

First Presbyterian Church, Tucumcari
The Church With the Holy Spirit Window
February 21, 2016 Second Sunday in Lent
11:00 a.m.

Rev. Amy Pospichal, Pastor

Marjorie McKenzie, Accompanist

Welcome and Announcements

Prelude

Call to Worship (see bulletin)

Opening Prayer

Creator God, we thank you for the wide sky and the warm sun, for the bottomless lakes and the flowing rivers, for the massive mesas and the never-resting winds, for trees and for soil underfoot. We thank you for our senses, which let us hear wind blowing through trees, and see the summer clouds cast moving shadows on the rolling hills, and taste the roasted chiles in autumn, and revel in the cold touch of the snow, and smell the breath of the spring after the rain. May you open the eyes of our hearts to this beauty – and keep us from being blind to your glory burning in even the lowly cholla, reminding us of your love for all things and all people, no matter how great or small. As you have made our senses come alive, let us be attuned to your presence in worship today! Amen.

***Opening Hymn**

Call to Confession

We are a sinful people in need of restoration,
but sometimes we are too stubborn to even realize it.
We are capable of such evil as well as such goodness.
Let us confess our sins that we might be cleansed
and welcome the goodness that God intends for us.

Prayer of Confession (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 27 (see bulletin)

Prayers of the People

Responsive:

"Blessed Jesus,

Hear us as we pray."

Christ our Savior, Lord of all,

as we journey with you we are aware of the difficulty and suffering of the world you love so dearly.

There are those who suffer rejection, injustice, and violence for their commitment to your way or their differences from the religious majority in their land.

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

There are many who seek power and status to fill a deeper need than the world can fill; there are many more who are oppressed or ignored on account of that pursuit of power.

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

There are children who depend on others to speak for them, sinners who long to know that they are welcomed into your love, and misfits who struggle to know where they belong.

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

There are those who face illness and death today, and there are those who grapple with broken and hurtful relationships; there are so many who cry out for mercy.

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

And there are so many who seek to follow you, who are learning to serve their neighbors in love and treat their enemies with compassion.

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

We are among those who would follow, and we place our lives at your disposal, joining together in the prayer you taught, saying: ...The Lord's Prayer

Time Out for Teaching: The Discipline of Spiritual Reading

(show an icon and explain how meditation with icons for Eastern Orthodox churches works - that in gazing and meditating on the image of a holy person, one allows God's presence and power to look into us from beyond the iconic image. In meditating on the holy image, one can feel God reaching out to them.)

Reading Scripture as Spiritual, that is, realizing it is like looking into the face of the Divine, we might discover that God is reaching out to us through the Holy Word of God. It takes practice and patience to approach the Bible as such. It means we break the habit of rushing through these sacred stories as if we are just looking for information. Rather it means we slow down, take our time word for word, and let individual words and sentences sink in.

This a great answer to how we normally process information in this crazy and overly-busy world. A great Biblical Teacher whose name I cannot remember right now once said, "The smallest unit of meaning is a paragraph." This is because the context of a sentence helps us gain a deeper understanding of what a sentence is saying. But if you only have time for one paragraph, make

the most of it. Read each word by visualizing what it means. Ask yourself what doesn't make sense to you and attempt to answer it, even if you're not sure. There are a number of forms of spiritual reading you can follow, such as the Benedictine discipline of "Lectio Divinia" which takes four steps: "lectio" (reading), "meditatio" (meditation on the meaning), "contemplatio" (contemplation of the insights you gained and what they might mean) and then finally "oratio" (prayer or a personal conversation with God about the scripture). Did you know that reading the Bible could involve so many steps in the process? Try it sometime during this Lenten season, or gather a couple of friends from this church and try it together. Prayer is important too, for as St. Teresa de Avila once defined prayer as "A conversation between friends." Take time to hear God's word and really meditate, contemplate and pray about what you have read. There's power in this book!

Prayer for Illumination

Lord of light, shine your light on us now. As you spoke your word of creation in the beginning, speak your creative word to us now. As you gave us your word through prophets and teachers, give us your word in our worship this day. As you yourself read the scroll and claimed its promises, read your word into our hearts and claim us with your promises. As your disciples, we gather around your word, in your name. Amen.

Philippians 3:17-4:1

17Brothers and sisters, join in imitating me, and observe those who live according to the example you have in us. 18For many live as enemies of the cross of Christ; I have often told you of them, and now I tell you even with tears. 19Their end is destruction; their god is the belly; and their glory is in their shame; their minds are set on earthly things. 20But our citizenship is in heaven, and it is from there that we are expecting a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ. 21He will transform the body of our humiliation that it may be conformed to the body of his glory, by the power that also enables him to make all things subject to himself.

1Therefore, my brothers and sisters, whom I love and long for, my joy and crown, stand firm in the Lord in this way, my beloved.

Gospel Luke 13:31-35

31At that very hour some Pharisees came and said to him, "Get away from here, for Herod wants to kill you." 32He said to them, "Go and tell that fox for me, 'Listen, I am casting out demons and performing cures today and tomorrow, and on the third day I finish my work. 33Yet today, tomorrow, and the next day I must be on my way, because it is impossible for a prophet to be killed outside of Jerusalem.' 34Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the city that kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to it! How often have I desired to gather your children together as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, and you were not willing! 35See, your house is left to you. And I tell you, you will not see me until the time comes when you say, 'Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord.'"

Genesis 15:1-12, 17-18

1After these things the word of the LORD came to Abram in a vision, "Do not be afraid, Abram, I am your shield; your reward shall be very great." 2But Abram said, "O Lord GOD, what will you give me, for I continue childless, and the heir of my house is Eliezer of Damascus?" 3And Abram said, "You have given me no offspring, and so a slave born in my house is to be my heir." 4But the word of the LORD came to him, "This man shall not be your heir; no one but your very own issue shall be your heir." 5He brought him outside and said, "Look toward heaven and count the stars, if you are able to count them." Then he said to him, "So shall your descendants be." 6And he believed the LORD; and the LORD reckoned it to him as righteousness.

7Then he said to him, "I am the LORD who brought you from Ur of the Chaldeans, to give you this land to possess." 8But he said, "O Lord GOD, how am I to know that I shall possess it?" 9He said to him, "Bring me a heifer three years old, a female goat three years old, a ram three years old, a turtledove, and a young pigeon." 10He brought him all these and cut them in two, laying each half over against the other; but he did not cut the birds in two. 11And when birds of prey came down on the carcasses, Abram drove them away.

12As the sun was going down, a deep sleep fell upon Abram, and a deep and terrifying darkness descended upon him.

17When the sun had gone down and it was dark, a smoking fire pot and a flaming torch passed between these pieces. 18On that day the LORD made a covenant with Abram, saying, "To your descendants I give this land, from the river of Egypt to the great river, the river Euphrates,"

Sermon

"Framily"

Rev. Amy Pospichal

A few years ago, a strange new word began to pop up in advertising. The word was "framily." This was the new word coined by the advertising world in response to the younger generation who, according to market research, had been considering groups of friends as something like family to them. We saw it emerge in the media, with TV shows like "Friends" and "Seinfeld."

"Framily" finally hit the advertising world as cell phone carriers tried to decentralize their calling plans so people could include other people who they considered close friends but weren't just from their own households. Statistics showed that sometimes people who we prefer to be around happen to not be blood relatives. Macmillan Dictionary online describes "Framily as a new social group underpinned by the principle that good friends are the family that we choose for ourselves." Framily, our closest, hand-picked friends.

There are some problems with the world's "Framily." First, sometimes God wants us to be around people we don't like to be around. Second, If we had the choice of who we could count as our "framily," then we could risk becoming very exclusionary, and our idea of what the Kingdom of God would be so narrow, compared to what God intends for us.

After all, a church is the original a "family of God." Formed and bound together by God's covenant. But unlike the "framily" pushed by cell phone companies, we don't have the same choices of who our family is. Our family based on whoever God calls into this place. Now, this "framily" has an interesting problem. It's a good problem, as long as we do something about it. The makeup of our church has changed dramatically over the last 2 years. Even from December 2014 up to now, we have 12 new people worshipping here. If you have

been worshiping here for a long time, you might look around a little and think, "who are these people?"

My "Family" - this is not a terrible problem, but one that needs to be corrected. What a wonderful "problem," to realize so many new people in our family. God is good! But now we each must discipline our hearts and minds to make new friends. And not just the "Hi, how are you doing?" On a Sunday morning. I'm talking real friends, friends in the Lord. Remember that to become closer friends, it takes a little work on your part.

God made us a "family" with a promise to always be with us, and to make us a nation of believers. Just look at the story of Abram and the Lord. Abram feels like he is cursed because he does not yet have a son. God promises he will have more descendants than there are stars in the sky, moreover, there will be a place for his descendants to dwell. But when Abram begs Him to show He's serious about this promise, God cuts a covenant with Abram.

These covenants were powerful pacts to form a kinship between two parties. Two people or two families become one family, bound by the powerful promise, which is described in the Prophet Jeremiah, when God says, "And those who transgress this covenant and did not keep the covenant that they made before me, I shall make them like the calf when they cut it in two and passed between the parts." God is the one promising by passing between the parts of the animals Abram lays out, God is the one who has said if He fails Abram that He will die like those animals cut in half. Surely Abram got the message. God has through that covenant, bound God's Self to Abram. And not just to Abram, but to all of Abram's descendants for all time. God is now Abram's kinsman. Jesus confirmed this covenant, shed in his blood, making

us all kin to one another. And that is how we are family, through the promise extended to us in Jesus Christ, through His death and resurrection hope.

So you see? We have our part of the covenant to uphold. We have all this family to look after. We have one another to take care of. We all confess the same Lord, and in his household we are one. Make a new friend here today at potluck. Sit with someone you never sit with. Break up the cliques. Talk to the people at your table about where God has been working in your life. If you can't think of something to say, there are conversation starters on the tables. During this season of Lent, a time of spiritual discipline, I cannot think of a better way to discipline the heart and mind than to make a new friend in Christ. I give thanks to God for the family we are now, and the family we are becoming. Amen.

***Apostles' Creed P 12 red hymnal**

***Closing Hymn**

***Benediction**