**First Presbyterian Church, Tucumcari**

*The Church With the Holy Spirit Window*

**Sunday, August 30, 2020 22nd Sunday in Ordinary Time**

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

**Hymns:**

**RH 46 O Splendor of God’s Glory Bright**

**BH 525 Here I Am, Lord**

**RH 339 Guide Me, O Thou Great Jehovah**

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

**Prayer of the Day**

God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob
God of our fathers and mothers,
Who sees the struggles of your people,
and comes to save,
Give us eyes to see you in burning bush,
feet to feel the holy ground beneath us,
and hearts willing to go where you send us,
So that all your people may know your salvation.
Amen.

**Call to Confession**

**Prayer of Confession**

**O God, you are hard to pin down. We want to be able to name you and speak of you with certainty, but you are always bigger than our words and faster than our thoughts. Forgive our attempts to control you, and our desire to speak our words on your behalf. Forgive our halfhearted ‘yes’ and our excuses for saying ‘no’ to your call. Help us to truly listen to your living word, so that we may fully love as you love and humbly serve as you serve.**~silence~ Amen.

Here is Good News! God is willing to cleanse us from our errors and sinful ways. Through God’s grace we are washed and forgiven.
**Thanks be to God! Hallelujah! Amen.**

The peace of the Lord be with you.

**And also with you.**

**Psalm 105:1-6, 23-26, 45c (please see bulletin)**

**Prayers of the People**

You are a God who leads us, who makes a way when there is no way.
We give you thanks, O Lord, for you are stronger than every foe.
We give you thanks, for your creative Spirit is always at work, making all things new.
We give you thanks, for though we feel scattered or on edge, there is no place we can go beyond the reach of your love.
And so we are bold to lift our voices to you, to admit our need.
We pray this day for your Church, in this community, in this nation, and in the world.
We ask your blessing on your Body, that we may in turn be a blessing to others.
We ask your guidance, strong and sure, for we are not certain of the way forward.
We pray for the gift of discernment, and the courage to follow, even when we feel battered by the waves.
Give us eyes to see and ears to hear…and feet ready to follow…and hands ready to serve.
Take from us any thought that does not glorify you, and lead us on your way.
…
We pray this day for the nations of this world, and for our leaders, that they too may have the gifts of discernment and courage.
Give them wisdom to seek the good of all, not only some.
Give them compassion, and imagination, and love.
…
We pray this day for your people near and far who live each day with fear.
Whether they fear someone in their home, or violence in the streets, or the government, or themselves…bring peace, O God.
Bring peace to those in the midst of war, and to those whose greatest enemy is within.
Bring peace that passes all understanding, peace founded on justice.
And bring us together, to be creators of justice and peace for all your creation.
…
We pray this day for those who are ill, in body, mind, or spirit.
May your healing presence surround and fill them, may your comfort enfold them.
Guide the hands and minds of doctors and nurses and all who care for others, that they may understand and so treat people toward wholeness.
…
We pray this day for all those who find the news too much to bear—people living with stories they have not been able to tell, with hearts burdened by trauma, with lives upended by choices made by others.
Shield their hearts, O God.
Give them hope, and help, and a listening ear.
Give us courage to hold their stories, their feelings, and their prayers, to be a friend to those who feel alone.
…
You are a God who makes a way when there is no way, who creates paths in the desert and through the storm. You carry our burdens and lift our spirits, that we may bravely walk this earthly way. Lead and guide us to go forward into your future, with faith, hope, and love.
We pray these and all things in the name of the One who is the pioneer and perfecter of our faith, Jesus the Christ. Amen.

**Presentation of Offering and Offertory**

**Time out for Teaching: “God Is a Verb! And More.” (checking out Exodus 3:1-15)**

This story is one that nearly all of us have heard. But, one of the pitfalls to reading an old familiar story is when we read it, expecting to hear it the same way every time. It could help to approach these old stories in some other ways, as a way of trying to hear them as if they are brand new and fresh.

The theologian Mary Daly once wrote a book called “God is a Verb.” I believe she may be right, just about. For God takes action in these stories. The entire Bible is a library of books, all written for the purpose of telling us of God’s actions throughout history. We can tell a lot about God by God’s actions here. So, let’s do an experiment and find out who God is, by the actions God takes here. And, let’s talk for a moment about angels, if we have time. Hear now the word of the Lord, from Exodus 3:1-15:

**Exodus 3:1-15**

1Moses was keeping the flock of his father-in-law Jethro, the priest of Midian; he led his flock beyond the wilderness, and came to Horeb, the mountain of God. 2There the angel of the LORD appeared to him in a flame of fire out of a bush; he looked, and the bush was blazing, yet it was not consumed. 3Then Moses said, “I must turn aside and look at this great sight, and see why the bush is not burned up.” 4When the LORD saw that he had turned aside to see, God called to him out of the bush, “Moses, Moses!” And he said, “Here I am.” 5Then he said, “Come no closer! Remove the sandals from your feet, for the place on which you are standing is holy ground.” 6He said further, “I am the God of your father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob.” And Moses hid his face, for he was afraid to look at God.

7Then the LORD said, “I have observed the misery of my people who are in Egypt; I have heard their cry on account of their taskmasters. Indeed, I know their sufferings, 8and I have come down to deliver them from the Egyptians, and to bring them up out of that land to a good and broad land, a land flowing with milk and honey, to the country of the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Amorites, the Perizzites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites. 9The cry of the Israelites has now come to me; I have also seen how the Egyptians oppress them. 10So come, I will send you to Pharaoh to bring my people, the Israelites, out of Egypt.” 11But Moses said to God, “Who am I that I should go to Pharaoh, and bring the Israelites out of Egypt?” 12He said, “I will be with you; and this shall be the sign for you that it is I who sent you: when you have brought the people out of Egypt, you shall worship God on this mountain.”

13But Moses said to God, “If I come to the Israelites and say to them, ‘The God of your ancestors has sent me to you,’ and they ask me, ‘What is his name?’ what shall I say to them?” 14God said to Moses, “I AM WHO I AM.” He said further, “Thus you shall say to the Israelites, ‘I AM has sent me to you.’” 15God also said to Moses, “Thus you shall say to the Israelites, ‘The LORD, the God of your ancestors, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, has sent me to you’:
     This is my name forever,
     and this my title for all generations.”

**Prayer for Illumination**

Gracious God, we do not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from your mouth. Make us hungry for this heavenly food, that it may nourish us today in the ways of eternal life; through Jesus Christ, the bread of heaven. Amen.

**Gospel Matthew 16:21-28**

21From that time on, Jesus began to show his disciples that he must go to Jerusalem and undergo great suffering at the hands of the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and on the third day be raised. 22And Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him, saying, “God forbid it, Lord! This must never happen to you.” 23But he turned and said to Peter, “Get behind me, Satan! You are a stumbling block to me; for you are setting your mind not on divine things but on human things.”

24Then Jesus told his disciples, “If any want to become my followers, let them deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me. 25For those who want to save their life will lose it, and those who lose their life for my sake will find it. 26For what will it profit them if they gain the whole world but forfeit their life? Or what will they give in return for their life?

27“For the Son of Man is to come with his angels in the glory of his Father, and then he will repay everyone for what has been done. 28Truly I tell you, there are some standing here who will not taste death before they see the Son of Man coming in his kingdom.”

**Romans 12:9-21**

9Let love be genuine; hate what is evil, hold fast to what is good; 10love one another with mutual affection; outdo one another in showing honor. 11Do not lag in zeal, be ardent in spirit, serve the Lord. 12Rejoice in hope, be patient in suffering, persevere in prayer. 13Contribute to the needs of the saints; extend hospitality to strangers.

14Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse them. 15Rejoice with those who rejoice, weep with those who weep. 16Live in harmony with one another; do not be haughty, but associate with the lowly; do not claim to be wiser than you are. 17Do not repay anyone evil for evil, but take thought for what is noble in the sight of all. 18If it is possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all. 19Beloved, never avenge yourselves, but leave room for the wrath of God; for it is written, “Vengeance is mine, I will repay, says the Lord.” 20No, “if your enemies are hungry, feed them; if they are thirsty, give them something to drink; for by doing this you will heap burning coals on their heads.” 21Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.

**Sermon: “Walking Tall” Rev. Amy Pospichal**

“…if your enemies are hungry, feed them; if they are thirsty, give them something to drink; for by doing this you will heap burning coals on their heads.” I really like the idea of heaping burning coals on the heads of my enemies. I mean, I really, really like the idea of getting vengeance for anyone out there who considers him/herself “my enemy.” We’ve all got someone who doesn’t like us. Finally! Paul gives us a practical advice on how to get the best of our enemies, when we want vengeance.

But Paul says that the best sort of vengeance is the kind that doesn’t look like vengeance at all, but the very opposite. And for us, that’s supposed to be good news. It doesn’t give us that wonderful satisfaction of actually getting anyone “back” for what they’ve done to us. It doesn’t give us that opportunity to let out an evil cackle, saying, “Ha ha! Finally you get yours!” For when we have that sort of anger towards someone else, we have already decided what kind of punishment he or she deserves. We want to get them back! But God says, “Vengeance is mine, I will repay.” And Paul says elsewhere in his letters: “Who is in the position to condemn? Only Christ. For Christ died for us…” God, in Jesus Christ, reserves the right to be our judge, for only God is perfect in every way.

But it sure is tempting, isn’t it? Especially when our hackles are up about controversial subjects during the year 2020. Pick your favorite topic and you’re sure to find someone who is willing to argue with you about it. And who comes out the winner is open to interpretation. We might as well accept that we shall be humbled if we aren’t the ones doing the humbling. Unless you’re the kind of person who likes to look for a fight, the path to peace may very well be to resist the temptation to vengefulness.

Did you ever see the movie, “Walking Tall,” from 1973? It tells the true story of Buford Pusser, a wrestling champion who moves with his wife to Tennessee to “settle down.” But after moving to their new home, he learns of corruption there, of which he himself becomes a victim. He becomes sheriff and violently removes corruption with a four-foot wooden club. Later on, to avenge the destruction of his own family, he shoots up a whorehouse and drives his car through a window. He is considered the one “Walking Tall,” for he walks all over the gangsters in this little town. One movie critic called this movie as a “revenge fantasy.” American Film Institute nominated Buford Pusser as one of their top 100 “Heroes of American Film,” in 2003.

Whether you think of Buford as a hero or not, our Scriptures call for us to walk taller than the sort of person who seeks vengeance only for ourselves. Just like when we let go of an argument that’s not going anywhere, when we show we are the “bigger person” by stepping aside. But Paul details other ways we are to “walk tall” and they are all different forms of humility. So, let’s review them now, for they are a laundry list of items:

Let love be genuine;

hate what is evil, hold fast to what is good;

love one another with mutual affection; outdo one another in showing honor.

Do not lag in zeal, be ardent in spirit, serve the Lord.

Rejoice in hope, be patient in suffering, persevere in prayer.

Contribute to the needs of the saints; extend hospitality to strangers.

Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse them.

Rejoice with those who rejoice, weep with those who weep.

Live in harmony with one another; do not be haughty, but associate with the lowly; do not claim to be wiser than you are.

Do not repay anyone evil for evil, but take thought for what is noble in the sight of all. If it is possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all.

Beloved, never avenge yourselves, but leave room for the wrath of God

“if your enemies are hungry, feed them; if they are thirsty, give them something to drink; for by doing this you will heap burning coals on their heads.”-Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.

Friends, God wants us to all Walk Tall. Not quite the same way as the Sheriff with the big stick, but knowing that God has the final say in all things, including about ourselves and our own way of life. Paul reminds us of our calling, which is to shed the light of God by the way we live. What would it look like, if we did offer the right hand of hospitality to those who have done us wrong? At the least, it would surprise them. And, we would be preparing the way for God’s work to begin, be it grace or vengeance. Walk Tall, Friends. The way God intended. Amen.

**THE LIFE OF THE CHURCH**

**Social Distancing and Personal Protection.** Please respect one another’s space, observing the 6-foot distancing between one another. Please remember to wash your hands on the way out today. If you need a protective face covering, please notify the pastor and she can help you.

**Church Lockdown Continues.** Friends, please be mindful that the Fellowship Hall side of our building is still locked down until September 7th.

**Alternatives to Church Events** – Anyone who would like to meet for a meal outside at a local restaurant, or gather at someone’s home for fellowship, or go for a walk together, please call the pastor at 575-708-0860. Other suggestions for how we can still fellowship with each other, are welcome.

## **Watershed**

[Indigo Girls](https://www.google.com/search?sxsrf=ALeKk03olwuhobUN7CivLmLpbyglyd7Ztw:1597784601063&q=Indigo+Girls&stick=H4sIAAAAAAAAAONgVuLUz9U3MDTLMs5exMrjmZeSmZ6v4J5ZlFMMADjdNUMcAAAA&sa=X&ved=2ahUKEwjDqMu806XrAhWNPM0KHb68AtcQMTAAegQIDRAF)

Thought I knew my mind
Like the back of my hand
The gold and the rainbow
But nothing panned out as I planned
And they say only milk and honey's
Gonna make your soul satisfied
Well I better learn how to swim
'Cause the crossing is chilly and wide

Twisted guardrails on the highway
Broken glass on the cement
A ghost of someone's tragedy
How recklessly my time has been spent
They say that it's never too late
But you don't, you don't get any younger
Well I better learn how to starve the emptiness
And feed the hunger

Up on the watershed
Standing at the fork in the road
You can stand there and agonize
'Til your agony's your heaviest load
You'll never fly as the crow flies
Get used to a country mile
When you're learning to face
The path at your pace
Every choice is worth your while

And there's always retrospect (when you're looking back)
To light a clearer path
Every five years or so I look back on my life
And I have a good laugh
You start at the top (start at the top)
Go full circle round
Catch a breeze
Take a spill
But ending up where I started again
Makes me want to stand still

Up on the watershed
Standing at the fork in the road
You can stand there and agonize
'Til your agony's your heaviest load
You'll never fly as the crow flies
Get used to a country mile
When you're learning to face
The path at your pace
Every choice is worth your while

Stepping on a crack (stepping on a crack)
Breaking up and looking back
'Til every tree limb overhead just seems to sit and wait
'Til every step you take becomes a twist of fate (twist of fate)

Up on the watershed
Standing at the fork in the road
You can stand there and agonize
'Til your agony's your heaviest load
You'll never fly as the crow flies
Get used to a country mile
When you're learning to face
The path at your pace
Every choice is worth your while

Up on the watershed
Standing at the fork in the road
You can stand there and agonize
'Til your agony's your heaviest load
You'll never fly as the crow flies
Get used to a country mile
When you're learning to face
The path at your pace
Every choice is worth your while

And when you're learning to face
The path at your pace
Every choice is worth your while

Lyrics by Emily Ann Saliers

Definition of Watershed

<https://www.vocabulary.com/dictionary/watershed#:~:text=A%20watershed%20is%20a%20turning,is%20a%20geographical%20term%2C%20originally.&text=It's%20from%20this%20meaning%20that,dividing%20line%20in%20social%20life.>