**First Presbyterian Church Tucumcari**

**Worship 11:00AM**

**Sunday, December 9, 2018, 2nd Sunday of Advent**

**Announcements**

**Lighting the Candle of Peace**

We light the candle of Peace as a sign of the coming light of Christ.

**In Christ there is life and light for all people.**

Now lift up your heads and rejoice: your redeemer is drawing near.

Prepare the way of the Holy One! All flesh will see the salvation of God.

**Glory to God in the highest, and peace to God’s people on earth!**

**Prayer of the Day**

You are the Promise of Peace

Peace with you, O Lord and peace with one another.

Fill us with the peace of worship,

By the light of your wisdom and word.

And as we worship remind us deep in our souls

That your peace is also for each one of us,

Through the grace of our lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

**Call to Confession**

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

**Assurance of Pardon**

In Christ, we have hope for true and just peace.

**Just as God forgives us, so we too shall forgive each other. Thanks be to God!**

The Lord be with you.

**And also with you.**

**Luke 1:68-79 (please see bulletin)**

**Prayers of the People**

You are a God who leads us, who makes a way when there is no way.  
We give you thanks, O Lord, for you are stronger than every foe.  
We give you thanks, for your creative Spirit is always at work, making all things new.  
We give you thanks, for though we feel scattered or on edge, there is no place we can go beyond the reach of your love.  
And so we are bold to lift our voices to you, to admit our need.  
We pray this day for your Church, in this community, in this nation, and in the world.  
We ask your blessing on your Body, that we may in turn be a blessing to others.  
We ask your guidance, strong and sure, for we are not certain of the way forward.  
We pray for the gift of discernment, and the courage to follow, even when we feel battered by the waves.  
Give us eyes to see and ears to hear…and feet ready to follow…and hands ready to serve.  
Take from us any thought that does not glorify you, and lead us on your way.  
…  
We pray this day for the nations of this world, and for our leaders, that they too may have the gifts of discernment and courage.  
Give them wisdom to seek the good of all, not only some.  
Give them compassion, and imagination, and love.  
…  
We pray this day for your people near and far who live each day with fear.  
Whether they fear someone in their home, or violence in the streets, or the government, or themselves…bring peace, O God.  
Bring peace to those in the midst of war, and to those whose greatest enemy is within.  
Bring peace that passes all understanding, peace founded on justice, for the people of Syria, and Sudan, and Palestine, and Korea.  
And bring us together, to be creators of justice and peace for all your creation.  
…  
We pray this day for those who are ill, in body, mind, or spirit.  
May your healing presence surround and fill them, may your comfort enfold them.  
Guide the hands and minds of doctors and nurses and all who care for others, that they may understand and so treat people toward wholeness.  
…  
We pray this day for all those who find the news too much to bear—people living with stories they have not been able to tell, with hearts burdened by trauma, with lives upended by choices made by others.  
Shield their hearts, O God.  
Give them hope, and help, and a listening ear.  
Give us courage to hold their stories, their feelings, and their prayers, to be a friend to those who feel alone.  
…  
You are a God who makes a way when there is no way, who creates paths in the desert and through the storm. You carry our burdens and lift our spirits, that we may bravely walk this earthly way. Lead and guide us to go forward into your future, with faith, hope, and love.  
We pray these and all things in the name of the One who is the pioneer and perfecter of our faith, Jesus the Christ. Amen.

**Time Out for Teaching:** **The Light of Peace**

Today we lit the candle of peace. Last week it was Hope. We will also light the candles of joy and love. Have you ever thought about the relationship between light and peace?

Well, every Sunday we light candles here at the beginning of worship and then we snuff them out at the end. Light signifies the effect of God in our Lives. John 1 says “The light shines in the darkness and the darkness shall not overcome it.” I am reminded of a quote about light that: “Even the darkest night cannot snuff out a single candle.”

The Peace of Jesus Christ is lit by the light of God. Being peacemakers in this world darkened by evil means we get to shine God’s light where we can.

I saw an interesting story about ICU Grandpas on morning TV today. An ICU in Atlanta, Georgia has people who have volunteered there for a nearly a couple of decades. One of them brings peace in the Neonatal ICU where he spends his days holding tiny preemie babies when their families cannot be there. He says he has never gotten upset in the hospital, even though he knows at home sometimes it makes him feel sad for them. But the peace on his face as he holds them in his arms, touches their tiny hands, looks like a perfect fellowship, by the light of God. The darkest night cannot snuff out a single candle.

I encourage you to remember God’s light cannot be snuffed out of you. If you bear that light towards those who are hurting, then you will bear them peace.

**Malachi 3:1-4**

1See, I am sending my messenger to prepare the way before me, and the Lord whom you seek will suddenly come to his temple. The messenger of the covenant in whom you delight — indeed, he is coming, says the LORD of hosts. 2But who can endure the day of his coming, and who can stand when he appears?

For he is like a refiner's fire and like fullers' soap; 3he will sit as a refiner and purifier of silver, and he will purify the descendants of Levi and refine them like gold and silver, until they present offerings to the LORD in righteousness. 4Then the offering of Judah and Jerusalem will be pleasing to the LORD as in the days of old and as in former years.

**Philippians 1:3-11**

3I thank my God every time I remember you, 4constantly praying with joy in every one of my prayers for all of you, 5because of your sharing in the gospel from the first day until now. 6I am confident of this, that the one who began a good work among you will bring it to completion by the day of Jesus Christ. 7It is right for me to think this way about all of you, because you hold me in your heart, for all of you share in God's grace with me, both in my imprisonment and in the defense and confirmation of the gospel. 8For God is my witness, how I long for all of you with the compassion of Christ Jesus. 9And this is my prayer, that your love may overflow more and more with knowledge and full insight 10to help you to determine what is best, so that in the day of Christ you may be pure and blameless, 11having produced the harvest of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ for the glory and praise of God.

**Gospel Luke 3:1-6**

1In the fifteenth year of the reign of Emperor Tiberius, when Pontius Pilate was governor of Judea, and Herod was ruler of Galilee, and his brother Philip ruler of the region of Ituraea and Trachonitis, and Lysanias ruler of Abilene, 2during the high priesthood of Annas and Caiaphas, the word of God came to John son of Zechariah in the wilderness. 3He went into all the region around the Jordan, proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins, 4as it is written in the book of the words of the prophet Isaiah,

"The voice of one crying out in the wilderness:

'Prepare the way of the Lord,

make his paths straight.

5Every valley shall be filled,

and every mountain and hill shall be made low,

and the crooked shall be made straight,

and the rough ways made smooth;

6and all flesh shall see the salvation of God.'"

**Sermon: “To See Forever”**

When I was 22 years old, I moved from Virginia to Dallas, Texas, with everything I had in the back of my pickup truck. I felt as though in Texas, compared to Northern Virginia, I could see forever. No longer were there humpback-shaped mountains slicing the landscape, creating dark forested “hollers” where you couldn’t see around hairpin curves in the roads, no longer myriads of tall buildings as far as the eye could see and cars everywhere. Of course, Texas has all of those things, if you travel the state end to end. But as a fresh-faced twenty-something, in a brand-new pickup truck, it feels as though the world is full of possibilities and I could see forever.

Maybe you can remember similar moments in your life: when you walked across the stage to get your High School diploma, you got your first job, fell in love the first time, looked into the eyes of your newborn child.

All the problems of this world seem to fall away. You can see forever. And that sort of feeling can bring us a peace borne of heaven. It’s the kind of peace that can give us courage to pursue God’s will, fight to hold onto that peace and make peace. But as we get older, that sense of peace might be harder to come by.

Peace seems hard to come by. It’s important that we remember that God’s peace is not the sort of peace of stagnation and inaction. It’s not a peace meant to mollify the masses, nor a peace enforced with threat of fear. We can find peace with God, even if we are in a world full of strife, if we are doing what God wants us to do, if we believe at the end of our days, God will declare, “Well done, good and faithful servant…” We sing a lot about peace at Christmas time, knowing full well that this world often seems teeter on the edge. We pray for peace and we know we are called to be peacemakers. We are in service to calling higher than our own personal interests, and we have the help of God.

Peace begins with you and me. Just like that song, “Let there be peace on earth and let it begin with me.” John the Baptist is making it clear this morning that in order for us to be prepared to meet God, we have to make peace with God, straighten things out, get things right with Him. He called for a baptism of repentance, which signifies the turning around of the heart – from one’s former ways to a new way of walking in the light of God’s forgiveness. He quotes the great prophets of old: “Let every valley be filled in and every mountain laid low…” calling for the roads and paths to be made straight. The idea of the prophets was that the Messiah would arrive via a highway in the desert and once and for all conquer all of Israel’s enemies. But now for me, I imagine that crooked desert highway is really all of our hearts, and the flattening out of the mountains and valleys is also call to be humble in His presence. John the Baptist calls us here to get straight with God, and start reckoning now. For it is the first step on this journey of peace, in order to see forever. And it begins with each one of us.

We witnessed the possibility of peace this past week, during the three hours of the funeral for our 41st President George H.W. Bush, in the National Cathedral in D.C.. All of our living presidents and their spouses sat peaceably and worshiped together side-by-side. Of course, the media needled this moment later to think of ways to comment or criticize. But the most interesting comment I heard was that “If these leaders can sit together for three hours in peace and decorum, just imagine if they could do it for longer.” It was almost like a challenge to us all everywhere, to try and exemplify an attitude of peace. But we know what was driving them toward that peace and decorum. It was because they were there in service to a principle much higher than any political matter. I imagine that all our past Presidents have a sort of “brotherhood” among them because so few people but they know how it feels to lead our nation. And they were there to observe the loss of a man all of them respected. That millions of people were watching matters too, “For all flesh shall see the salvation of God.”

The peace we make is in service to a higher principle. We are partners with God in peacemaking. We don’t agree on everything as the Body of Christ, but it matters that the world watches what we Christians do, especially at Christmastime. That we are in service to God’s mission to the world gives us every reason to make peace. And that we too are automatically called to find peace with God, as we also sing about peace, pray for peace, and yes even fight for peace, that is a joy and privilege we can share and celebrate. We all want to see forever. Making peace is one way we can. Amen.

**Coming Up:**

**Next Sunday is Potluck Sunday!** Make sure you come next week, bring a dish to share, and enjoy a Christmassy fellowship dinner. All are invited.

**Christmas Cantata Performance** - Friday, December 14th @ Center Street United Methodist Church 7:00PM. Come early in order to secure a seat. Refreshments afterwards.

**White Elephant Christmas Party** – A gift exchange and fun fellowship together, family-style. Bring a plate of treats to share and a mystery gift for the White Elephant Game.