**First Presbyterian Church Tucumcari**

**Worship 11:00AM**

**Sunday, February 24, 2019, 7th Sunday in Ordinary Time**

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

**Prayer of the Day**

God our Creator,

Your mercies extend from everlasting to everlasting.

Make this moment of worship be a moment that touches eternity.

Draw our hearts together in unity

That we may see together your will for us and your world. Amen.

**Call to Confession**

The presence of God shines all around us, and yet our faces are buried in our phones, and our minds are on the tasks that are left undone, oblivious to the miracle of the Holy Spirit that surrounds. Let us together lift up our heads and open our eyes to see the work of God that abounds.

**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 37:1-11, 39-40 (please see bulletin)**

**Prayers of the People**

O Lord, we lift up our souls to you.
We trust in you, because you are always faithful to your covenant.
You never leave your people alone.

So we pray for the people on our hearts who are in need.
We pray for those who are sick,
for those who suffer or struggle,
and especially for those who are lonely or hopeless.
We pray for those we have lifted up by name…
O Lord, we put our hope in you.

Teach us to serve you, loving God,
and make us faithful to your call.
Open our hearts and minds to know your truth,
and shape our actions to live into your covenant.
Hold us gently, in your eternal mercy.
Set us free from sin and look at us only with your love.

We dedicate our efforts, skills, and interests to your work,
in this congregation and everywhere we go.
Let our lives show your good news to the world, O Lord.
Let us feed, serve, and lift up your people in need.
Bind us to each other as your beloved people,
called together in Jesus’ name.
We pray together as he taught us, saying:
*The Lord’s Prayer*

**Time Out for Teaching: The Go Bag Mission**

 Today I’d like to tell you about a mission program of this church. We are about ready to do the next phase of it. The money for this mission project came to us in the form of a grant from the Presbyterian Church USA (through our Synod and then passed on to us from the Presbytery). About half of it has been spent and we seek to develop it a little further. It is our mission to the Tucumcari Domestic Violence Program.

Today I would like to challenge each and every one of us here to look into our closets and see if there are any medium to large purses or nice, unused tote bags. We often cull those kinds of things from the Rummage Sale donations and save them up for the Domestic Violence Program. This church uses the grant funds to purchase items to put into these purses and then, as they get new clients in the program, they give out these purses. The purse is filled with useful items that they will need when they make their escape from the home. We use the much larger purses to include a small toy, a few diapers or other useful items that a child might need.

So, the PW at our meeting yesterday, pledged to make 10-20 more of these Go Bags. We will purchase the items to fill up. If you want to help, like go shopping with me for the items, or donate purses, please let me know!

Biblical Relevance:

Remember the widow, the orphan and the alien in your midst

Luke 4: 18-19 Jesus said: “The Spirit of the Lord is upon me,
    because he has anointed me
        to bring good news to the poor.
He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives
    and recovery of sight to the blind,
        to let the oppressed go free,
to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor.”

2 Corinthians 9:6ff The point is this: the one who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and the one who sows bountifully will also reap bountifully. **7**Each of you must give as you have made up your mind, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver. **8**And God is able to provide you with every blessing in abundance, so that by always having enough of everything, you may share abundantly in every good work. **9**As it is written,

“He scatters abroad, he gives to the poor;
    his righteousness[[b](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=2%20Corinthians+9&version=NRSV#fen-NRSV-28950b)] endures forever.”

**10**He who supplies seed to the sower and bread for food will supply and multiply your seed for sowing and increase the harvest of your righteousness.[[c](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=2%20Corinthians+9&version=NRSV#fen-NRSV-28951c)]

**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.

**1 Corinthians 15:35-38, 42-50**

35But someone will ask, "How are the dead raised? With what kind of body do they come?" 36Fool! What you sow does not come to life unless it dies. 37And as for what you sow, you do not sow the body that is to be, but a bare seed, perhaps of wheat or of some other grain. 38But God gives it a body as he has chosen, and to each kind of seed its own body.

42So it is with the resurrection of the dead. What is sown is perishable, what is raised is imperishable. 43It is sown in dishonor, it is raised in glory. It is sown in weakness, it is raised in power. 44It is sown a physical body, it is raised a spiritual body. If there is a physical body, there is also a spiritual body. 45Thus it is written, "The first man, Adam, became a living being"; the last Adam became a life-giving spirit. 46But it is not the spiritual that is first, but the physical, and then the spiritual. 47The first man was from the earth, a man of dust; the second man is from heaven. 48As was the man of dust, so are those who are of the dust; and as is the man of heaven, so are those who are of heaven. 49Just as we have borne the image of the man of dust, we will also bear the image of the man of heaven.

50What I am saying, brothers and sisters, is this: flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, nor does the perishable inherit the imperishable.

**Genesis 45:3-11, 15**

3Joseph said to his brothers, "I am Joseph. Is my father still alive?" But his brothers could not answer him, so dismayed were they at his presence.

4Then Joseph said to his brothers, "Come closer to me." And they came closer. He said, "I am your brother, Joseph, whom you sold into Egypt. 5And now do not be distressed, or angry with yourselves, because you sold me here; for God sent me before you to preserve life. 6For the famine has been in the land these two years; and there are five more years in which there will be neither plowing nor harvest. 7God sent me before you to preserve for you a remnant on earth, and to keep alive for you many survivors. 8So it was not you who sent me here, but God; he has made me a father to Pharaoh, and lord of all his house and ruler over all the land of Egypt. 9Hurry and go up to my father and say to him, 'Thus says your son Joseph, God has made me lord of all Egypt; come down to me, do not delay. 10You shall settle in the land of Goshen, and you shall be near me, you and your children and your children's children, as well as your flocks, your herds, and all that you have. 11I will provide for you there--since there are five more years of famine to come--so that you and your household, and all that you have, will not come to poverty.'" 15And he kissed all his brothers and wept upon them; and after that his brothers talked with him.

**Gospel Luke 6:27-38**

27"But I say to you that listen, Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, 28bless those who curse you, pray for those who abuse you. 29If anyone strikes you on the cheek, offer the other also; and from anyone who takes away your coat do not withhold even your shirt. 30Give to everyone who begs from you; and if anyone takes away your goods, do not ask for them again. 31Do to others as you would have them do to you.

32"If you love those who love you, what credit is that to you? For even sinners love those who love them. 33If you do good to those who do good to you, what credit is that to you? For even sinners do the same. 34If you lend to those from whom you hope to receive, what credit is that to you? Even sinners lend to sinners, to receive as much again. 35But love your enemies, do good, and lend, expecting nothing in return. Your reward will be great, and you will be children of the Most High; for he is kind to the ungrateful and the wicked. 36Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful.

37"Do not judge, and you will not be judged; do not condemn, and you will not be condemned. Forgive, and you will be forgiven; 38give, and it will be given to you. A good measure, pressed down, shaken together, running over, will be put into your lap; for the measure you give will be the measure you get back."

**Sermon: Be Still…**

Stopped in our tracks. That’s what we might be feeling after the words of Jesus today. He has difficult things to say to us, things that seem antithetical to our usual ways of acting normally. The New Testament scholar Pinchas Lapide once critiqued these words of Jesus – words said in his famous “Sermon on the Plain” in Luke – that “who can possibly comply” with these difficult commands? Turn the other cheek when one raises one’s hand against you. Do not withhold your last coat for a person who is cold. Love your enemies. Jesus gives us the most compelling reason why we are commanded to do these things, a reason that is equally maddening. If we only loved those who love us back, then what credit is that to us? That’s easier said than done.

Jesus is speaking to crowds who have been following him around, to see him and hear his teachings. Many are curious and hopeful that he will say something that will help them or change them. Luke calls it his Sermon on the Plain. Matthew calls it his Sermon on the Mount. But whatever the topography, Jesus unveils words that will change the lives of many, even while others will just walk away, seemingly untouched by the power of His message.

There is a famous prayer that prays “our hearts are restless until they rest in you…” How restless a world we have become since the time of Jesus! Seeking after a better thing than what we have. Looking for more and better. Sometimes we need more and better. But usually it is our restlessness, and maybe even greed, which drives us for more and better than what we need. Restlessness, may cause us to turn away from the message Christ has for us. Restlessness may cause us to miss what He has to say to us. Restlessness may make us afraid to hear the challenges from God, if we are only interested in comfort. As our call to confession suggested today, we often bury ourselves – in our phones, our housework, or something else that is safe and familiar, distracting us from the difficult yet rewarding work of discerning God’s will for us. Restlessness may cause us to miss seeing God’s true purpose for us, cause us to turn away from learning and growing in faith, with an opportunity to break old habits.

Today’s Psalm points to that restlessness, a restlessness which can come from too much worry about others’ behaviors. It begins, “Do not fret because of the wicked; / do not be envious of wrongdoers,/ for they will soon fade like the grass,/ and wither like the green herb.” Then it gives a lot of advice, to turn one’s mind away from those worries, and focus on what is right, trusting in God, and believing that God’s vindication will shine. And my favorite part: “Be still before the Lord, and wait patiently for him; do not fret over those who prosper in their way, over those who carry out evil devices.” It doesn’t mean to simply stand by and let evil happen. However, it also seeks to comfort us, and give us reason to pause, stop in our tracks, and find our own place of stillness and peace before God. Patience being our virtue.

In the book “Slow Church” by Christopher Smith and Joe Pattison, these two different church pastors talk about the importance of patience as part of an exercise of faith. The word “patience” comes from “patiens” which is not just the peace and calm we normally wish for when we lack it. For the ancient church “patiens” was the struggle itself – the act of suffering through discomforts of life. It is an activity of trusting God while we undergo times of pain and uncertainty. Stillness in God, patience, in the sense of being connected to God’s ancient peoples, trusting God that this time shall one day pass and a new day shall come. These are part of our ancient Christian legacy, and shall probably never stop being an operative part of our faith traditions.

So, if patience, trust, and stillness knowing God is in control are operative parts of our lives of faith, maybe it is just fine for us to be stopped in our tracks by today’s lesson from Jesus. It is fine that we don’t understand everything as it comes to us right away. It’s fine because patience as we know it is holy and in the very image of God who is eternally patient with us. There were people who glommed on right away in understanding Jesus’ teachings and there were others who didn’t feel it and were not willing to continue following him. They walked.

The Christian writer of the 2nd century, Tertullian, wrote extensively on the nature of holy patience. Patience…

Fortifies faith; Is the pilot of peace; Assists charity;

Establishes humanity; Sets her seal on confession; Rules the flesh;

Preserves the spirit; Bridles the tongue; Restrains the hand;

Tramples temptations underfoot; Drives away scandals…

Consoles the poor; Teaches the rich moderation; Overstrains not the weak;

Exhausts not the strong; Is the delight of the believer.

Patience, for Tertullian, was a necessary part of his life as an elder in his church in North Africa. For the church in North Africa had been struck with a strain of heresy and the North African Church fell prey to it for several decades. That was tens of years Tertullian saw the church in trouble. He hung in there in spite of the confusion and uncertainty.

Don’t fall prey to your restlessness that causes you to wander from the words of Christ. Be still and know that He is Lord. Use the full power of patience, and exercise it, for it will make our faith stronger, it will show forth the very patience God has with each one of us. Amen.

**Announcements:**

**Dutch Treat Dames** meet *this Wednesday* at the Cornerstone! We gather there at noon.

**Next Sunday is Communion Sunday** and also the Transfiguration of our Lord.

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*Of Patience* (Tertullian, 160-220 AD)

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