

**First Presbyterian Church, Tucumcari**  
***The Church With the Holy Spirit Window***  
**July 3, 2016 Fourteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time**  
**11:00 a.m.**

**Rev. Amy Pospichal, Pastor**

**Marjorie 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**

I will praise God with all I have, because God has lifted me up.  
**We have cried to God for help, and God has healed us.**  
When we are at the lowest point, in the absolute depths, God has restored us to life.  
**Weeping may linger for a night, but joy comes in the morning.**  
Do not be silent; let us praise God!  
**We will give thanks to God forever.**

**Opening Prayer**

This day we open our hearts to the freedom to which you call us  
A freedom that is yours,  
In our worship, may we speak of your freedom,  
In our worship today, may we bring our gratitude,  
And in this worship, may we renew our freedom we find in Jesus Christ our Lord.  
To you we give our honor and praise. Amen.

**\*Opening Hymn**

**Call to Confession**

**Prayer of Confession**

**Gracious and steadfast God, you come to us with news of hope, freedom, and restoration.**  
**We confess that we have not believed your word or trusted your promise. We have been**  
**silent when we could have spoken your mercy, selfish when we could have shared our time**  
**and gifts, and timid when we could have shined your light into the world. God of compassion,**  
**hold us gently. Forgive what we have done or failed to do. Free us from the shadow of**  
**death, and guide our feet into the way of peace, through Jesus Christ. (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.**

**Psalm 30:1-12**

I will extol you, O LORD, for you have drawn me up,  
and did not let my foes rejoice over me.

**O LORD my God, I cried to you for help,  
and you have healed me.**

O LORD, you brought up my soul from Sheol,  
restored me to life from among those gone down to the Pit.

**Sing praises to the LORD, O you his faithful ones,  
and give thanks to his holy name.**

For his anger is but for a moment;  
his favor is for a lifetime.

**Weeping may linger for the night,  
but joy comes with the morning.**

As for me, I said in my prosperity,  
"I shall never be moved."

**By your favor, O LORD,  
you had established me as a strong mountain;  
you hid your face;  
I was dismayed.**

To you, O LORD, I cried,  
and to the LORD I made supplication:

**"What profit is there in my death,  
if I go down to the Pit?**

Will the dust praise you?

Will it tell of your faithfulness?

**Hear, O LORD, and be gracious to me!**

**O LORD, be my helper!"**

You have turned my mourning into dancing;  
you have taken off my sackcloth  
and clothed me with joy,

so that my soul may praise you and not be silent.

**O LORD my God, I will give thanks to you forever.**

**Offering**

## **Time Out for Teaching: Authority**

What is authority?

The story you will be hearing from the Old Testament has something to do with authority. Authority is a word that rather divides us, especially as modern Americans, for on the one hand, there are those who feel those in authority should receive a certain amount of respect. On the other hand some of us feel those in authority do not deserve our respect, or have to earn our respect.

In the story of Naaman the army commander, he receives no help until he heeds the advice of two servants, one servant we know was a prisoner his army came from Israel. He suffers from leprosy, and is informed via the servant that someone in Israel can heal him.

So, where did Naaman get God's authority?

Where do we get God's authority?

We will hear more on this soon.

## **Hymn**

## **Prayer for Illumination**

### **Luke 10:1-11, 16-20**

<sup>1</sup>After this the Lord appointed seventy others and sent them on ahead of him in pairs to every town and place where he himself intended to go. <sup>2</sup>He said to them, "The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few; therefore ask the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest.

<sup>3</sup>Go on your way. See, I am sending you out like lambs into the midst of wolves. <sup>4</sup>Carry no purse, no bag, no sandals; and greet no one on the road. <sup>5</sup>Whatever house you enter, first say, 'Peace to this house!' <sup>6</sup>And if anyone is there who shares in peace, your peace will rest on that person; but if not, it will return to you. <sup>7</sup>Remain in the same house, eating and drinking whatever they provide, for the laborer deserves to be paid. Do not move about from house to house.

<sup>8</sup>Whenever you enter a town and its people welcome you, eat what is set before you; <sup>9</sup>cure the sick who are there, and say to them, 'The kingdom of God has come near to you.' <sup>10</sup>But whenever you enter a town and they do not welcome you, go out into its streets and say, <sup>11</sup>'Even the dust of your town that clings to our feet, we wipe off in protest against you. Yet know this: the kingdom of God has come near.'

<sup>16</sup>"Whoever listens to you listens to me, and whoever rejects you rejects me, and whoever rejects me rejects the one who sent me."

<sup>17</sup>The seventy returned with joy, saying, "Lord, in your name even the demons submit to us!"

<sup>18</sup>He said to them, "I watched Satan fall from heaven like a flash of lightning. <sup>19</sup>See, I have given you authority to tread on snakes and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy; and nothing will hurt you. <sup>20</sup>Nevertheless, do not rejoice at this, that the spirits submit to you, but rejoice that your names are written in heaven."

### **2 Kings 5:1-14**

<sup>1</sup>Naaman, commander of the army of the king of Aram, was a great man and in high favor with his master, because by him the LORD had given victory to Aram. The man, though a mighty warrior, suffered from leprosy. <sup>2</sup>Now the Arameans on one of their raids had taken a young girl captive from the land of Israel, and she served Naaman's wife. <sup>3</sup>She said to her mistress, "If only my lord were with the prophet who is in Samaria! He would cure him of his leprosy." <sup>4</sup>So Naaman went in and told his lord just what the girl from the land of Israel had said. <sup>5</sup>And the king of Aram said, "Go then, and I will send along a letter to the king of Israel."

He went, taking with him ten talents of silver, six thousand shekels of gold, and ten sets of garments. <sup>6</sup>He brought the letter to the king of Israel, which read, "When this letter reaches you, know that I have sent to you my servant Naaman, that you may cure him of his leprosy." <sup>7</sup>When the king of Israel read the letter, he tore his clothes and said, "Am I God, to give death or life, that this man sends word to me to cure a man of his leprosy? Just look and see how he is trying to pick a quarrel with me."

<sup>8</sup>But when Elisha the man of God heard that the king of Israel had torn his clothes, he sent a message to the king, "Why have you torn your clothes? Let him come to me, that he may learn that there is a prophet in Israel." <sup>9</sup>So Naaman came with his horses and chariots, and halted at the entrance of Elisha's house. <sup>10</sup>Elisha sent a messenger to him, saying, "Go, wash in the Jordan seven times, and your flesh shall be restored and you shall be clean." <sup>11</sup>But Naaman became angry and went away, saying, "I thought that for me he would surely come out, and stand and call on the name of the LORD his God, and would wave his hand over the spot, and cure the leprosy! <sup>12</sup>Are not Abana and Pharpar, the rivers of Damascus, better than all the waters of Israel? Could I not wash in them, and be clean?" He turned and went away in a rage. <sup>13</sup>But his servants approached and said to him, "Father, if the prophet had commanded you to do something difficult, would you not have done it? How much more, when all he said to you was, 'Wash, and be clean'?" <sup>14</sup>So he went down and immersed himself seven times in the Jordan, according to the word of the man of God; his flesh was restored like the flesh of a young boy, and he was clean.

**Sermon                      "Take Me To the River"                      Rev. Amy Pospichal**

If God told you to do something easy, would you do it?

If God said all you have to do is go down to the river, would you follow instructions? Or would you doubt – figuring that things ought to be harder than that?

Naaman, commander of the Aramean army, did had that doubt. He expected the treatment for leprosy to be much more difficult. Leprosy in the Old Testament took a variety of forms and was often used as a generic term to cover a variety of skin conditions, some worse than others. The ancients often believed that illnesses came about by mysterious means,

stemming from the human condition of sin. Naaman suffered, and he expected it would require drastic measures, prescribed by a powerful healer.

He so desperate for healing he is willing to do what it took. He even listened to this slave girl, who had very likely been taken prisoner on his recent invasion of Israel. He was willing to travel back to that country Israel. Just imagine doing that, facing the people you've invaded, now seeking healing there.

The servants seem important to this story. For their words are what change his heart. We privileged Americans might not notice at first. We, celebrating the American liberation from English rule this weekend – we, enjoying a relatively free economy – we, who primarily don't know how it feels to fight a war in our own backyards. In a nation which celebrates freedom of speech, perhaps even flaunt it - we can easily overlook the powerful words of these servants who were prisoners of war. These two, seemingly unimportant people speak up for his benefit, but I suspect it was also for the benefit of their own nation Israel, who of late had been ruled by Ahab, a dysfunctional king. The world needed to know that there were still prophet in Israel and without these servants' proclamation, Naaman may never have become enlightened by this good news.

Let's face it we enjoy seeing God get the best of the "bad guy." But that's not what happens in this story. Rather, Naaman is redeemed. Freed from his sickness. He listens first to the slave girl who sends him in the direction of Elisha, and then later, to the servant who finally persuades him with the voice of reason: "If God had told you to do something difficult, would you have done it?" How much more should you do this, which is easy?

Friends, I believe that God was speaking through the prophet Elisha telling Naaman to go down to the river. I also believe that God was speaking through the servants, who corroborate the message. Whenever two or more witnesses bear the same testimony, it is believable. Elisha's message was corroborated by the slaves, when the common people had lost faith in their own rulers. The outsider, the foreign invader, comes to believe those servants, thereby finding healing and freedom. This is God's work, working through the words of people!

Nowadays, we hear testimony from many sources on where we might find freedom. In a nation where we enjoy many freedoms, it can be hard to know whose testimony to believe.

How might we, the Body of Christ, live the good news that Naaman has seen? Perhaps it helps to listen to the voices of others. Perhaps intentionally listening carefully to the testimonies of fellow believers who know how it feels to not have freedom. Perhaps hearing what it is really like to be someone in suffering. It is not so hard to just listen. It is as easy as dipping our toe in the river.

Hearing the voices of those whom we don't normally pay heed, we will become richer in the knowledge of how other people practice their faith, hearing others' expressions of belief in God. Just two weeks ago the Presbyterian Church General Assembly voted to include the Belhar Confession into our Constitution. It is now the next chapter in the Book of Confessions. It is the first confession ever to come from the Southern Hemisphere. It comes from the black churches in South Africa when they were fighting for equality under Apartheid. I am not familiar enough with it yet, but I feel like I must listen. A theme is reconciliation as a binding force for unity of the church. Here is just a little snippet of that confession:

We believe • that this unity of the people of God must be manifested and be active in a variety of ways: in that we love one another; that we experience, practice and pursue community with one another; that we are obligated to give ourselves willingly and joyfully to be of benefit and blessing to one another; that we share one faith, have one calling, are of one soul and one mind; have one God and Father, are filled with one Spirit, are baptized with one baptism, eat of one bread and drink of one cup,” and it goes on...

Friends, these words come from another side of the world. I admonish you to read this and pray for help to hear them. Some parts might feel uncomfortable, other parts I guarantee will make your heart sing. It's not hard. It's as easy as dipping your toe into a new river. Let's listen like Naaman, and find out how God speaks through others. Amen.

### **Service of Holy Communion**

#### **Invitation**

Seek, and you shall find. Knock and the door shall be opened.

Friends, this is the table where people gather, from North and South, East and West. We come, invited by our host, the Lord Jesus Christ. It is in a Presbyterian building, but it is not a Presbyterian table. This is the Lord's Table, and we are His guests.

On the night of our Lord's arrest, he took bread, blessed it, broke it, and he gave it to his disciples, saying,

“Take, eat, this is my body given for you. Do this in remembrance of me.”

When his disciples were finished eating, he took the cup, gave it to them, saying,

“This is my blood poured out for the forgiveness of sin. Drink this all of you in remembrance of me.”

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

### **Great Prayer of Thanksgiving**

The Lord be with you

**And also with you**

Lift up your hearts

**We lift them unto the Lord**

Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

**It is right to give our thanks and praise.**

Blessed are you, O Lord our God, Creator of the universe,  
for you made all things and called them good—  
earth, sea, and sky are yours,  
every tree and bird, each seed sprouting,  
every firefly twinkling and every drop of precious water  
is a witness to your grace.

We give you thanks this day for your generosity,  
for you are the giver of every good gift.

Today we especially give you thanks for the gift of freedom,  
for those who have worked and sacrificed to honor that gift,  
and for the many privileges we enjoy in this place.

We thank you for the gift of this community,  
the gift of curious minds and ingenuity,  
the privilege of learning and teaching.

We thank you for your Son  
who became flesh and lived among us

in order that we might know the gift of your abundant life

right here in these bodies, right here in this Body.

When we forget that all we have, from every tiny bone to every big cathedral, is a gift from you,  
call us back to your truth.

When we are tempted by the siren song of individual independence,  
remind us that we are but one part of your Body on earth.

When we separate this earth from your Spirit,  
give us eyes to see and ears to hear your breath in every heartbeat, every gust of wind, every creaking  
joint, every neighbor's laugh and enemy's tear.

We hold in your light those who live in fear, in violence, under oppression.

We remember your people in Syria, in Bangladesh, in Baghdad, in West Virginia, on the streets of  
Chicago, in Arizona, and the homes of our own neighborhood.

As we gather at this table, we remember that many are hungry.

As we share the cup together, we remember that many are thirsty.

May the day come soon when there may be food and water for all.

May the day come soon when justice and peace take the place of violence.

May the day come soon when your freedom may be known by all of creation.

As we eat this feast, draw us together in your Spirit.

Make us again into your body, loving, serving, and caring for the world.

We pray in the name of Jesus the Christ, who taught us to pray together... **The Lord's Prayer**

### **Distribution of the Elements**

This is the feast of God for the people of God. Come, let us keep the feast!

### **Prayer after Communion**

God of grace, you have given us all things, and you have fed us with Christ's presence through this sacrament. We commit ourselves to you now, and we give ourselves to the work of your kingdom, which is upon us in Jesus' life. Thanks be to God! Amen.

**\*Closing Hymn**

**\*Benediction**

**Announcements:**