**First Presbyterian Church, Tucumcari**

*The Church With the Holy Spirit Window*

**August 8, 2021 19th Sunday in Ordinary Time**

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

**BH 485 To God be the Glory**

**BH 356 Help Us Accept Each Other**

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

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

**Call to Worship**

God we cry out to you from the valleys of our lives.  
**Hear our pleas, listen to our cries, hear our voice, O God.**  
Lord, we wait, and we wait, and we wait.  
**Divine one, our soul waits for you, for our hope is in your word.**  
Hope in the Lord, you people of God,  
**For God’s love for us is unbreakable!**

**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**

Sisters and Brothers in Christ,  
in order to speak the truth in love,  
we are called to speak the hard truth of our sins.  
Let us together confess our sins.

**Prayer of Confession**

**Merciful God,  
you call us to lay aside immaturity and walk in the ways of wisdom.***(Proverbs 9:6)*  
**But too often we revert to our silly and selfish ways;**  
**focusing on ourselves instead of others,**  
**fighting over issues that belong in the past,**  
**and fretting over the future with no sense of trust or imagination.**  
**Holy God, save us from ourselves**  
**and free us to embrace the promise you offer us.**  ~silence~ **Amen.**

**Assurance of Pardon**

Beloved sisters and brothers in Christ,  
God has heard our plea for forgiveness  
and offers us mercy in abundant supply.  
Our sins have been 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 130:1-8**

Out of the depths I cry to you, O LORD.

**Lord, hear my voice!**

Let your ears be attentive

to the voice of my supplications!

**If you, O LORD, should mark iniquities,**

**Lord, who could stand?**

But there is forgiveness with you,

so that you may be revered.

**I wait for the LORD, my soul waits,**

**and in his word I hope;**

my soul waits for the Lord

**more than those who watch for the morning,**

more than those who watch for the morning.

**O Israel, hope in the LORD!**

For with the LORD there is steadfast love,

and with him is great power to redeem.

**It is he who will redeem Israel**

**from all its iniquities.**

**Offering**

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

**Time out for Teaching: Great Moments in Heresy: Gnosticism**

Gnosticism is a word that has had a lot of airplay in the last 20 years, mostly because of the mysterious “Gnostic Gospels,” which are mainly books written after Christianity had already taken root in the ancient world. These gospels are different from what you’d expect from something called a “gospel,” since there is a lot left unexplained to the reader, unlike the gospels in our canon.

“Gnosticism” is from the Greek word “gnosis,” which means “knowledge.” It places a strong emphasis on wisdom, personal spirituality and especially the pursuit of “special knowledge” that is only available to those who have special powers to understand. Gnosticism also predicts that only those special people who have the “special knowledge” - “secret knowledge” – will one day join with God. Everyone else will be excluded and going to “H-E-double hockey sticks.”

Gnosticism had its rise early on as Christianity was growing as a religion. But Gnosticism is not just one religion. It is more of a way of seeing things, which has found its way into many different kinds of religions and brought challenges to the Church ever since the first and second century. It brought challenges which helped shape some of our basic notions of God. So, I guess you might say a “little heresy” can be a helpful thing, as it can help us think and confess from our hearts what we truly believe about God.

Since it isn’t a single religion, Gnosticism takes a variety of forms. But here are a few of the assumptions and teachings that it offers:

* Marcion, an early Gnostic Christian, gets credit for the canonization of the Bible, in a form similar to what we now have today (around 200 AD). However, he also believed the Old Testament God and the New Testament God were different gods and that the New Testament God in Jesus is the “good one.”
* Gnosticism also subscribed to a very negative view of the earthly life, and that the only life is that which we pursue in order to escape this world.
* Gnosticism is often heavily dualistic, seeing Good versus Evil, Light versus Dark, Male versus Female. It is also possible this is in part the influence on women who chose to pursue a holy life through fasting, in order to look more male, and more like Jesus.
* Gnosticism, as I mentioned earlier, believed that there was a “secret gospel” or “secret knowledge” which made it rather exclusive.
* The “Gnostic gospels” that we know have been dated on average as much later than the Scriptures we call Gospels in the Bible. Even though our canon was initially formed with the influences of a gnostic heretic, it was eventually closed to new books.

Strongly dualistic, different gods for Old and New Testaments, secret knowledge for only some people, and the need to escape this early, dark and sinful world. What do you think of that?

**2 Samuel 18:5-9, 15, 31-33**

5The king ordered Joab and Abishai and Ittai, saying, "Deal gently for my sake with the young man Absalom." And all the people heard when the king gave orders to all the commanders concerning Absalom.

6So the army went out into the field against Israel; and the battle was fought in the forest of Ephraim. 7The men of Israel were defeated there by the servants of David, and the slaughter there was great on that day, twenty thousand men. 8The battle spread over the face of all the country; and the forest claimed more victims that day than the sword.

9Absalom happened to meet the servants of David. Absalom was riding on his mule, and the mule went under the thick branches of a great oak. His head caught fast in the oak, and he was left hanging between heaven and earth, while the mule that was under him went on.

15And ten young men, Joab's armor-bearers, surrounded Absalom and struck him, and killed him.

31Then the Cushite came; and the Cushite said, "Good tidings for my lord the king! For the LORD has vindicated you this day, delivering you from the power of all who rose up against you." 32The king said to the Cushite, "Is it well with the young man Absalom?" The Cushite answered, "May the enemies of my lord the king, and all who rise up to do you harm, be like that young man."

33The king was deeply moved, and went up to the chamber over the gate, and wept; and as he went, he said, "O my son Absalom, my son, my son Absalom! Would I had died instead of you, O Absalom, my son, my son!"

**Ephesians 4:25-5:2**

25So then, putting away falsehood, let all of us speak the truth to our neighbors, for we are members of one another. 26Be angry but do not sin; do not let the sun go down on your anger, 27and do not make room for the devil. 28Thieves must give up stealing; rather let them labor and work honestly with their own hands, so as to have something to share with the needy. 29Let no evil talk come out of your mouths, but only what is useful for building up, as there is need, so that your words may give grace to those who hear. 30And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, with which you were marked with a seal for the day of redemption. 31Put away from you all bitterness and wrath and anger and wrangling and slander, together with all malice, 32and be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ has forgiven you.

1Therefore be imitators of God, as beloved children, 2and live in love, as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us, a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.

**Gospel John 6:35, 41-51**

35Jesus said to them, "I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me will never be hungry, and whoever believes in me will never be thirsty."

41Then the Jews began to complain about him because he said, "I am the bread that came down from heaven." 42They were saying, "Is not this Jesus, the son of Joseph, whose father and mother we know? How can he now say, 'I have come down from heaven'?" 43Jesus answered them, "Do not complain among yourselves. 44No one can come to me unless drawn by the Father who sent me; and I will raise that person up on the last day. 45It is written in the prophets, 'And they shall all be taught by God.' Everyone who has heard and learned from the Father comes to me. 46Not that anyone has seen the Father except the one who is from God; he has seen the Father. 47Very truly, I tell you, whoever believes has eternal life. 48I am the bread of life. 49Your ancestors ate the manna in the wilderness, and they died. 50This is the bread that comes down from heaven, so that one may eat of it and not die. 51I am the living bread that came down from heaven. Whoever eats of this bread will live forever; and the bread that I will give for the life of the world is my flesh."

**Sermon “The Bread is Broken…” Rev. Amy Pospichal**

The bread was broken. The Body of Christ, broken. But God’s love is unbreakable. Sometimes we forget this, that Jesus’ body was broken for us once, having poured all that He was out on the cross. This wonderful act of grace was the breaking of God’s body out of great love for us all. For even though God’s body was broken for us, His love is unbreakable.

It’s genius, really. Only God could do such a thing for our benefit. To pour out all that God has, giving all His love, only to know that even though the bread has been broken and the blood poured out, the love of God will never die. And… because we believe in God’s love, it multiplies with that grace, borne of miracles. You could say that only God could have done this because only God could give all that God has and still have love left to give.

The Olympic Games always remind me of the phrase “Leave everything on the field…” These athletes have been training and training, plus one extra year of training to participate in the 2020 Summer Olympics, finally now happening. They had to stretch themselves in training for one year longer than usual, because of the tragedies of 2020.

Every time we meet these Olympians, we learn about their background and where they are from, and how it takes their whole family to pitch in and help support the athlete in training. All that support helps them to focus on their sport. They have to have great focus to pour everything into their sport, so that in that moment of glory, they are able to say that they have left everything on the field, given every bit of themselves. Perhaps what makes them so special is that they are as close to superhumans as we’ll ever know, and they come with their issues and problems, anxieties and fears just like us.

Jesus also left everything – poured himself out on the cross, and still has love to give. He calls himself “the bread of life,” and whomever believes in him shall never go hungry. I cannot imagine life without Jesus. I cannot imagine living with the perils and grief of this world without also knowing that God is there to love me and help me, to listen to me when I have no one else to talk to. When I worked in Houston at M.D. Anderson Cancer Center, I had a patient who was dying and her home had been destroyed by Hurricane Katrina. She was a refugee from New Orleans who had landed in Houston and now had cancer. She told me, “I wouldn’t still be here if it weren’t for God’s help.”

Jesus is our Bread of life, the one who nourishes us even if we have no actual bread nearby. We not only eat the bread of life when we celebrate communion once a month here. I think the bread we also eat is the bread of our faith. Faith is the knowledge of God’s caring for us, the tether that holds us to God, as we are assured of God’s love for us. The bread has already been broken, our faith may become stronger in remembering this. Theologian John Calvin once defined as “Faith is the firm and certain knowledge of God’s benevolence towards us, founded on truth of the freely-given promise in Christ, both revealed to our minds and sealed upon our hearts through the Holy Spirit.” If we can have the firm and certain knowledge of God’s benevolence towards us, made evident by the fact that Jesus left nothing out there on the cross, gave it all for us, then surely this may give us hope and strengthen us through every difficult moment, whether we are reaching for that moment of glory, or straining for every breath of life.

Our true superhero is the one who only had to compete once and won over death, whose body was broken only once in order to also win over our hearts. It might even cause us to ooh and aah at what He did. We are truly freed by Him, and indebted to Him at the same time. His moment of glory happened then, when he poured out everything for us, in order for the world to know of God’s love and grace. For us to have eternal life. For love to never end. Amen.

**\*Benediction**

**Prayer Requests:**

Amy (Glenna Gray’s daughter) chronic medical issues  
Betty (Alzheimer’s) and Dolores (paralyzed) – Glenda’s sisters  
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  
Helen – in hospital with pneumonia (mother of Dr. Corey’s employee)

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 – awaiting course of treatment for cancer

Travelers  
All those suffering from COVID19

**Announcements:**

**Ruling Elders:**  Our next Session will be today after church.