1-12**

**3**Moses was keeping the flock of his father-in-law Jethro, the priest of Midian; he led his flock beyond the wilderness, and came to Horeb, the mountain of God. **2**There the angel of the Lord appeared to him in a flame of fire out of a bush; he looked, and the bush was blazing, yet it was not consumed. **3**Then Moses said, “I must turn aside and look at this great sight, and see why the bush is not burned up.” **4**When the Lord saw that he had turned aside to see, God called to him out of the bush, “Moses, Moses!” And he said, “Here I am.” **5**Then he said, “Come no closer! Remove the sandals from your feet, for the place on which you are standing is holy ground.” **6**He said further, “I am the God of your father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob.” And Moses hid his face, for he was afraid to look at God.

**7**Then the Lord said, “I have observed the misery of my people who are in Egypt; I have heard their cry on account of their taskmasters. Indeed, I know their sufferings, **8**and I have come down to deliver them from the Egyptians, and to bring them up out of that land to a good and broad land, a land flowing with milk and honey, to the country of the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Amorites, the Perizzites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites. **9**The cry of the Israelites has now come to me; I have also seen how the Egyptians oppress them. **10**So come, I will send you to Pharaoh to bring my people, the Israelites, out of Egypt.” **11**But Moses said to God, “Who am I that I should go to Pharaoh, and bring the Israelites out of Egypt?” **12**He said, “I will be with you; and this shall be the sign for you that it is I who sent you: when you have brought the people out of Egypt, you shall worship God on this mountain.”

**Gospel Luke 24:13-23, 27-32**

13Now on that same day two of them were going to a village called Emmaus, about seven miles from Jerusalem, 14and talking with each other about all these things that had happened. 15While they were talking and discussing, Jesus himself came near and went with them, 16but their eyes were kept from recognizing him. 17And he said to them, “What are you discussing with each other while you walk along?” They stood still, looking sad. 18Then one of them, whose name was Cleopas, answered him, “Are you the only stranger in Jerusalem who does not know the things that have taken place there in these days?” 19He asked them, “What things?” They replied, “The things about Jesus of Nazareth, who was a prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people, 20and how our chief priests and leaders handed him over to be condemned to death and crucified him. 21But we had hoped that he was the one to redeem Israel. Yes, and besides all this, it is now the third day since these things took place. 22Moreover, some women of our group astounded us. They were at the tomb early this morning, 23and when they did not find his body there, they came back and told us that they had indeed seen a vision of angels who said that he was alive.

27Then beginning with Moses and all the prophets, he interpreted to them the things about himself in all the scriptures.

28As they came near the village to which they were going, he walked ahead as if he were going on. 29But they urged him strongly, saying, “Stay with us, because it is almost evening and the day is now nearly over.” So he went in to stay with them. 30When he was at the table with them, he took bread, blessed and broke it, and gave it to them. 31Then their eyes were opened, and they recognized him; and he vanished from their sight. 32They said to each other, “Were not our hearts burning within us while he was talking to us on the road, while he was opening the scriptures to us?”

**Sermon “Holy Fire” Rev. Amy Pospichal**

Last week I was talking to a young woman who works at the grocery store. She greeted me as usual, and I asked her, “How have you been doing today?” She responded, “Great! Except I’m feeling really zoned out – I don’t know why.” I inquired, “Zoned out – you feel sort of tired?” “Yes!” she said. “I drive to Portales four nights a week for classes.” “No wonder you feel tired,” I said. “What are you studying?”

She said she is studying Human Services and Nutrition, to which I replied, “Oh boy! I better watch out what I buy when I go through YOUR line!” She laughed and told me my food choices were way better than what some people get at the grocery.

She must be pretty passionate about her life goals. Driving to Portales for college four nights a week, while working nearly full time at the grocery store here; now, that’s dedication! She has one year of school left; I wish her well.

I like meeting young people whose hearts are on fire for something. College students seem like they’re ready to take on the world and make it a better place.

In our gospel reading, the disciples’ hearts burn within them. At first, Jesus finds them on the road to Emmaus, sad and rather confused. But, like the Wonderful Counselor he is, gets them to open up about their sadness and disappointment. It is only after they recognize him in the breaking of bread, that we are told their hearts had begun to burn within them when he was teaching them the Scriptures. Their burning hearts send them to go and tell: “Jesus is Risen Indeed!” I believe their hearts had been burning because, even though they didn’t yet recognize him, something inside them was telling them that the Lord was near. How could their hearts NOT be burning?

The burning heart is an indicator. A sign that something is very right. It’s a sign telling us that we’ve hit on an answer. It means we know something – something that maybe we cannot immediately put into words – but something holy is happening.

Let me tell you another story of a heart on fire. A guy I recently met named James.

James is the office manager of a “Transitional Housing” in Carlsbad, just a few blocks away from First Presbyterian Church. He first came there looking for help. He was homeless, sleeping on the couch of a friend. He was homeless, having had to move there from Harlingen, Texas because of health problems. He was homeless, even though a Veteran of the first Gulf War. People like James happen. He happened to walk into the Transitional Housing because he needed a working computer to find a job and they let him to use theirs. Now, he is employed there, dedicated to serve the needs of other homeless people who need temporary shelter before they can get back on their feet. Having been homeless himself, he understands with compassion their complicated situations. His heart must burn with God’s holy fire.

For what does your heart burn? Is it for the homeless in our city? They exist. We have homeless children in Tucumcari. Or does your heart burn to see projects completed and a job well-done? There’s a need for that. Maybe your heart burns to see this beautiful church better organized or repairs done. Or does your heart burn to welcome the stranger, feed the hungry, visit them in the detention center?

A contemporary theologian by the name of Frederick Buechner once said, “God calls you to a place where the world’s hunger and your deepest need meet.” I’ll repeat that: God calls you to a place where the world’s hunger and your deepest need meets. It’s true. Like a match made in heaven.

There are millions of ways we can serve God. But God calls you to satisfy a particular need this world has, where you will also find satisfaction. Don’t ignore the holy fire in your heart any longer. God will find a way to make it work, if you listen.

I have one more story for you. It’s about a murderer. He saw one of his own people being beaten so he tried to defend the person. It ended with him killing the attacker. Instead of sticking around to face the music, he ran away. Do you know his name? Moses. It’s after this, that God finds him. God finds him and sends him back to Egypt, back to save not just one Hebrew, but the entire nation. God had a passion to see the Hebrews liberated, and uses Moses’ experience to make that happen.

The examples go on and on of how God takes the burning heart of a human and uses it for Godly ministry. For what does your heart burn? Let your burning heart be the sign of where is God sends you. Amen.

**Installation of Marjorie G. McKenzie**

This morning we install Marge as Deacon. Barbara Cherry had one more year in her term as Deacon when we lost her last year. Marjorie Gene McKenzie has graciously accepted the call to finish this term out. It was noted in last week’s Session meeting that she must be installed to satisfy constitutional requirements. So, this morning we will ask her the questions that constitute the vows of a Presbyterian Deacon.

**\*Closing Hymn**

**\*Benediction**