**First Presbyterian Church Tucumcari**

**Worship 11:00AM**

**Sunday, April 29, 2018, 5th Sunday of Easter**

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

**Prayer of the Day**

**Call to Confession**

**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 22:25-31 (please see bulletin)**

**Prayers of the People**

Responsive:

O Lord our help,

**come quickly to our aid!**

My God, my God, come close to your people!

You come to us to rescue us from powers that are too great for us.

Come to the help of all who face trouble or danger today.

O Lord our help,

**come quickly to our aid!**

O Lord, you bind us together as brothers and sisters, beloved in Christ.

Fill our hearts, our lives, and our voices with your praise,

and make us bold to proclaim your name to all people.

O Lord our help,

**come quickly to our aid!**

O Lord, we lift up those who are close to us who face trouble,

especially those who are sick, sorrowing, or confused.

Send forth your healing and restoring love.

O Lord our help,

**come quickly to our aid!**

O Lord, we pray for those who are poor, hungry, or homeless,

who are closer to us than many of us realize.

Open our hands to share what we have,

and open our hearts to share in relationship.

O Lord our help,

**come quickly to our aid!**

 O Lord, we pray for all who are entrusted with power

over nations, corporations, and the powers of the world,

that their decisions might honor you and seek the welfare of all people.

O Lord our help,

**come quickly to our aid!**

 O Lord, we pray for all the generations:

with thanksgiving for those who have gone before us and enjoy your eternal rest;

and with hope for those who will follow us, to whom we must still proclaim your salvation.

Keep your church faithful in every age.

O Lord our help,

**come quickly to our aid!**

 Keep us faithful to you, O Lord,

and teach us to serve you,

as we pray together with Jesus, saying:

The Lord’s Prayer

**Time out for Teaching: Listening to Scripture**

**Prayer for Illumination**

God our Parent,
your voice claims us as your people
and calls us into new relationships
with ourselves and others.
By your Holy Spirit, help us hear your voice speaking to us
through these words of scripture,
and prepare us for your service,
in Jesus’ name. Amen.

**Acts 8:26-40**

26Then an angel of the Lord said to Philip, “Get up and go toward the south to the road that goes down from Jerusalem to Gaza.” (This is a wilderness road.) 27So he got up and went. Now there was an Ethiopian eunuch, a court official of the Candace, queen of the Ethiopians, in charge of her entire treasury. He had come to Jerusalem to worship 28and was returning home; seated in his chariot, he was reading the prophet Isaiah. 29Then the Spirit said to Philip, “Go over to this chariot and join it.” 30So Philip ran up to it and heard him reading the prophet Isaiah. He asked, “Do you understand what you are reading?” 31He replied, “How can I, unless someone guides me?” And he invited Philip to get in and sit beside him. 32Now the passage of the scripture that he was reading was this:
     “Like a sheep he was led to the slaughter,
          and like a lamb silent before its shearer,
               so he does not open his mouth.
33  In his humiliation justice was denied him.
          Who can describe his generation?
               For his life is taken away from the earth.”
34The eunuch asked Philip, “About whom, may I ask you, does the prophet say this, about himself or about someone else?” 35Then Philip began to speak, and starting with this scripture, he proclaimed to him the good news about Jesus. 36As they were going along the road, they came to some water; and the eunuch said, “Look, here is water! What is to prevent me from being baptized?” [37And Phillip said, “If you believe with all your heart, you may.” And he replied, “I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God.”] 38He commanded the chariot to stop, and both of them, Philip and the eunuch, went down into the water, and Philip baptized him. 39When they came up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord snatched Philip away; the eunuch saw him no more, and went on his way rejoicing. 40But Philip found himself at Azotus, and as he was passing through the region, he proclaimed the good news to all the towns until he came to Caesarea.

**1 John 4:7-21**

7Beloved, let us love one another, because love is from God; everyone who loves is born of God and knows God. 8Whoever does not love does not know God, for God is love. 9God's love was revealed among us in this way: God sent his only Son into the world so that we might live through him. 10In this is love, not that we loved God but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the atoning sacrifice for our sins. 11Beloved, since God loved us so much, we also ought to love one another. 12No one has ever seen God; if we love one another, God lives in us, and his love is perfected in us.

13By this we know that we abide in him and he in us, because he has given us of his Spirit. 14And we have seen and do testify that the Father has sent his Son as the Savior of the world. 15God abides in those who confess that Jesus is the Son of God, and they abide in God. 16So we have known and believe the love that God has for us.

God is love, and those who abide in love abide in God, and God abides in them. 17Love has been perfected among us in this: that we may have boldness on the day of judgment, because as he is, so are we in this world. 18There is no fear in love, but perfect love casts out fear; for fear has to do with punishment, and whoever fears has not reached perfection in love. 19We love because he first loved us. 20Those who say, “I love God,” and hate their brothers or sisters, are liars; for those who do not love a brother or sister whom they have seen, cannot love God whom they have not seen. 21The commandment we have from him is this: those who love God must love their brothers and sisters also.

**Gospel John 15:1-8**

1“I am the true vine, and my Father is the vinegrower. 2He removes every branch in me that bears no fruit. Every branch that bears fruit he prunes to make it bear more fruit. 3You have already been cleansed by the word that I have spoken to you. 4Abide in me as I abide in you. Just as the branch cannot bear fruit by itself unless it abides in the vine, neither can you unless you abide in me. 5I am the vine, you are the branches. Those who abide in me and I in them bear much fruit, because apart from me you can do nothing. 6Whoever does not abide in me is thrown away like a branch and withers; such branches are gathered, thrown into the fire, and burned. 7If you abide in me, and my words abide in you, ask for whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. 8My Father is glorified by this, that you bear much fruit and become my disciples.

**Sermon: Hanging with Jesus**

Vines – they’re a little like life. They grow in whatever direction they seem to go. Left to their own devices, they can wild, as they twist around lattice work and fenceposts. Our lives are similarly messy; they take unpredictable twists and turns. Without a little training from God, this one life we have to live, can start to go like a vine without domestication, unconcerned with survival or bearing fruit.

Jesus compares us to branches of a vine. And He says that He is the true vine. He also says that the one who tends, prunes and cleans up the branches is His Father. Many of us enjoy reading this beautiful description. It reminds us that we are connected to that Vinedresser, our God, through Jesus Christ. And the Vinedresser, even though only mentioned once in this passage, is always there, actively engaged in our growth. Jesus’ words tell us that our God is intimately involved, but also a shrewd gardener, for the Vinedresser carefully watches the branches. If those branches do not produce fruit, then they are not much use to the Vinedresser, are they? And those who do produce fruit, because they are doing what they should, even **they** get a trim, so that they will bear even more fruit in the next season.

All of this makes sense, doesn’t it? Those of us who have experience in gardening, we do similar things. For instance, a geranium that is blooming lots of flowers eventually needs a trim so the dying flowers are thrown out, if you were to trim it further back you will cause the stem to branch out. More branches, more flowers, more fruit.

And how do we know we’re bearing fruit? What is the fruit we should bear?

Here is where Jesus is a bit vague. If we read on from verse 8 and see that he speaks a lot of love and he commands us to “Love one another.” Love most certainly is a fruit we bear when we submit to God’s care and love. And that is a fruit that can multiply. And in verse 8 Jesus says, “My Father is glorified by this, that you bear much fruit and become my disciples.” This tells us that if our thoughts and acts glorify God, then we are bearing the fruit. This fruit may be tangible or intangible things. It is bread for the hungry, a helping hand, a well-thought out mission project, or anything else that conveys the love of God in this untamed world. Jesus reminds us also that we can be tamed by his words, if we would just abide in him, hang out with Jesus.

The Gospel writer has traditionally been called “St. John the Evangelist” for a reason, as this gospel is not just interested in preserving the words of Jesus; it also seeks to explain and teach so that others might believe. So we might surmise that this branching of the vine is also with the goal of connecting the world to Jesus through us. New believers who come to God through us are also fruits from our branches. But first, spend time with Jesus. Abide with him, absorb his words.

Maybe for you, you have been through a lot of trimming lately. Perhaps you’re presently smarting from the pruning shears. Dip your roots back into the nourishing fertilizer of Jesus’ words and spend time hanging out with Him. You will bear fruit if you do. But now, make sure you abide in Him. To do this is more than just a belief or knowing the right words or actions. Abiding in Jesus is to be in union with Him. We share some of the same DNA, we are of the same family.

Let yourself be tamed, healed and held by the words of Jesus. These printed words of Scripture were lovingly crafted and passed on to us. Hanging out with Jesus until you are strong and ready to bear more fruit. How could we possibly turn down an invitation to hang out with the Son of God? Amen.
**Announcements:**

**Rev. Amy** will be on vacation and continuing education leave from May 6th till May 18th.

**The Rummage Sale will be May 4-5 from 9:00AM to 3:00PM.** We could use helpers after the sale to pack up the leftovers and help us move them out to Ministry of H.O.P.E. Special thanks to those who have already been helpful and/or given donations!

**Elders!** We have a Session Meeting this Tuesday at 5:30PM, May 1st. Sorry it feels so soon, but it’s because it is!