**First Presbyterian Church, Tucumcari**

*The Church With the Holy Spirit Window*

**May 28, 20177th Sunday of Easter**

**11:00 a.m.**

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

**Call to Worship(from Ps 68)**

Sing to God, O kingdoms of the earth;   
sing praises to the Lord,                                                       
**Ascribe power to God,   
whose majesty is over Israel**   
Awesome is God in his sanctuary;  
O God of Israel,  
**Give power and strength to your people!  
Blessed be the Lord!**

**Opening Prayer**

**Call to Confession**

**Prayer of Confession**

**God of grace and mercy,**  
**You create a new order for our lives:**  
**Service before success,**  
**Faith before knowledge,**  
**Partnership over independence,**  
**The cross over the crown.**  
**Forgive us when we fall into the patterns of this world,**  
**Rejecting your call through our action or inaction.**  
**Forgive us, God, and move us to see the world through lens of your great love.**  
**Forgive us, God, and grant us peace. (silence) Amen.**

**Assurance of Pardon**

God forgives us of our sins,  
**Not because we are righteous, but because God is good.**  
God calls us to try again,  
**Not because we are strong, but because God will help us.**  
God calls us as disciples,  
**Not because we are worthy, but because we are loved.**  
God’s foolishness is wiser than human wisdom,  
and God’s weakness is stronger than human strength.  
Through the love of God in Christ Jesus, we 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 68:4-10, 32-35**

Sing to God, sing praises to his name;   
**lift up a song to him who rides upon the clouds —   
     his name is the LORD —   
          be exultant before him.**

Father of orphans and protector of widows   
          is God in his holy habitation.   
**God gives the desolate a home to live in;   
          he leads out the prisoners to prosperity,   
          but the rebellious live in a parched land.**

O God, when you went out before your people,   
          when you marched through the wilderness,                    
**the earth quaked, the heavens poured down rain   
          at the presence of God, the God of Sinai,   
          at the presence of God, the God of Israel.**Rain in abundance, O God, you showered abroad;   
          you restored your heritage when it languished;   
**your flock found a dwelling in it;   
          in your goodness, O God, you provided for the needy.**

Sing to God, O kingdoms of the earth;   
          sing praises to the Lord,                                                          
**O rider in the heavens, the ancient heavens;   
          listen, he sends out his voice, his mighty voice.**Ascribe power to God,   
          whose majesty is over Israel;   
          and whose power is in the skies.   
**Awesome is God in his sanctuary,   
          the God of Israel;   
          he gives power and strength to his people.**

**Blessed be God!**

**Offering**

**Prayers of the People**

Arise, O God, and scatter the shadows of enmity and hatred!  
In Christ’s resurrection, you drive away sin and death  
like smoke before the wind;  
in Christ’s ascension, you give glory to the one whose suffering saves us;  
therefore we rejoice and sing for joy before you.  
Teach us to honor your name above all things  
and keep us from being content with anything but your will.

You, O God, defend widows and set orphans in families,  
you who dwell on high!  
You give a home to the lonely and freedom to the prisoners;  
you lead your people through the wilderness  
into communities of wholeness and abundance.  
Show us your presence once again, Holy One;  
shake us from our complacency,  
and refresh us in all our thirst.  
Make a home for all people,  
provide generously for the poor,  
and use your church to heal your world.  
Make room especially for those we have lifted up by name,  
and for those whose names are far from our lips  
or deep within our hearts.

We sing to you, O God,  
praising you for your glorious creation,  
trusting in your mighty power,  
and celebrating the wonders of your promise.  
Blessed are you, O God,  
in Jesus Christ,  
who teaches us to pray as we say:

The Lord’s Prayer

**Time out for Teaching: Enlist Yourself**

I am throwing out whatever I was planning to talk about today (so disregard the Time out for Teaching you see in the bulletin). I would prefer to call this Time Out “Enlist Yourself.”

We talked a few weeks ago about 1 Peter as a useful document for encouraging us in times when we are “suffering” for doing the right thing. This is indeed a strong theme in the 1st Letter of Peter.

But going deeper into it, when we explore what the church in Asia Minor was enduring at the time this letter was written, we can find another theme, one that goes beyond a theology of suffering.

What was happening to those churches was less the gory and terrifying physical torture that we often imagine when we think of Christian persecution. That sort of thing didn’t really get going for a few years later, under the Emperor Domitian. Rather, the suffering they were presently feeling was along the lines of a social discrimination.

The society around them had heard it was the Christians’ fault for the burning of Rome, no thanks to Nero, which was the year 64AD. Their awareness and suspicion of the Christians was further raised because it was obvious they were no longer just a Jewish sect. They were not a specific ethnic group, which would have afforded them some distinction. They were just oddballs.

You know how people talk behind your back? You know how gossip can spread like wildfire?

When these things happen and they get back to you, you probably feel like checking out – hiding away.

1 Peter tells them they need to remain “enlisted” in the social institutions of which they are already a part, even though their faith makes them feel like outcasts. The letter says that even though they feel like foreigners in their own land, they are to stay with it, participate in society and hopefully by their presence, greater understanding of the Christian faith will take place.

So I ask you, how in your participation in society, have you seen your faith make this world better?

**Prayer for Illumination**

**John 17:1-11**

1After Jesus had spoken these words, he looked up to heaven and said, “Father, the hour has come; glorify your Son so that the Son may glorify you, 2since you have given him authority over all people, to give eternal life to all whom you have given him. 3And this is eternal life, that they may know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent. 4I glorified you on earth by finishing the work that you gave me to do. 5So now, Father, glorify me in your own presence with the glory that I had in your presence before the world existed.

6“I have made your name known to those whom you gave me from the world. They were yours, and you gave them to me, and they have kept your word. 7Now they know that everything you have given me is from you; 8for the words that you gave to me I have given to them, and they have received them and know in truth that I came from you; and they have believed that you sent me. 9I am asking on their behalf; I am not asking on behalf of the world, but on behalf of those whom you gave me, because they are yours. 10All mine are yours, and yours are mine; and I have been glorified in them. 11And now I am no longer in the world, but they are in the world, and I am coming to you. Holy Father, protect them in your name that you have given me, so that they may be one, as we are one.”

**Acts 1:6-14**

6So when they had come together, they asked him, “Lord, is this the time when you will restore the kingdom to Israel?” 7He replied, “It is not for you to know the times or periods that the Father has set by his own authority. 8But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.” 9When he had said this, as they were watching, he was lifted up, and a cloud took him out of their sight. 10While he was going and they were gazing up toward heaven, suddenly two men in white robes stood by them. 11They said, “Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking up toward heaven? This Jesus, who has been taken up from you into heaven, will come in the same way as you saw him go into heaven.”

12Then they returned to Jerusalem from the mount called Olivet, which is near Jerusalem, a sabbath day’s journey away. 13When they had entered the city, they went to the room upstairs where they were staying, Peter, and John, and James, and Andrew, Philip and Thomas, Bartholomew and Matthew, James son of Alphaeus, and Simon the Zealot, and Judas son of James. 14All these were constantly devoting themselves to prayer, together with certain women, including Mary the mother of Jesus, as well as his brothers.

**1 Peter 4:12-14, 5:6-11**

4:12Beloved, do not be surprised at the fiery ordeal that is taking place among you to test you, as though something strange were happening to you. 13But rejoice insofar as you are sharing Christ’s sufferings, so that you may also be glad and shout for joy when his glory is revealed. 14If you are reviled for the name of Christ, you are blessed, because the spirit of glory, which is the Spirit of God, is resting on you.

5:6Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, so that he may exalt you in due time. 7Cast all your anxiety on him, because he cares for you. 8Discipline yourselves, keep alert. Like a roaring lion your adversary the devil prowls around, looking for someone to devour. 9Resist him, steadfast in your faith, for you know that your brothers and sisters in all the world are undergoing the same kinds of suffering. 10And after you have suffered for a little while, the God of all grace, who has called you to his eternal glory in Christ, will himself restore, support, strengthen, and establish you. 11To him be the power forever and ever. Amen.

**Sermon “Blessed Be the Slow” Rev. Amy Pospichal**

It is right that on this Memorial Day weekend, as we gratefully remember those who have died serving our country, that we are reading these words from the first letter of Peter. For First Peter is not just about suffering. It charges us to serve, even if we’re uncomfortable.

For the churches in 1st century Asia Minor, the cause of their discomfort was a type of social discrimination. They were being persecuted, not so much with the gory torture that we read of in the books of the martyrs. Rather, the discrimination was from slanderous gossip about those weird Christians. They could not be trusted, for they were blamed for the great fire in Rome in 64 AD. Furthermore, they were misunderstood. The Christian faith had evolved so that it was no longer a Jewish sect; Christians were no particular ethnic group, for they were a mix of many ethnic groups, so the government did not know how to categorize them. They were misfits.

So these Christians, as a people charged with the call to make disciples, instead felt exclusion and mistrust from their neighbors.

They were foreigners in their own hometowns. This letter tells them, “Do not be surprised at the fiery ordeal that is taking place…” and reminds them that just as Jesus Christ had been rejected in his time, from now on, it will be normal for them to also feel rejection. Even though they were probably tempted to turn tail and heading for the hills to protect themselves, it is right that they should remain in the society, to live and work there, even though it will be uncomfortable.

In the words of Biblical theologian Dr. Leonhardt Goppelt these Christians were being encouraged to “enlist themselves” in the institutions of the world, for in this way, they will make a bigger impact with their faith than they would if they were to isolate themselves. There are similar themes in Paul’s writings, such as in his first letter to the Corinthians, where he instructs married couples where one is Christian and one who is not. Paul says this is okay, it is an opportunity, for is an opportunity to bring a positive experience of the faith into their household. Marriage is one of the many institutions where God plants us.

Intermixing our faith with society can bring about positive results, even though it is uncomfortable. We feel that discomfort today. As churches are shrinking in North America, we see an erosion of faith, an erosion of knowledge about Scripture, we too may feel some similarities with those first churches.

We might not notice it right away, but there exists a sort of “social discrimination” towards the Church now, primarily by persons who do not understand the faith. We cannot turn tail and head for the hills. We have to continue to participate in society, finding those opportunities to show our faith in the places where God has planted us. It’s so that we can effect positive change in the world through. And it’s so that the world understands us better, even if we are just a little weird. Exercise our voting rights, attend exercise groups and bridge clubs, own small businesses, take leadership in our retirement organizations and civic clubs, and more.

It can feel like slow and agonizing progress. But the slow boat is probably better.

This is our new normal. Let’s take things slowly. Our calling to participate and serve in our worldly institutions means that we can chip away at the cynicism and skepticism that folks have towards Christians. It may seem an insurmountable task, but our calling is to take things one by one, person to person, and God has our backs. This letter says for us to cast our anxieties on Him for He cares for us. And I promise you there will be some who find that our “weirdness” is actually wonderful. Amen

**\*Closing Hymn**

**\*Benediction**

**Announcements:**

Next Saturday, June 3rd at 8:00AM the Men of the Church are all called to fellowship for a breakfast here in the Church Kitchen. Come on Guys, and bring a buddy to help us eat up the food!

Sunday, June 4th will be Holy Communion Sunday. Marjorie McKenzie is the Deacon in Charge of the elements.