

**Sunday, September 13, 2015, 24<sup>th</sup> Sunday in Ordinary Time**

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

**Prayer of the Day**

God, in Jesus Christ you make all things new.  
This day is not like any other Sunday. It is your day.  
We bring ourselves, our lives, our joys and trials today.  
Embolden our voices in song and prayer.  
So that you make our hearts new and renewed.  
By your Spirit, refresh us to love and serve you more.  
In God the Father, God the Son and in God the Holy Spirit, Amen.

**Call to Confession**

God knows our hearts and understands our needs. And yet it still helps us to approach Him with the confidence of children, as we stand before the throne of grace confessing our shortcomings. Please pray with me in faith and in penitence.

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

**Assurance of Grace**

True abundance does not come because of what we do  
but because of the Person we know.  
God invites us into a bounty of forgiveness, inviting you to share the same with others.

Friends, believe in the Good News of Jesus Christ!

**In Jesus Christ, we are forgiven. Amen.**

**PSALM 19:1-14 (please see bulletin)**

**Prayers of the People**

Lord, we are the weary travelers of life. Some of us traveled to celebrations. To football and volleyball games. To doctors' appointments. Some just traveled across our yards with the lawnmower, perhaps for the last time this summer. We thank you for traveling with us wherever

we go. For keeping us safe. For bringing us fellowship and bringing us together in numerous ways.

We celebrate you and your gifts.

We hold in our hearts many prayers. Prayers of thanksgiving for the healing you have brought us. Prayers of gratitude for unexpected gifts. For a kind word from a stranger. For a reminder of our freedoms. We also hold in our hearts a reminder of that fateful Tuesday in September when we witnessed thousands die in falling skyscrapers and airplanes. That day our world became a little bit bigger and a little bit smaller. A little bit scarier. A little bit more hateful and paranoid. And for some, who reached out to protect others, we saw unexpected kindnesses, surprising signs of your love in the midst of terror. Your Word tells us that perfect love casts out fear.

We pray for your world, and for ourselves, O God. For we still struggle with the memory of that day. We cannot let go of the uncertainty it makes us feel. Help us and help the children who have grown up in this world and know no other way.

And as we remember that day, we also remember with gratitude the many firefighters and public servants who protect us every day, and who have given their lives for us to live in freedom. We thank you and we ask that your Spirit turn the tide of disrespect that has been directed towards police and military. We pray for their protection.

And lastly, we pray for ourselves. For those of us struggling with illness. For those who suffer at the hands of those who should love them. For those who are seeking just a word of hope.

And now in silence we lift our prayers to you.

To you, Almighty God, maker of heaven and earth, belong all glory and honor, thanksgiving and praise. And it is in you we pray, Jesus, who taught your disciples to first pray, “Our Father, who art in heaven...Amen.”

### **TIME OUT FOR TEACHING: Theology of Worship**

Have you ever wondered about why we follow a certain pattern in our worship services? Or, have you ever wondered what was the point in showing up when you could just worship God from wherever you are?

First of all, it's important that we recognize that this is “corporate worship” that is, a body of people worshipping God together. Second of all, it is also public worship. Our Book of Order says that maintenance of divine worship is one of the five great ends of the Church.

We have lots of reasons for coming to church. We are seeking meaning in a sermon. We need prayer. We need to visit with each other. We like to sing.

But worship isn't all about what we get out of it and what we like. It is our service to God, our worship. The word “liturgy” comes out of the Greek word “leitourgia” and it really meant a form of ministering to God, serving God, performing a public service in view of all who are there.

So as we go about our worship on Sundays, remember we are doing it to proclaim our faith, we are worshipping God with every thing that we do in church. We are also proclaiming that we have given our lives to God in His service. We give God our very best – even if some of

us aren't great singers or preachers, even if we are not extroverts. We aren't here just for ourselves. We are here for God in Jesus Christ. We're here for people to know He is at the center of our lives.

### **Prayer for Illumination**

As we read the words of scripture,  
point us to your living Word who walked among us;  
as we are surrounded by your Spirit, whispering words within our hearts and minds.  
Inspire us in our hearing and reflecting,  
that we may move beyond your words  
into life-changing acts of grace, love, hope, and peace.  
Amen.

### **Proverbs 1:20-33**

<sup>20</sup>Wisdom cries out in the street;  
in the squares she raises her voice.  
<sup>21</sup>At the busiest corner she cries out;  
at the entrance of the city gates she speaks:  
<sup>22</sup>"How long, O simple ones, will you love being simple?  
How long will scoffers delight in their scoffing  
and fools hate knowledge?  
<sup>23</sup>Give heed to my reproof;  
I will pour out my thoughts to you;  
I will make my words known to you.  
<sup>24</sup>Because I have called and you refused,  
have stretched out my hand and no one heeded,  
<sup>25</sup>and because you have ignored all my counsel  
and would have none of my reproof,  
<sup>26</sup>I also will laugh at your calamity;  
I will mock when panic strikes you,  
<sup>27</sup>when panic strikes you like a storm,  
and your calamity comes like a whirlwind,  
when distress and anguish come upon you.  
<sup>28</sup>Then they will call upon me, but I will not answer;  
they will seek me diligently, but will not find me.  
<sup>29</sup>Because they hated knowledge  
and did not choose the fear of the LORD,  
<sup>30</sup>would have none of my counsel,  
and despised all my reproof,  
<sup>31</sup>therefore they shall eat the fruit of their way  
and be sated with their own devices.  
<sup>32</sup>For waywardness kills the simple,  
and the complacency of fools destroys them;  
<sup>33</sup>but those who listen to me will be secure  
and will live at ease, without dread of disaster."

### **James 3:1-12**

<sup>1</sup>Not many of you should become teachers, my brothers and sisters, for you know that we who teach will be judged with greater strictness. <sup>2</sup>For all of us make many mistakes. Anyone who makes no mistakes in speaking is perfect, able to keep the whole body in check with a bridle. <sup>3</sup>If we put bits into the mouths of horses to make them obey us, we guide their whole bodies. <sup>4</sup>Or look at ships: though they are so large that it takes strong winds to drive them, yet they are guided by a very small rudder wherever the will of the pilot directs. <sup>5</sup>So also the tongue is a small member, yet it boasts of great exploits.

How great a forest is set ablaze by a small fire! <sup>6</sup>And the tongue is a fire. The tongue is placed among our members as a world of iniquity; it stains the whole body, sets on fire the cycle of nature, and is itself set on fire by hell. <sup>7</sup>For every species of beast and bird, of reptile and sea creature, can be tamed and has been tamed by the human species, <sup>8</sup>but no one can tame the tongue—a restless evil, full of deadly poison. <sup>9</sup>With it we bless the Lord and Father, and with it we curse those who are made in the likeness of God. <sup>10</sup>From the same mouth come blessing and cursing. My brothers and sisters, this ought not to be so. <sup>11</sup>Does a spring pour forth from the same opening both fresh and brackish water? <sup>12</sup>Can a fig tree, my brothers and sisters, yield olives, or a grapevine yield figs? No more can salt water yield fresh.

### **Mark 8:27-38**

<sup>27</sup>Jesus went on with his disciples to the villages of Caesarea Philippi; and on the way he asked his disciples, "Who do people say that I am?" <sup>28</sup>And they answered him, "John the Baptist; and others, Elijah; and still others, one of the prophets." <sup>29</sup>He asked them, "But who do you say that I am?" Peter answered him, "You are the Messiah." <sup>30</sup>And he sternly ordered them not to tell anyone about him.

<sup>31</sup>Then he began to teach them that the Son of Man must undergo great suffering, and be rejected by the elders, the chief priests, and the scribes, and be killed, and after three days rise again. <sup>32</sup>He said all this quite openly. And Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him. <sup>33</sup>But turning and looking at his disciples, he rebuked Peter and said, "Get behind me, Satan! For you are setting your mind not on divine things but on human things."

<sup>34</sup>He called the crowd with his disciples, and said to them, "If any want to become my followers, let them deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me. <sup>35</sup>For those who want to save their life will lose it, and those who lose their life for my sake, and for the sake of the gospel, will save it. <sup>36</sup>For what will it profit them to gain the whole world and forfeit their life? <sup>37</sup>Indeed, what can they give in return for their life? <sup>38</sup>Those who are ashamed of me and of my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, of them the Son of Man will also be ashamed when he comes in the glory of his Father with the holy angels."

## **Sermon: Location, Location, Location!**

Three rules of real estate: Location, Location, Location! Yes, all three rules are the same. It's a little joke to realtors. Location is everything when someone is considering acquiring property. Ease of access. Pleasing surroundings, and more. All sorts of factors are impacted by the location.

Every location in the world, even the most broken, war torn, tattered place, belongs to God. And we are reminded of that in Mark's gospel, Jesus travels all about the known world. In last week's story of the Gentile woman debating with Jesus about dogs and children, they were southeast of the Sea of Galilee in Gentile country. Now Jesus is on the way to Jerusalem, where he will eventually meet the Sanhedrin and be charged with blasphemy. But today, instead of heading west, crossing the Jordan and then south, he takes a 32 mile detour north, to far northern Israel, to a place called Caesarea Philippi.

Caesarea Philippi was not exactly the place you bring a bunch of devout Jewish men. It was considered a sacred site to pagan rituals, serving the fertility god Pan. It also had a temple dedicated to his "holiness" the Caesar Augustus, built by Philip, son of King Herod the Great. Cultic sacrifices to Pan and to Caesar happened there regularly. Worshipers would toss their sacrifices into the waters in a cave there, hoping they would be accepted by the gods.

So this was the place where Jesus has his talk with his disciples about the Messiah. In a place rife with imperial powers and pagan rites. This location full of reminders of why they hungered for the Messiah's return. Jesus' students wanted to see justice and righteousness to flow down like the mighty waters, for the Roman Emperor to be put in his place, for Israel to be free of oppression. In this place of brokenness and sin, they probably felt deep hunger and angst for a King to restore Israel.

But these were the Jewish expectations of a Messiah. And although Peter confesses that Jesus is the Messiah, it's obvious he cannot accept that God has other plans. When Jesus explains that the Messiah will suffer and die, Peter won't accept it. To suffer and die sounded like a failed Messiah to Peter, not the Messiah he had wanted. So Jesus tells him, "Get behind me, Satan!" which means, "Get out of my way!"

Failure is a word we are all too familiar with. We're a lot like Peter, afraid of failure. Failure as individuals, failure as a church.

We look around at the broken places, where unholy sacrifices are made, where people are hurting, and injustice occurs. There is simply too much for us to try and fix, to know where to even begin. We might see unfinished projects or programs, things that we once did well and now we're too busy to continue. We hear people say there's nothing here for them. We see empty buildings where once were proud independent locally owned businesses. We know our community struggles with high school dropouts, teen drug use, and homelessness. It's easy to feel overwhelmed with signs of failure.

But only if we refuse to let go of our personal expectations of Jesus and of ourselves. Peter is required to step aside, let go of his preconceived notions of the Messiah. He is, in effect, to die to his own understandings, get out of God's way. Even if Jesus himself prayed in Gethsemane for that cup to not pass his lips, he went through with God's plan, he dies, taking the risk that others would think he was a failure.

We are all called to let go of our own expectations if we really want to follow Jesus. The plan is for us to do our best at all things, be the people that God created us to be. Realize that some point failure happens, because we are free to try something and then recognize it's time to let go of it to try something else. Freed to make mistakes and keep on trying. See, God placed

us in this particularly broken location, in Tucumcari, not because we ourselves can fix everyone's problems. Because we understand failure. In Jesus Christ, failure is not the end. The Jesus we know died so new life can begin. We aren't strong enough to be the Messiah. In Jesus we can take a risk of faith, let go of the past, and find freedom to never give up. After all, we know and proclaim to the world that Jesus hasn't given up on us. Thanks be to God! Amen.

## **Announcements**

Next Sunday we continue our “What’s a Presbyterian?” Summer Adult Education series on Sundays at 9:30 in Fellowship Hall. It’s not too late to join in the conversation.

Ever had a question about God? The Bible? Or something theological? Your question might become the next sermon topic. Please write your questions down and drop them in the jar in the Narthex.