**First Presbyterian Church, Tucumcari**

*The Church With the Holy Spirit Window*

**Sunday, February 2, 2020 4th Sunday in Ordinary Time**

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

**Welcome and Announcements**

**Prelude Surely the presence of the Lord is in this place.**

**I can feel His mighty power and His grace.**

**I can feel the brush of angels’ wings, I see glory on each face.**

**Surely the presence of the Lord is in this place.**

**Surely the presence of the Lord is in this place.**

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

**Prayer of the Day**

**\*Opening Hymn RH#17 “We Praise Thee, O God, Our Redeemer”**

**Call to Confession**

**Prayer of Confession (please see bulletin)**

**God of grace and mercy, You create a new order for our lives:**  
**Service before success, Faith before knowledge,**  
**Partnership over independence, The cross over the crown.**  
**Forgive us when we fall into the patterns of this world, rejecting your call through our action or inaction. Forgive us, God, and move us to see the world through lens of your great love.**  
**Forgive us, God, and grant us peace. (silence) Amen.**

**Assurance of Pardon**

God forgives us of our sins,  
**Not because we are righteous, but because God is good.**  
God calls us to try again,  
**Not because we are strong, but because God will help us.**  
God’s foolishness is wiser than human wisdom,  
and God’s weakness is stronger than human strength.  
Through the love of God in Christ Jesus, we are 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.**

**Responsive Reading Psalm 15 (please see bulletin)**

O LORD, who may abide in your tent?  
Who may dwell on your holy hill?

**Those who walk blamelessly, and do what is right,  
and speak the truth from their heart;**who do not slander with their tongue,  
and do no evil to their friends,  
nor take up a reproach against their neighbors;  
**in whose eyes the wicked are despised,  
but who honor those who fear the LORD;  
who stand by their oath even to their hurt;**who do not lend money at interest,  
and do not take a bribe against the innocent.  
**Those who do these things shall never be moved.**

**Hymn RH #236 “Spirit of God, Descend Upon My Heart”**

**Presentation of Offering and Offertory**

**\*Doxology Praise God from whom all blessings flow. Praise Him all creatures here below. Praise Him above ye heavenly hosts. Praise Father, Son and Holy Ghost. Amen.**

**\*Dedication of the Offering**

**\*Congregational Response We give Thee but Thine own. Whatever the gift may be;**

**All that we have is Thine alone, A trust, O Lord, from Thee. Amen**

**Time out for Teaching “Those Who Do These Things”**

Our Psalm today ends with a line that is a promise: “Those who do these things shall never be moved.”

It sounds very compelling. What do you think it means by “Those who do these things shall never be moved?”

It seems that it is saying that if a person does the things listed above, then they shall never be moved from their place in God’s holy tent. Notice that it lists out a number of different things that one ought and ought not do as our means of honoring God.

So to say that one shall never be moved (from God’s holy tent) means that one is included in God’s house and family.

The “House” or the “Tent” symbolizes very often in the Old Testament the family who lived in that house or tent. Hospitality towards strangers who came to your tent was also a very common practice. When a stranger came into your tent, it usually meant there would be a family-style meal and that stranger would receive the benefits usually accorded to a special guest. You became a part of that family.

When we read these ancient books and we see things about tents, hospitality, and more, think about what kind of world these ancient people lived in. Imagine the context from which that these words of scripture emerged. German Bible Scholars used to call it that “sitz im leben,” meaning the “situation of life.” Questions worth asking ourselves would be “What was life like for them?”

I think that as we read the scriptures, it is incumbent upon us later saints to remember that those earlier saints had a life too, and they tell us through the Bible about the times when God broke into their lives to make it a better world.

**Prayer for Illumination**

**Epistle Reading 1 Corinthians 1:18-31**

18For the message about the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God. 19For it is written,  
     “I will destroy the wisdom of the wise,  
          and the discernment of the discerning I will thwart.”  
20Where is the one who is wise? Where is the scribe? Where is the debater of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of the world? 21For since, in the wisdom of God, the world did not know God through wisdom, God decided, through the foolishness of our proclamation, to save those who believe. 22For Jews demand signs and Greeks desire wisdom, 23but we proclaim Christ crucified, a stumbling block to Jews and foolishness to Gentiles, 24but to those who are the called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God. 25For God’s foolishness is wiser than human wisdom, and God’s weakness is stronger than human strength.

30He is the source of your life in Christ Jesus, who became for us wisdom from God, and righteousness and sanctification and redemption, 31in order that, as it is written, “Let the one who boasts, boast in the Lord.”

**Gospel Matthew 5:1-12**

1When Jesus saw the crowds, he went up the mountain; and after he sat down, his disciples came to him. 2Then he began to speak, and taught them, saying:

3“Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

4“Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted.

5“Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth.

6“Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled.

7“Blessed are the merciful, for they will receive mercy.

8“Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God.

9“Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God.

10“Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness’ sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

11“Blessed are you when people revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account. 12Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you.”

**Sermon: “Out of the Ashes“ Rev. Amy Pospichal**

Ancient Greek and Egyptian mythology boasted of the story of the magnificent bird they called the Phoenix. As the story goes, it came from Paradise, and was perfect and beautiful in every way. Some versions of the legend say that the bird had a lifespan of 500 years. The myth of the Phoenix also said that when it died on the altar of fire, it took three days for the bird to arise from the ashes, reborn, to live for another 500 years.

The Phoenix is a fascinating myth because it holds out an idea that something could rise as a new creature out of ashes and flame. It speaks to an inner need to be reborn, to start over. Many of us desperately wish we could rise, out of the ashes of our problems, out of the ashes of our addiction to sin, rise, out of the ashes of failure to try again, to fly another day. And perhaps this is another compelling aspect of Phoenix legend – that it is a bird. Most compelling is that it can take to the skies and flee the place of its death.

It reminds me a little of that old timey gospel song, “I’ll Fly Away.” By composer Alan Jackson, the simple and profound lyrics sing, “Some glad mornin' when this life is over / I'll fly away / To a home on God's celestial shore / I'll fly away / I'll fly away, oh, glory/ I'll fly away / When I die, Hallelujah, by and by / I'll fly away”.

Sometimes in life, we would like to just fly away. It would be a highly attractive faith if the church promised you could flee this earthly plane and not have to face our problems. Sometimes things can be so hard that - even though we know God has reasons for keeping us around - things can be so hard that we wish we could fly away. Sometimes it would be nice though, to rise like a Phoenix, from the ashes of our lives, and flee. A highly persuasive belief in Paul’s day, especially in the Greco-Roman areas like Corinth was the idea that you could indeed escape this present reality, and fly away to heaven. It came out of a philosophy of Gnosticism which often disparaged this earthly life we’re living and preached the idea that the goal of life was to escape it. But Paul says that is not the goal of this life in Christ.

It is no wonder why Paul sets so much emphasis on the cross. The cross is like a vehicle for our own flight from our mistakes, as a vehicle for repentance and forgiveness. And yet, we are not to escape everything, but to live forgiven and freed, for a purpose. To continue to be committed to living this life, as new creatures, in a world that still chases after the ways of sin and death.

It is why ethics – our pursuit of what is right – is a front and center teaching of Jesus Christ. In the Sermon on the Mount, part of which you just heard with the recitation of the Beatitudes, Jesus is focused in on the ethics and practice of a Christian. They get pretty specific. And they also get pretty – for lack of a better word – “tough.”

Take a look at the very last two lines of the Beatitudes: “Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness’ sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are you when people revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account.  Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you.” He said these things because our ancient brothers and sisters were actually going through those things, and they were doing for the cross of Christ, foolish as they may have seemed. The statements of Jesus, and of Paul about the cross tell us that there is no way to avoid the cross and just fly away. The way of the cross has something to do with faithful endurance. The cross is the way to new life, but the way of the cross calls for us to persevere through those things that others would much rather escape.

When I face a difficult task that I don’t want to do, I often remember the words of a nursery rhyme from my childhood about a bear who comes across obstacles as it travels in the woods. You ask the children, “Can he go around it?” “No!” “Can he go under it?” “No!” “What should he do?” and the children call out, “He’s got to go over it.” This is our challenge as we celebrate our Christian lives, and wear crosses on our necks to symbolize the one who we follow. To follow the way of the cross shall seem foolish to many, but for those who understand, we know we must walk the walk, or even, when called for, climb over it. Before we can fly away, we have to follow the cross. Let us now approach the table of Jesus Christ, who in his sacrifice once again provides us renewing strength for the journey. Amen.

**Service of Holy Communion**

**Invitation**

This is not my table.  
This is not our church’s table.  
This is not our denomination’s table,  
or an American table,  
or a table reserved for the wealthy or well-connected.  
This table is reserved for sinners,  
for the poor,  
for those who are cast out,  
for those who hunger and thirst.  
This table is reserved for all the baptized.  
This table belongs to Jesus Christ.  
Come.

**Great Prayer of Thanksgiving**

We praise and thank you, Lord,  
because you do wonderful things.  
In Jesus Christ, you make your salvation known  
for all people,  
completing the faithfulness you promised  
to the house of Israel,  
which you remember still.

Through these gifts of bread and cup,  
we join all the earth in praising you.  
Pour out your Holy Spirit upon us  
as we share in this meal.  
As you feed us,  
make us instruments of your praise  
and servants of your faithfulness.

Keep us faithful in Christ’s service  
until he comes at long last to establish justice and plenty on the earth.  
We pray with and for all people,  
joining in the prayer Christ taught, saying…  
*The Lord’s Prayer*

**Words of Institution, Distribution of Elements**

On the night of his arrest, Jesus had a love feast with his disciples. And after the meal, he took the bread, broke it, and gave it to them all, saying,   
Take and eat. This is my body broken for you. Do it in remembrance of me.

After the finished eating, he took the cup. He blessed it and gave it to them saying, “This cup is the new covenant poured out in my blood for the forgiveness of sins. Drink this in remembrance of me.”

Each time we keep this feast, we remember the Lord’s death until He comes again.

**Prayer after Communion**

God of glory, in this holy meal  
you show us your will for every meal.  
In Christ’s strength, let us live and work  
for the day when all tables are filled with your abundance  
and surrounded by your people in peace.  
In Jesus’ name. Amen.

**\*Closing Hymn BH#386 “O for a World”**

**THE LIFE OF THE CHURCH**

**PRAYER REQUESTS FOR COMFORT AND HEALING**

Shay – requested by Julie Sursa

Jenna Morris, knee problems

Jim Enriquez & family - medical problems

Emma Lowther, Lou Sims’ great niece – ongoing heart trouble

Reagan Kenyon - more health problems

Gloria (Teresa Gallegos-Brake’s sister) – still having health problems

Sharon McCauley – awaiting surgery

Gene Kelly (Friend of Schusters’) – leaky heart valve

Ruth Johnson – physical problems

Cheryl Brewer – cancer hospice

Karen Foster – chemo for cancer

Sonia (Betty Faye’s daughter) recovering from stroke

Stacie (Glenda’s friend) – medical problems

Gracie Whitson – still recovering

Glenda Coles – healing after surgery

Sharon Huffman – continued health problems

Tom Anderson – health concerns

Sheila Martinez – Heart Trouble, diabetes, vision problems

Connor (grandson of the Bonds) – at sea in the Navy

Misty Tompkins – stiff person syndrome

Levi Mericle – thyroid cancer

Ida Macias – broken femur