**First Presbyterian Church, Tucumcari**

*The Church With the Holy Spirit Window*

**December 12, 2021 Third Sunday in Advent**

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

**Hymns:**

**Bulletin Insert Baptized in Water**

**BH 13 Prepare the Way, O Zion**

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

**RH 171 O Little Town of Bethlehem**

**Lighting the Candle of Joy**

Today we light the candle of hope, the candle of peace, and the pink candle- the candle of joy. This candle is also known as the Mary candle. Mary demonstrates for us the grace, humility, and determination of the woman who carried the Incarnate Joy of the world- Christ Jesus. Mary reminds us that we, too, carry this same Joy in our lives as we live in a world that lifts up the powerful over the lowly, the prideful over the humble, and the strong over the weak.

As we light this candle of joy, we acknowledge how hard it is to feel joy this year. We acknowledge Mary as a teacher of how to carry the weight of the world on her shoulders. We acknowledge our shared Incarnate Joy of Christ within us as we continue our journey of Advent.

**Prayer:** Holy God, we thank you for the gift of joy that is found in Christ Jesus. Remind us of this Incarnate Joy within us as we enter into another week ahead. Amen.

**Call to Worship**

Sing aloud, daughter Zion; shout, O Israel!  
**Let us rejoice and exult with all our hearts.**  
God has taken away the judgements against us.  
**The King of Israel, the Lord, is in our midst; we shall fear no more.**  
God is gathering us, bringing us home.  
**we will sing and praise the Lord.**  
Come, let us worship God on this Advent journey.

**Opening Prayer**

The prophet says that “we will draw water with rejoicing  
from the springs of salvation.”  
May our worship of you today be that water,  
nourishing us to the joyful receiving of your scripture.  
Through your Holy Spirit, may this saving spring come to us  
and wash us with the wisdom of your word.  **Amen.**

**Call to Confession**

**Confession  
Lord, we have not trusted you. In all our scurrying to prepare, even spiritually, we have forgotten this one thing—to believe, to cling, to lay our burdens on you. We have failed to trust in your eternal realm. We brought it all on ourselves to carry the weight of sin, the need to fix our own problems and clean up our own messes. In all this striving, we missed the brightness of your morning star; we missed the fullness of the joy a life lived in you radiates. Fill us with your truth. Shape us into creatures who trust and obey, that we may rejoice with you in our salvation!***~silence~* **Amen.**

**Assurance of Pardon**Friends, Believe the good news of the Gospel.

**In Jesus Christ we are forgiven.**

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.**

**Canticle Isaiah 12:2-6**

Surely God is my salvation;

**I will trust, and will not be afraid, for the LORD GOD is my strength and my might;**

he has become my salvation.

**With joy you will draw water from the wells of salvation.**

And you will say in that day:

**Give thanks to the LORD, call on his name;**

make known his deeds among the nations; proclaim that his name is exalted.

**Sing praises to the LORD, for he has done gloriously; let this be known in all the earth.**

Shout aloud and sing for joy, O royal Zion,

**for great in your midst is the Holy One of Israel.**

**Special Music: “Magnificat” Sung by Emily Priddy**

**Prayers of the People**

God of our Highest Joy,  
we come to you this day as your servants,  
gathered to worship you and you alone.  
As we continue this Advent journey,  
help us to focus on you and the coming of your son, Jesus.  
Amidst the commercials, the cooking, and the company,  
help us to remember the true meaning of this season:  
that you would come to us in the flesh and forever live among us.

Even as we share the joy we find in you with one another,  
we are mindful of those for whom joy is hard to find,  
for those who don’t have enough clothes,  
for those who don’t have enough food,  
for those who don’t have enough (or any) shelter,  
for those who don’t have enough protection and justice.  
We confess that there really is “enough” for everyone,  
but it is our fault that the “enough” is hoarded by few at the expense of many.  
Help us to bear the good fruit that the Baptist called us to bear,  
being mindful of those around us without during this season of giving.

We pray this day for those longing for spiritual renewal.  
We would ask that your Holy Spirit invigorate us  
that we may provide for others first  
before expecting them to provide for us.  
Come to this place and encourage us to do the work  
to which we were baptized.  
Help us to proclaim the Good News in word and in deed.

We pray this day for the hope we have found,  
the peace we seek,  
and the joy we will receive in your Holy name.  
May we bring hope to the hopeless,  
peace to the restless,  
and joy to those who crave it.  
We pray this day, either out loud or in our hearts, for those dear to us…

Gracious God, may the joy we find not be a commodity to be hoarded  
but a gift to be shared with one another.  
We thank you for your presence among us,  
your creation around us,  
and your providence within us,  
as we continue this blessed journey.

In our Savior Jesus, the Word Made Flesh, who prays with us when we say, “Our Father…” Amen.

**Offering**

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

**Time out for Teaching: “What is Joy?”**

Joy seems like it can be elusive sometimes. Do you have to feel joy to know you have it?

Is “joy” the same as “happiness?”

I’m not asking trick questions. They are questions I wonder about a lot.

For me, as I get into my older age, I think joy and happiness have begun to be the same thing. I guess I am a little skeptical of things that I used to think of as “happy” things. Is that really happiness or just a pretty or fun thing I don’t really need?

I guess I am tired to seeking happiness in things that don’t seem to lead to real happiness. But joy… that seems like something that is a terminal thing. Something that helps us in the long-term. Joy is a condition that comes from something more than a happy shiny object. It strikes us deep inside, for a momentary sensation that reminds us of forever. A leap in the heart that we know that is from God.

There is that joyful feeling when we want to leap and dance, break into song! What is joy to you?

**Zephaniah 3:14-20**

14Sing aloud, O daughter Zion;

shout, O Israel!

Rejoice and exult with all your heart,

O daughter Jerusalem!

15The LORD has taken away the judgments against you,

he has turned away your enemies.

The king of Israel, the LORD, is in your midst;

you shall fear disaster no more.

16On that day it shall be said to Jerusalem:

Do not fear, O Zion;

do not let your hands grow weak.

17The LORD, your God, is in your midst,

a warrior who gives victory;

he will rejoice over you with gladness,

he will renew you in his love;

he will exult over you with loud singing

18as on a day of festival.

I will remove disaster from you,

so that you will not bear reproach for it.

19I will deal with all your oppressors at that time.

And I will save the lame

and gather the outcast,

and I will change their shame into praise

and renown in all the earth.

20At that time I will bring you home,

at the time when I gather you;

for I will make you renowned and praised

among all the peoples of the earth,

when I restore your fortunes

before your eyes, says the LORD.

**Epistle Philippians 4:4-7**

4Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, Rejoice. 5Let your gentleness be known to everyone. The Lord is near. 6Do not worry about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. 7And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

**Gospel Luke 3:7-18**

7John said to the crowds that came out to be baptized by him, "You brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the wrath to come? 8Bear fruits worthy of repentance. Do not begin to say to yourselves, 'We have Abraham as our ancestor'; for I tell you, God is able from these stones to raise up children to Abraham. 9Even now the ax is lying at the root of the trees; every tree therefore that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire."

10And the crowds asked him, "What then should we do?" 11In reply he said to them, "Whoever has two coats must share with anyone who has none; and whoever has food must do likewise." 12Even tax collectors came to be baptized, and they asked him, "Teacher, what should we do?" 13He said to them, "Collect no more than the amount prescribed for you." 14Soldiers also asked him, "And we, what should we do?" He said to them, "Do not extort money from anyone by threats or false accusation, and be satisfied with your wages."

15As the people were filled with expectation, and all were questioning in their hearts concerning John, whether he might be the Messiah, 16John answered all of them by saying, "I baptize you with water; but one who is more powerful than I is coming; I am not worthy to untie the thong of his sandals. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire. 17His winnowing fork is in his hand, to clear his threshing floor and to gather the wheat into his granary; but the chaff he will burn with unquenchable fire."

18So, with many other exhortations, he proclaimed the good news to the people.

**Sermon “Who is Worthy?” Rev. Amy Pospichal**

John the Baptist shows up in Luke 3, announcing that the Messiah is coming. On that day, he came to baptize people with water, but he announces that the Messiah will be there to baptize them with the Holy Spirit and fire. Luke’s gospel is part 1 of 2, unlike the other gospels. Part 2 is the Acts of the Apostles, in which at the start of the book, they ARE indeed baptized with the Holy Spirit, with tongues as like flames dancing above their heads. On that day, the Day of Pentecost, the disciples have already become Apostles – sent by God. So, John the Baptist was right, announcing the coming of the Holy Spirit too, the 3rd person of the Trinity. He might not have been able to imagine what that was supposed to look like, but because John was a prophet of the Lord and a cousin to our Lord, he was given the words to say to move others.

He sure knows what to say and how to move them. His announcement moves sinners – even tax collectors – to take his announcement seriously. I imagine him – fire in his eyes – voice carrying across the water of the Jordan as people begin gathering around. His announcement is so powerful, people are prepared to ask him, “so what are we supposed to do?” The answer is clear: Get ready! Get ready! Get ready!

And, they believe him. He, a holy man, is announcing that even he isn’t worthy to untie the sandals of the Messiah. That means that no one else is worthy either. Not a one of us is worthy. And the only way to get ready for this Messiah is – repentance, changing our ways. But the fervency with which John announces all of this is important to us too. The fervency of his announcement is something to get us up and hopping. If we haven’t been living the life that God wants us to live, then it’s time that we do. He wants us to focus. Stay focused on the work at hand, for realizing that we are not worthy to even tie his sandals is a wake up call!

But something else is happening. It’s not just that they are being warned: “The Messiah is coming, so you better start acting right.” For after all, it’s not like Jesus doesn’t already know that we’ve been slouching a little on the job and just got started on things late. He knows that we haven’t exactly been perfect. God knows who the latecomers are the “fair-weather friends.” He knows which of us just started doing things so we look busy for Him. And yet, I think maybe God looks at our intentions too, our joy for our Savior, which leads us to share our coats, our food, our lives out of hope and faith, instead of fear of what He might think of us. It’s for joy we give our gifts, not fear.

Yes, the Jews who heard John’s announcement that day felt the need to start doing something to get ready for the Messiah. For the sinners – that would be all of us – know that the Messiah wants to see us on our best behavior. We are reminded all our lives of the mistakes that we’ve made and the hurt we caused. We really want Jesus to see us in the best possible light. And yet, He already sees us. The news of Jesus’ arrival might strike fear in our hearts, but actually be something to celebrate. It is the sign of God’s Jubilee. A time in the Old Testament when every 7 years people gave away their goods generously. It was a time meant to forgive debts, free slaves and prisoners, all – according to the Book of Leviticus – to make the mercies of the Lord manifest.

We are not worthy. Not to untie his sandals, the lowest of the low. But Jesus makes us worthy by coming to give us new life. A life that should never be squandered, but a life to be shared with each other. This can be our year of Jubilee! The year that even we, little unworthy sinners that we are, can make the mercies of our Lord visible for all to see. We do not have to be special or important to do such a beautiful, sacred and powerful act as that. To give something of ourselves, to declare with joyful giving the gift of God’s mercy, doing so with a lift and leap in our own hearts. His arrival is good news, not just something to be feared. Something to celebrate with the giving of gifts and the soaring of joy in our hearts. It also means that we give not out of guilt or coercion but in gratitude and hope for the Savior who fulfills God’s promises to us. Amen.

**\*Benediction**

**Prayer Requests:**

Alex Galvan – COVID infection, in hospital on respirator

Amy (Glenna Gray’s daughter) chronic medical issues  
Betty (Alzheimer’s) and Dolores (paralyzed) – Glenda’s sisters  
Elmer Schuster - leg pain

Ernest (Susie’s uncle) - cancer

Fay Birch – stage 4 cancer   
Glenda Coles – awaiting shoulder surgery (early December)  
Lucy Jasper – Alzheimer’s/Dementia  
Misty Tompkins and family – stiff person syndrome, seeking experimental treatment

People seeking jobs, and people seeking employees  
Ruth Johnson – for general health  
Sarah Hittson's daughter Marie – surgery for chronic problems  
Schools, students, teachers and families  
Sharon and Wayne Huffman – general health  
Shay – Julie Sursa’s daughter

Teresa Gallegos’ family in their loss

Tommy Morris – for health and strength  
Travelers  
All those suffering from COVID19

**Announcements:**

**Bible Study** will continue Wednesday next week at 5:15PM. We are working our way through the letter of James, and you are invited to hop right in! What to study next? Amy is open to suggestions. Ask Amy 575-708-0860.