**First Presbyterian Church, Tucumcari**

*The Church With the Holy Spirit Window*

**August 22, 2021 21st Sunday in Ordinary Time**

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

**RH 135 Fairest Lord Jesus**

**RH 401 Jesus, the Very Thought of Thee**

**BH 322 Spirit of the Living God (Prayer for Illumination)**

**BH 367 Jesu, Jesu, Fill Us With Your Love**

**Call to Worship**

We gather in this holy place, lifting our voices in praise.

**We come to offer ourselves, heart and soul and mind and strength.**

We seek God’s presence, opening ourselves to God’s living Word.

**We come to be filled by the Holy Spirit, breath of all creation.**

Wherever two or three are gathered, Christ is among us.

**Let us worship the living God together.**

**Opening Prayer**

We celebrate your many gifts, almighty Creator. We celebrate the many gifts that you have planted in each of us for our enjoyment of ourselves and others. Breathe new life into each of us today, as we receive your word and holy sacrament of communion. Amen.

**Call to Confession**

If anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation—the old has gone, and the new has come. Yet we often have difficulty living in that new reality, clinging to the old ways that have passed. When we confess our sin, we make room for God’s truth to dwell in us, clearing the path for a new way of life. Before God, with the people of God, let us confess our faults and our failings. Let us pray.

**Prayer of Confession (based on Ephesians 6)**

**Holy and beloved God, though we wander from your path as though we don’t have a care in the world, it is you who protects us and guides us back. When we would choose falsehood, tighten your belt of truth around us. When we would be corrupted by the world, cover us with your long-sleeved shirt of righteousness that reminds us of your purity. When we would walk into tall grass wearing sandals, cover our feet with your boots, ready to take the Gospel of Peace even to the den of snakes. When thorns and stickers would wound us, protect us with your bluejeans of faith. When our heads would get hot and our tempers rise, cool us with your wide-brimmed hat of salvation, reminding us that nothing separates us from you. When we would throw rocks in anger, show us the rod of your Spirit, the Word of God, who reminds us to love our enemies and heal their wounds. Walk with us in our journey, and help us to be in step with you and in you, wherever you lead us.** ~silence~ **Amen.**

**Assurance of Pardon**

The mercy of the Lord is from everlasting to everlasting. From before the beginning until long beyond our imagination, God’s love endures.

Friends, live and believe this good news:

**In Jesus Christ, we are forgiven! Thanks be to God!**

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 84:1-12**

How lovely is your dwelling place,

O LORD of hosts!

**My soul longs, indeed it faints**

**for the courts of the LORD;**

**my heart and my flesh sing for joy**

**to the living God.**

Even the sparrow finds a home,

and the swallow a nest for herself,

where she may lay her young,

at your altars, O LORD of hosts,

my King and my God.

**Happy are those who live in your house,**

**ever singing your praise.**

Happy are those whose strength is in you,

in whose heart are the highways to Zion.

**As they go through the valley of Baca**

**they make it a place of springs;**

**the early rain also covers it with pools.**

They go from strength to strength;

the God of gods will be seen in Zion.

**O LORD God of hosts, hear my prayer;**

**give ear, O God of Jacob!**

Behold our shield, O God;

look on the face of your anointed.

**For a day in your courts is better**

**than a thousand elsewhere.**

I would rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God

than live in the tents of wickedness.

**For the LORD God is a sun and shield;**

**he bestows favor and honor.**

No good thing does the LORD withhold

from those who walk uprightly.

**O LORD of hosts,**

**happy is everyone who trusts in you.**

**Prayers of the People**

Response:

O God our protector: **Be our rock of refuge.**

To you, O Lord, we call out for help,

for you are our rock and our fortress.

Listen to the prayers we raise before you today.

Rescue those who are under the power of injustice and cruelty,

and cleanse our hearts of the desires that do violence against your people.

O God our protector: **Be our rock of refuge.**

Protect and nurture the young,

who are just learning the promise of your constant presence;

keep them safe and cover them with your gracious love.

O God our protector: **Be our rock of refuge.**

Let your mercy surround those who are old,

especially those whose health or mind or family fail them;

let your strength lift them up, and let your praises be on their lips.

O God our protector: **Be our rock of refuge.**

Stand with all who seek to serve you faithfully.

Give them steadfast hope by the power of your Holy Spirit,

and let them celebrate the righteous acts you do through them day after day.

O God our protector: **Be our rock of refuge.**

Reveal yourself in family and community gatherings this week,

that as loved ones gather together for Thanksgiving,

each generation may tell another about the wonders of your love.

Bless and watch over all who travel.

O God our protector: **Be our rock of refuge.**

Revive and comfort those who face trouble and calamity among us,

and let your healing presence be with all who are ill (especially \_\_\_).

Bring your people up from the depths, to your honor.

O God our protector: **Be our rock of refuge.**

Show your faithfulness to those who face death or walk in the shadow of grief (especially \_\_\_).

Strengthen your people to sing your praises even in the darkness,

and watch over the souls of all who rest in you.

O God our protector: **Be our rock of refuge.**

God our rock, we call to you now and always,

trusting in the name of Jesus the Christ,

who taught us to pray as we say together:

**Offering**

**Prayer for Illumination BH 322 Spirit of the Living God**

**Time out for Teaching: One More Great Moment in Heresy: “It was something you did.”**

When I was a sophomore at Virginia Tech, I was involved with an evangelical group called “Great Commission International.” I forgot how I met them, but began attending their on-campus worship services and learned that their leaders lived down the street from me. Well, that year was the year I considered changing the course of my studies, because, while I was pretty good at biology, I didn’t get along well with chemistry nor physics.

So, I began to sense a call to ministry, way back then. I had an image in my mind of preaching and leading a church, and found my pastor back home very inspiring too. Her name is Beth and she was an inspiring leader to a church of 400 members. I was so excited to share the news with someone that I felt a calling from God to ministry! So I told the people at my on-campus “church,” thinking that they too would be excited. Instead, they sounded a bit serious, and asked me if I could come over to their apartment and talk about it.

When I entered the apartment, several of them were sitting there waiting. They did not like what I had to say. I was told, quite specifically, that because I am female, God could not possibly want me to be a minister. I told them that women in my church could be, and I knew a couple of very good ones. And then I was informed that if I became a preacher, then “bad things” would happen to me. Figuring that bad things would happen to me anyways, I left their church and started attending Blacksburg Presbyterian Church and the on-campus Presbyterian campus ministry during the week.

There is an idea out there that bad things happen to us because of something we did. The Old Testament has many stories in which it shows that God has apparently destroyed peoples, or sent them into exile as a way of punishing them for their sins. This area of theology is called “theodicy,” which seeks to explain why bad things happen. We often cry out at disasters and even at the awful stuff that happens to us personally and ask, “Why did God allow this to happen?” But sometimes they just happen to us. In the book, “When Bad Things Happen to Good People,” Rabbi Harold Kushner tries to make sense of the death of his son. He doesn’t understand the Old Testament philosophy as it doesn’t seem to apply to him. He says that his son was innocent and – while Rabbi Kushner isn’t perfect – he isn’t all that bad a person.

If God were simply to send us evil and suffering for every bad thing we have ever done, what does this say about the God we worship? Discuss.

**Gospel John 6:56-69**

56"Those who eat my flesh and drink my blood abide in me, and I in them. 57Just as the living Father sent me, and I live because of the Father, so whoever eats me will live because of me. 58This is the bread that came down from heaven, not like that which your ancestors ate, and they died. But the one who eats this bread will live forever." 59He said these things while he was teaching in the synagogue at Capernaum.

60When many of his disciples heard it, they said, "This teaching is difficult; who can accept it?" 61But Jesus, being aware that his disciples were complaining about it, said to them, "Does this offend you? 62Then what if you were to see the Son of Man ascending to where he was before? 63It is the spirit that gives life; the flesh is useless. The words that I have spoken to you are spirit and life. 64But among you there are some who do not believe." For Jesus knew from the first who were the ones that did not believe, and who was the one that would betray him. 65And he said, "For this reason I have told you that no one can come to me unless it is granted by the Father."

66Because of this many of his disciples turned back and no longer went about with him. 67So Jesus asked the twelve, "Do you also wish to go away?" 68Simon Peter answered him, "Lord, to whom can we go? You have the words of eternal life. 69We have come to believe and know that you are the Holy One of God."

**Ephesians 6:10-20**

10Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his power. 11Put on the whole armor of God, so that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. 12For our struggle is not against enemies of blood and flesh, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers of this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places. 13Therefore take up the whole armor of God, so that you may be able to withstand on that evil day, and having done everything, to stand firm. 14Stand therefore, and fasten the belt of truth around your waist, and put on the breastplate of righteousness. 15As shoes for your feet put on whatever will make you ready to proclaim the gospel of peace. 16With all of these, take the shield of faith, with which you will be able to quench all the flaming arrows of the evil one. 17Take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.

18Pray in the Spirit at all times in every prayer and supplication. To that end keep alert and always persevere in supplication for all the saints. 19Pray also for me, so that when I speak, a message may be given to me to make known with boldness the mystery of the gospel, 20for which I am an ambassador in chains. Pray that I may declare it boldly, as I must speak.

**Sermon “Clothed in Christ” Rev. Amy Pospichal**

About 13 years ago, when I worked in Albuquerque, I was a chaplain resident at Presbyterian Hospital on Central Avenue. For one year, I was training, studying, writing papers, in addition to working full time as a hospital chaplain. They assigned me to four departments, including ICU and the Emergency Department. Sometimes we were flooded with urgent needs and frightened people. I truly felt needed there. Often, if someone had paged me, when I arrived at the nurses’ station, they would greet me with the sound of relief in their voices, “Thank you for coming, Chaplain.” They knew me not always by name, but by my function.

All that excitement and anxiety can really overwhelm us. Whether we are in the hospital fearing for our lives, or just opening up the newspaper to read about the latest catastrophe. Our search for answers to life’s most frightening questions can inundate us with our own sense of mortality. We can feel fatigue, when we are trying to hold up the problems and fears up for someone else, for ourselves.

With each patient and grieving family whom I met, I tried to be their temporary traveling companion on this hard and rocky road of pain. They probably don’t remember my name now, should they look back on that chapter of their lives. However, I hope that they do remember is that they were not alone, and that someone was there to help shoulder their burdens while they worked out their problems.

Sometimes we need someone to hold our problems for us, at least just for a little while, as we sort out other problems. For we all experience times like those, when the problems are too many and we don’t know what to deal with first. We need someone who will just hear us, acknowledge us. It can be hard to accept that this all people want, for we would like to be the heroes for someone else. Or maybe our own armor is too thin to be able to listen to another’s problems, for they are too much for us to absorb.

We are told to put on the whole armor of God. It goes from our head to our toes. Nothing needs to be left unprotected. When clothed in Christ, we are better able to hold open our hearts for God’s leading, whether to help someone else with their problems, or to face our own.

But what does the writer of Ephesians mean by putting on the whole armor of God? It is a wonderfully creative metaphor for how to be prepared for anything and persevering through faith. It also takes into account our WHOLE selves – not just our brains or souls. Our whole bodies are involved in God’s work of salvation. And this matters, for God is the maker of the entire cosmos, including our bodies. It mattered to the audience who first heard this letter read to them, for their bodies were in terrible danger. Aware of the martyrdom of Christians, they were aware of their own mortality, surrounded by hostility of their neighbors. It must have been extremely stressful. It must have required an extraordinary amount of courage and righteousness. No wonder being “clothed in Christ” looks a little like wearing a suit of armor.

Sometimes we forget that moment-by-moment protection which may help us. We can be armed with the knowledge of what God has told us through Scripture, and through God’s people. We can be comforted with the assurance of God’s salvation (the helmet!) and our hearts covered with righteousness. But putting the whole protective outfit on in a pinch… how to do it? Prayer? I would say so. After listing the various parts of this protective gear – from head to toe – so that we are prepared to meet the world, we are then told, “Pray in the Spirit at all times in every prayer and supplication. To that end keep alert and always persevere in supplication for all the saints.” We are not alert nor aware every single second of each day, but prayer can help us maintain our alertness, so we are ready to handle the slings and arrows of life.

The next time you feel you are slipping, when you feel your spirit is in danger, those can be signals for you to gear up, pay attention to what’s happening in the moment. And say a prayer for perseverance. Going back to the hospital in Albuquerque, as I knocked on each patient’s door, I never knew what pain and suffering I would meet when I went in to visit them. I did not know who might need me to help hold their pain for them. So I ritualized these moments of entering and leaving. I would get a little hand sanitizer and pictured it a part of my prayer – for myself to be strong and open, for the people I was about to meet, and as I left, I washed my hands again, praying for God’s help so that I could release that patient’s needs to God, so I had space in my heart for the next visit. While we might not necessarily do this in our day to day life, you might give it a try. If you don’t have evening prayers or some other prayer life, maybe find when and where during your day you feel like your armor is falling off. On your drive to work? When you go into a particular meeting? When you go visit your least favorite cousin? When you try to read the morning news? If we relied only on our own armor, it eventually fails us. But God is here, ready and waiting for whole armor of God is not of our own making, for our own armor will fail us. But we can be prepared, through prayer. Amen.

**\*Benediction**

**Prayer Requests:**

Amy (Glenna Gray’s daughter) chronic medical issues  
Betty (Alzheimer’s) and Dolores (paralyzed) – Glenda’s sisters  
Cheryl Holland – grief for husband

Dorothy Randals – at Autumn Blessings, for strength and comfort  
Elmer Schuster - leg pain, final dental surgery  
Fay Birch – stage 4 cancer, prayers for her husband, Larry too  
Glenda Coles – injured rotator cuff  
Irene – (requested by Linda) – breast cancer surgery and treatment

Dr. Jean Corey   
Lissa – Glenda’s granddaughter (high risk pregnancy)  
Lucy Jasper – Alzheimers/Dementia – recovering from a fall in home  
Lynn Hawkins – she may have found a new home closer to her doctor  
Pat Sieglen – health and courage

Ruth Johnson – for general health   
Sharon and Wayne Huffman – general health   
Shay – Julie Sursa’s daughter  
Susie – still seeking a car, planning for EMS school  
Tammy Lucero –treatment for cancer

Travelers  
All those suffering from COVID19

**Announcements:**