**First Presbyterian Church, Tucumcari**

The Church With the Holy Spirit Window

**Sunday, February 28, 2021 2nd Sunday in Lent**

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

**Hymns:**

**RH 348 Faith of Our Fathers**

**RH 135 Fairest Lord Jesus**

**RH 504 We’ve a Story to Tell to the Nations**

**Call to Worship**

We come from mountaintop and valley  
**From highways and quiet streets.**  
We come with joys and concerns  
**with expectations and excuses.**  
We come seeking Christ  
**to know and follow his way.**

**Morning Prayer**

Lord, on this second Sunday of Lent, help us to know that because you traveled through the darkest valley, you know just what we feel when we are afraid. Help us to know that because you rose from the dead, in you, we can find new life. Help us to remember that the key to new life is to repent of our mistakes. Remind us again of your gift of new life and that in you, nothing is impossible. We love you. Amen.

**Call to Confession**

**Prayer of Confession**

**We name you Christ…and in the next breath we explain what we mean by that.  
We offer our hearts and lives…on our terms.  
We make sure you know when we think you’ve gone wrong.  
We are full of human thoughts and there’s little room for God’s thoughts.  
Forgive us again. Correct us.  
Turn us around, and teach us your ways,  
and lead us as we let go of all that we have grasped so tightly,  
that we may pick up the cross and follow you.** (Silence)  
Amen.

**Assurance of Forgiveness**

Let yourself live and believe this good news:  
**In Jesus Christ we are forgiven. Thanks be to God!**

The peace of the Lord be with you.

**And also with you.**

**Psalm 22:23-31**

You who fear the LORD, praise him!  
**All you offspring of Jacob, glorify him;  
stand in awe of him, all you offspring of Israel!**For he did not despise or abhor  
the affliction of the afflicted;  
he did not hide his face from me,  
but heard when I cried to him.

**From you comes my praise in the great congregation;  
my vows I will pay before those who fear him.**The poor shall eat and be satisfied;  
those who seek him shall praise the LORD.  
**May your hearts live forever!**

All the ends of the earth shall remember  
and turn to the LORD;  
and all the families of the nations  
shall worship before him.  
**For dominion belongs to the LORD,  
and he rules over the nations.**

To him, indeed, shall all who sleep in the earth bow down;  
before him shall bow all who go down to the dust,  
and I shall live for him.  
**Posterity will serve him;  
future generations will be told about the Lord,  
and proclaim his deliverance to a people yet unborn,  
saying that he has done it.**

**Prayers of the People**

O Lord our help,

**come quickly to our aid!**

My God, my God, come close to your people!

You come to us to rescue us from powers that are too great for us.

Come to the help of all who face trouble or danger today.

O Lord our help,

**come quickly to our aid!**

O Lord, you bind us together as brothers and sisters, beloved in Christ.

Fill our hearts, our lives, and our voices with your praise,

and make us bold to proclaim your name to all people.

O Lord our help,

**come quickly to our aid!**

O Lord, we lift up those who are close to us who face trouble,

especially those who are sick, sorrowing, or confused.

Send forth your healing and restoring love.

O Lord our help,

**come quickly to our aid!**

O Lord, we pray for those who are poor, hungry, or homeless,

who are closer to us than many of us realize.

Open our hands to share what we have,

and open our hearts to share in relationship.

O Lord our help,

**come quickly to our aid!**

O Lord, we pray for all who are entrusted with power

over nations, corporations, and the powers of the world,

that their decisions might honor you and seek the welfare of all people.

O Lord our help,

**come quickly to our aid!**

O Lord, we pray for all the generations:

with thanksgiving for those who have gone before us and enjoy your eternal rest;

and with hope for those who will follow us, to whom we must still proclaim your salvation.

Keep your church faithful in every age.

O Lord our help,

**come quickly to our aid!**

Keep us faithful to you, O Lord,

and teach us to serve you,

as we pray together with Jesus, saying:

*The Lord’s Prayer*

**Presentation of Offering and Offertory**

**Time out for Teaching: “Turning Around”**

I am the queen of U-turns. Especially when I have to get around Albuquerque or Santa Fe. Lately I have been in Albuquerque helping out my husband who needed some immediate medical attention. I was taking him to get a blood test, taking his medical records to an orthopedic surgeon, picking up coffee at a Starbucks, a wheelchair at Wal-mart, etc. All of these were places I had not visited before, and even if some areas were familiar to me, they seemed new and confusing because of construction zones. So, I missed a few turns as I traveled. I hate U-turns.

Sometime last year I was heading to Santa Fe and was supposed to go from I-40 to 285 North at the Clines Corners Exit. For some stupid reason, I missed the exit (I think there were too many semi trucks in my way) and I thought, “Oh, I’ll just get off at the next exit and turn around.”

Well, that’s another 13 miles down the interstate before I could turn around and come back.

U-turns force us to return over ground we’ve alread traveled. They are annoying. No one likes it. We’d rather just keep on moving forward and not have to stop. But that’s a little bit like what repentance is about too.

What does repentance mean to you? The word itself is a Latin-based word. There is a word “pensive” which means thoughtful, right?

That word root has to do with the action of thought. Repenting could meant to “think again” or a return to proper thinking. It is about a review of our past, a most annoying and inconvenient activity. But it is the only way to find God’s forgiveness and to learn from those mistakes.

The Greek word is “metanoia.” It literally means to have a change of mind. And it means a thorough change of mind. That’s different from just thinking you want to eat spaghetti and then decide lasagna. It’s a complete turning around of how one thinks – about everything. It is a conscious choice. It is not something you do without serious consideration and a true desire to be a new person.

Today’s reading from the gospel details the first “passion prediction” of Jesus. This means that Jesus is telling the disciples for the first time that the Son of Man will be tried by the Scribes and Pharisees, suffer, die and rise again in 3 days. Peter’s reaction is visceral. He rebukes Jesus, which means he sternly reprimands Him. And Jesus says, “Get behind me, Satan! For you are setting your mind not on divine things but on human things.” Now there’s a call for repentance. Jesus tells Peter to change his mind. Time for a U-turn. Sure enough, in the very next paragraph, which you also will hear, Peter has made that U-turn, confession Jesus to be the Messiah. Peter shall have more U-turns in the gospel stories.

Let’s make repentance a topic of our meditations this week, friends. And we will talk about it some more next Sunday too.

**Prayer for Illumination**

Open your good news to us, O God…and open us to your good news, that we may find ourselves in your abundant life. Speak, Lord, and help us to listen. Amen.

**Genesis 17:1-7, 15-16**

1When Abram was ninety-nine years old, the LORD appeared to Abram, and said to him, “I am God Almighty; walk before me, and be blameless. 2And I will make my covenant between me and you, and will make you exceedingly numerous.” 3Then Abram fell on his face; and God said to him, 4“As for me, this is my covenant with you: You shall be the ancestor of a multitude of nations. 5No longer shall your name be Abram, but your name shall be Abraham; for I have made you the ancestor of a multitude of nations. 6I will make you exceedingly fruitful; and I will make nations of you, and kings shall come from you. 7I will establish my covenant between me and you, and your offspring after you throughout their generations, for an everlasting covenant, to be God to you and to your offspring after you.”

15God said to Abraham, “As for Sarai your wife, you shall not call her Sarai, but Sarah shall be her name. 16I will bless her, and moreover I will give you a son by her. I will bless her, and she shall give rise to nations; kings of peoples shall come from her.”

**Romans 4:13-25**

13For the promise that he would inherit the world did not come to Abraham or to his descendants through the law but through the righteousness of faith. 14If it is the adherents of the law who are to be the heirs, faith is null and the promise is void. 15For the law brings wrath; but where there is no law, neither is there violation.

16For this reason it depends on faith, in order that the promise may rest on grace and be guaranteed to all his descendants, not only to the adherents of the law but also to those who share the faith of Abraham (for he is the father of all of us, 17as it is written, “I have made you the father of many nations”) — the presence of the God in whom he believed, who gives life to the dead and calls into existence the things that do not exist. 18Hoping against hope, he believed that he would become “the father of many nations,” according to what was said, “So numerous shall your descendants be.” 19He did not weaken in faith when he considered his own body, which was already as good as dead (for he was about a hundred years old), or when he considered the barrenness of Sarah’s womb. 20No distrust made him waver concerning the promise of God, but he grew strong in his faith as he gave glory to God, 21being fully convinced that God was able to do what he had promised. 22Therefore his faith “was reckoned to him as righteousness.” 23Now the words, “it was reckoned to him,” were written not for his sake alone, 24but for ours also. It will be reckoned to us who believe in him who raised Jesus our Lord from the dead, 25who was handed over to death for our trespasses and was raised for our justification.

**Gospel Mark 8:31-38**

31Then he began to teach them that the Son of Man must undergo great suffering, and be rejected by the elders, the chief priests, and the scribes, and be killed, and after three days rise again. 32He said all this quite openly. And Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him. 33But turning and looking at his disciples, he rebuked Peter and said, “Get behind me, Satan! For you are setting your mind not on divine things but on human things.”

34He called the crowd with his disciples, and said to them, “If any want to become my followers, let them deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me. 35For those who want to save their life will lose it, and those who lose their life for my sake, and for the sake of the gospel, will save it. 36For what will it profit them to gain the whole world and forfeit their life? 37Indeed, what can they give in return for their life? 38Those who are ashamed of me and of my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, of them the Son of Man will also be ashamed when he comes in the glory of his Father with the holy angels.”

**Sermon: “Deep Magic” Rev. Amy Pospichal**

C.S. Lewis – in my opinion – is the king of allegory. An allegory is a story which symbolizes something else, but also is a good story in and of itself. Many of his stories are symbolic for Christian themes. In the Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe, we see that one of the children-Edmund- has betrayed the great Lion named Aslan. Edmund fell under the spell of the White Witch Jadis, who offers him power and lots of good food in exchange for the life of the great lion. So Aslan – clearly a symbol of Jesus Christ – gets tied up and held captive, then killed by the White Witch Jadis. Jadis thought quite highly of herself, for she had a certain authority, given by the Emperor-from-Beyond-the-Sea, to punish anyone who was seen to be a traitor in the land of Narnia.

Sound familiar to you?

In our gospel reading today, we hear Jesus’ first prediction of the suffering and death of the Son of Man. He says that the Son of Man must “undergo great suffering, and be rejected by the elders, the chief priests, and the scribes, and be killed, and after three days rise again.” This sounds awful. Peter seems to think so too. So he rebukes his Lord. We don’t know the exact words of Peter. Rebuking means sternly reprimand or express sharp disapproval. Nobody has the authority to rebuke Jesus! All Jesus is doing here is preparing his disciples for what will happen to him. But the last part of that prediction, which Peter seems to overlook, is that the Son of Man will rise in three days’ time. And even though that “rising” part of the prediction sounds like the positive, the things which must happen before that are terrifying and dark. That rising part probably just doesn’t sound good enough, compared to all the bad that Jesus must undergo first. And even more, anyone who chooses to follow Jesus, must also give their life in order to save it.

This is how we become great, He says. To become His follower. To set our minds not on human things, but on divine things. Following Jesus is not an easy thing. It put us in opposition with things that are not of God. It could force us into positions of having to forgive someone, with the temptation of not wanting to forgive. The temptation will often be there for us to take matters into our own hands, to betray our Lord instead of follow Him. To seize control of that which is not under our control. To choose an easier way, instead of the hard way. Football coach and commentator John Madden once said, “The road to Easy Street goes through the sewer.”

But to rise, one’s success must be connected to following the Word of God made flesh. He took not Easy Street but the hard and messy way. I came across a comic recently which describes the road to success. In the first frame, it depicts what we think success looks like, a nice simple straight line from A to B. In the second frame, it depicts what success actually is from A to B. But halfway down the road the line is squiggly and knotted, twisty and complicated, before emerging again. On that journey to success, whether it’s your career, your health, your relationships, your walk of faith, and all of these things are within God’s concern and care, that path is messy and complicated tends to be full of U-turns and setbacks.

Jesus would probably agree. The Son of Man just HAD to travel through the messy human systems of laws before rising from the dead. It was complicated, but because He was without sin, the Lamb of God COULD navigate that complicated path to death and beat it all. Remember Jadis the Witch? She thought she had Aslan beat with her deep magic. But then, after he died, he rose, alive again. That’s deeper magic, from beyond the dawn of time. Deeper than the laws that humans make, and deeper than those things we think are important. Divine things always win in the end.

It is by taking the harder road, that we are able to see the power of God at work. Our faith is challenged every day. And that’s okay. Peter challenged Jesus by rebuking him, thus pushing him harder. It was by way of betrayal and death that Jesus demonstrates God’s power to beat everything, even death itself. Paul says in the book of Romans, “Where, O death, is thy sting?” Jesus has taken the sting away, by taking it for us. He has paved the way to new life for us. So that in following him, we may never be great according to the measures of this world. But by being His servants to His Word, by setting our minds on divine things, we will become even greater in His eyes. Don’t take Easy Street. Take that confusing and twisty road, full of U-turns, that lead to life. 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.

**The Annual Meeting** will be on Sunday, March 7th, directly following church. Please try to make it so you can cast your votes! Please forgive us for the delays this year.