**First Presbyterian Church Tucumcari**

**Worship 11:00AM**

**Sunday, February 5, 2017, 5th Sunday in Ordinary Time**

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

**Prayer of the Day**

O Light that shines in the darkness

And can never be extinguished,

Dawn in our hearts today.

Encourage us with your truth,

That, as we worship, we remember again how to be your salt of the earth.

So, as we meet the world each morning,

The world meets you.

You are the Word made Flesh to dwell in and among us,

In the name of God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit, Amen.

**Call to Confession**

**Jesus says to you, “You are the salt of the earth.” And salt without flavor has nothing in its favor. Let us return to God in prayer, seeking is forgiveness for where we have gone wrong, for those things we have done and those things we have left undone. Let us pray.**

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

**Assurance of Pardon**

Friends, Believe the Good News of Jesus Christ.

**In Jesus Christ we are forgiven!**

The Lord be with you.

**And also with you.**

**Psalm 112:1-9 (10)**

Praise the LORD!   
Happy are those who fear the LORD,   
who greatly delight in his commandments.   
**Their descendants will be mighty in the land;   
the generation of the upright will be blessed.**Wealth and riches are in their houses,   
and their righteousness endures forever.   
**They rise in the darkness as a light for the upright;   
they are gracious, merciful, and righteous.**It is well with those who deal generously and lend,   
who conduct their affairs with justice.   
**For the righteous will never be moved;   
they will be remembered forever.**They are not afraid of evil tidings;   
their hearts are firm, secure in the LORD.   
**Their hearts are steady, they will not be afraid;   
in the end they will look in triumph on their foes.**They have distributed freely, they have given to the poor;   
their righteousness endures forever;   
their horn is exalted in honor.   
**The wicked see it and are angry;   
they gnash their teeth and melt away;   
the desire of the wicked comes to nothing.**

**Time Out for Teaching:**

**Isaiah 58:1-9a**

1   Shout out, do not hold back!   
          Lift up your voice like a trumpet!   
     Announce to my people their rebellion,   
          to the house of Jacob their sins.   
2   Yet day after day they seek me   
          and delight to know my ways,   
     as if they were a nation that practiced righteousness   
          and did not forsake the ordinance of their God;   
     they ask of me righteous judgments,   
          they delight to draw near to God.   
3   “Why do we fast, but you do not see?   
          Why humble ourselves, but you do not notice?”   
     Look, you serve your own interest on your fast day,   
          and oppress all your workers.   
4   Look, you fast only to quarrel and to fight   
          and to strike with a wicked fist.   
     Such fasting as you do today   
          will not make your voice heard on high.   
5   Is such the fast that I choose,   
          a day to humble oneself?   
     Is it to bow down the head like a bulrush,   
          and to lie in sackcloth and ashes?   
     Will you call this a fast,   
          a day acceptable to the LORD?

6   Is not this the fast that I choose:   
          to loose the bonds of injustice,   
          to undo the thongs of the yoke,   
     to let the oppressed go free,   
          and to break every yoke?   
7   Is it not to share your bread with the hungry,   
          and bring the homeless poor into your house;   
     when you see the naked, to cover them,   
          and not to hide yourself from your own kin?   
8   Then your light shall break forth like the dawn,   
          and your healing shall spring up quickly;   
     your vindicator shall go before you,   
          the glory of the LORD shall be your rear guard.   
9   Then you shall call, and the LORD will answer;   
          you shall cry for help, and he will say, Here I am.

**Matthew 5:13-20**

13“You are the salt of the earth; but if salt has lost its taste, how can its saltiness be restored? It is no longer good for anything, but is thrown out and trampled under foot.

14“You are the light of the world. A city built on a hill cannot be hid. 15No one after lighting a lamp puts it under the bushel basket, but on the lampstand, and it gives light to all in the house. 16In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father in heaven.

17“Do not think that I have come to abolish the law or the prophets; I have come not to abolish but to fulfill. 18For truly I tell you, until heaven and earth pass away, not one letter, not one stroke of a letter, will pass from the law until all is accomplished. 19Therefore, whoever breaks one of the least of these commandments, and teaches others to do the same, will be called least in the kingdom of heaven; but whoever does them and teaches them will be called great in the kingdom of heaven. 20For I tell you, unless your righteousness exceeds that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven.”

**Sermon: “Savory Characters”**

About 13 years ago, a movie came out in the artsy-fartsy theaters, a movie called “Osama.” It was about a girl of 12 or 13 years old, who lived with her mother and grandmother in Afghanistan. The family was starving, for their husbands had been killed in war. And as we know in some Muslim countries, women are oppressed. They are not allowed to get a job to save their lives. So, the women dressed the little girl up as a boy, cut her hair and give her a boy’s name, “Osama.” They then beg local businessmen to hire young “Osama” to work in their shops. Finally one man hires “Osama” to help him in his bakery. Every day she walks to and from work, through a dreary world of bombed out buildings and the desperate faces of passers-by. She is in a “man’s world,” and you sense her fear, as she tries desperately to play the part of a boy, hoping that no one will discover her. Even her boss believes she is a boy. However, he is merciful toward her, providing extra food to take home.

As hard as this movie is to watch, and revealing of inequalities between men and women, there is something quite compelling. For whenever someone does a kind or merciful thing for someone else, and they are thanked, the reply is, “God is good.”

God gets the praise for neighborly kindness.

Many people in the movie get by with very little, which is probably why they help someone, they are met with deep gratitude. Their ability to share gives cause for praising God.

Praising God. This is the underlying reason for why Jesus tells his audience to be salt of the earth and light of the world. Jesus is preaching the Sermon on the Mount to his disciples and the crowds who have been pursuing him. He is telling them they are the salt of the earth, and the light of the world. We don’t entirely know who these crowds are, except we can be sure they are full of seekers. Some of them might be rich, but most of them probably are not. Anyone who is pursuing a holy man on foot is definitely a seeker of something, maybe they feel something missing from her or her life. Jesus’ declaration might at first feel comforting, validating their life experiences of pain and trouble. But his sermon also comes with strings attached. He seems to be warning them that if they ever lose their saltiness, they will lose their essential nature, their whole purpose for living. And he says not to hide their light, for it does no good. You are meant to shine, and illuminate the world.

Now, that’s not always so simple for us to do, for we are easily swayed by who we THINK we should be, by who we WISH we were, and even what others TELL us we are supposed to be. We can be bewildered by our many options in trying to “find ourselves.” But God wants us to be the very best versions of ourselves, salted with life experience, enlightening the world around us with God’s mission of grace and love. God must be glorified by our life choices.

There is a song “In my life, Lord, be glorified, be glorified. In my life, Lord, be glorified today.” We have numerous opportunities to be God’s people, to shine light and bring out the flavor of the Gospel. And they involve our being the people God made us to be – the best versions of ourselves. It doesn’t require us to change who we are, but be our very best – saltiest and brightest. Let me tell you an old story: “Rabbi Simon ben Shetah once bought a donkey from an Ishmaelite. His students went and discovered a precious stone hanging from its neck. The disciples went to their teacher and said, ‘Rabbi, the blessing of the Lord makes rich’ (Proverbs 10:22). They were quoting the book of Proverbs to justify keeping the stone. Rabbi ben Shetah said to them, ‘I bought a donkey, I did not buy a precious stone.’ He went and returned the stone to the Ishmaelite, who said to him, ‘Blessed be the God of Simon ben Shetah.’

What this story tells us is we believers can be deceived by wishful thinking, like those disciples. But the Rabbi understood with his deeper knowledge of God’s Law, common sense, and his commitment to God’s Law, that it was better to return the stone. His good word caused the Ishmaelite to know something more about the Lord, and blessed Him.

Today we are inquiring in our Congregational Meeting how to be at our saltiest as a church. We want to see how to be the kindest, hardest working, most faithful, God-fearing people we can be. Not for ourselves but for others to know what kind of God we serve. We seek His will for us as individual believers and for His church. So that God is glorified. God is good. Let everyone know by your life. Amen.

**Service of Holy Communion**

**Invitation**

God is good, all the time. This day we celebrate God’s gift of our Lord Jesus Christ. This table is not a Presbyterian one, but a table presided by Jesus Himself. All who seek to be one with Him are invited to this feast.

On the night of his arrest, Jesus took the bread, blessed it, and gave it to his disciples, saying, “Take this and eat of it, all of you, in remembrance of me.”

And when they were done eating, Jesus took the cup, gave it to them and said, “This is my blood poured out for the forgiveness of sins. Drink of it in remembrance of me.”

Whenever we eat this bread and drink this cup, we proclaim the Lord’s death until He comes again.

Let us pray.

**Great Prayer of Thanksgiving - please use the responsive part that we usually use.**

The Lord be with you,

**And also with you**

Lift up your hearts

**We lift them unto the Lord.**

Lamb of God, you came to take away the sin of the world.

Before your birth, humanity lived in sin and darkness. God so loved His creation, He sent the stories of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, stories of great warriors like Deborah and Esther, prophets to remind humanity of their sins and teach ways to righteousness. And when we continued to turn away from you, God poured out himself into the form of a human, and you, Jesus set aside your power and grace in order to walk with us in our shoes, lead us with your parables and healings, and personally show us how to be salt and light. And when you rose in your Resurrection Power, your disciples’ eyes were opened. Yet even still we have trouble remembering.

Forgive us, O Lord. Let this table in this church be the place where we meet you again, be filled with your nourishment and holy presence. Let this table be our meeting place with you, where we are fed changed forever.

We praise you, joining our voices with the choirs of angels and saints in every time and place,

**Holy Holy Holy Lord, God of power and might.**

**Heaven and earth are full of your glory,**

**Hosanna in the highest, hosanna in the highest.**

**Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord,**

**Hosanna in the highest, hosanna in the highest.**

Knowing of your love for your world, we are not ashamed of your Gospel, the good news of your everlasting love. We are unafraid to ask you now for our own needs and the needs of others:

This we pray, using the prayer you taught your disciples, “Our Father,…Amen.”

**Distribution of the Elements**

**Prayer after Communion**

You have fed us with spiritual food,

Let us know that it is more than bread and juice,

But by your Holy Spirit, we are also fed and strengthened for your work.

Make this day be a new beginning,

As we seek your will and serve you wherever you have planted us.

And in being your salt and light, let others see and glorify you.

Amen.

**Announcements:**

Today is the day! Stick around for the Annual Congregational Meeting right here in the Sanctuary after worship. We promise you will have plenty of time to enjoy the Super Bowl.