**First Presbyterian Church, Tucumcari**

The Church With the Holy Spirit Window

**Sunday, January 24, 2021 Third Sunday in Ordinary Time**

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

**Hymns:**

**RH 272 Just As I Am, Without One Plea**

**RH 275A Amazing Grace, How Sweet the Sound (first tune)**

**RH 303 Be Thou My Vision**

**Call to Worship**

For God alone our souls wait in silence, for our hope is from God.

**God alone is our rock and our salvation; we will not be shaken.**

Our God sends deliverance and honor.

**Like a mighty rock, God is our refuge.**

Trust in God always, for God is power and grace.

**Steadfast love belongs to you, O Lord.**

Brothers and sisters, praise the Lord!

**The Lord’s name be praised!**

**Morning Prayer**

Lord, you know that we are like Jonah, called to proclaim your favor to those repentant. And like Jonah, we do not always stand up and do your will, but even run away. Today in our worship and service to you, help us to stay. Bind us to your heart. Open us up to your will and way. May our words and actions ring true according to your Word. Amen.

**Call to Confession**

**Prayer of Confession (Unison)**

**God…you call us…and sometimes…we duck under the table…
hoping you didn’t notice us when you walked into the room.
You call us…and sometimes…we grab a stapler and a stack of papers…
trying to look too busy to be bothered at the moment.
You call us…and sometimes we just say, “No!”
We know that we aren’t expected to do everything…
but we often forget that you call us to be our selves
in the places where our very self is what is most needed.
So give us the grace to say “Yes” to your call…
even now…as we offer our silent confessions…**~silence~ Amen.

**Assurance of Forgiveness**

Friends, in the name of the Jesus Christ, you and I are forgiven!
**Alleluia!  Amen!**

The peace of the Lord be with you.

**And also with you.**

**Psalm 62:5-12**

For God alone my soul waits in silence,
for my hope is from him.
**He alone is my rock and my salvation,
my fortress; I shall not be shaken.**On God rests my deliverance and my honor;
my mighty rock, my refuge is in God.

**Trust in him at all times, O people;
pour out your heart before him;
God is a refuge for us.**

Those of low estate are but a breath,
those of high estate are a delusion;
**in the balances they go up;
they are together lighter than a breath.**Put no confidence in extortion,
and set no vain hopes on robbery;
if riches increase, do not set your heart on them.

**Once God has spoken;
twice have I heard this:
that power belongs to God,
and steadfast love belongs to you, O Lord.
For you repay to all
according to their work.**

**Prayers of the People**

Word of God, come to us as you came to Lazarus.

Come to the caves of our lives –
caves we have created,
and caves we have sought;
Caves to which we have been sent,
caves in which we now reside.

Come to the caves of our world –
caves of containment,
and caves of protection;
Caves of solace and anxiety,
caves that quickly become tombs.

Word of God, come to us as you came to Lazarus.

Call us back to life –
life created by you,
and life sustained by you;
Life in relationship with you,
life in service to others.

Call us back to life –
life that is hope in despair,
and peace in unsettled times.
Life that is joy in sorrow,
love beyond understanding.

Word of God, come to us as you came to Lazarus.

Unbind us and set us free –
liberate shackles of sadness,
and burdens too heavy to bear.
Release us from fear that inhibits
deliver us in your grace.

Unbind us and set us free –
call us to community,
and fuel us for connection.
Show us your way,
inspire us to walk with you.

Through the renewing power of your Spirit,
and grounded in the words you teach us to pray….

**Presentation of Offering and Offertory**

**Time out for Teaching: “Kairos”**

Did you know that in just one month (February 17th), we will begin the season of Lent?

That might come as a big surprise for you. It often catches me a little off-guard. Just a few weeks ago, we were celebrating the birth of our Lord. Now, I am already thinking about his fasting in the wilderness, his first action after his baptism by John in the Jordan River.

Time is a sacred thing. We confess that our Lord is maker of heaven and earth, including the means by which we mark time itself, by the light and dark of the day and night. Time was made by God. Time provides us a means by which to live – a way to know when to rest and when to wake up.

We use time in another way to measure out the life we live in Christ. Many of our Sundays are marked out as special days, commemorating the various stories and mysteries of the life of Jesus Christ. These mysteries and stories are so important, we give them names. They are stories that teach us an important doctrine or a way we ourselves should try and imitate.

Have you ever heard of the word “Kairos?” It is a word used in our 1 Corinthians passage today. Paul writes to them, “…the appointed time has grown short…” and then he says, “from now on, let even those who have wives be as though they had none, and those who mourn as though they were not mourning, and those who rejoice as though they were not rejoicing, and those who buy as though they had no possessions, and those who deal with the world as though they had no dealings with it. For the present form of this world is passing away.”

Paul had a strong belief that the Messiah – the Son of Humanity – would be coming back to heal and judge the world very, very soon. He really thought this would happen and that our lifestyles needed to change in order to be ready for that moment. And that it was such good news, one should go ahead and lean into that moment and deal with the world as though everything was going away.

**Prayer for Illumination**

Lord Jesus Christ, we are hungry to hear a good word from you. This past week we have been busy, maybe all too busy to listen for you. Speak now to us and refresh us with your word – for our sakes and for the sake of your world. Amen.

**1 Corinthians 7:29-31**

29I mean, brothers and sisters, the appointed time has grown short; from now on, let even those who have wives be as though they had none, 30and those who mourn as though they were not mourning, and those who rejoice as though they were not rejoicing, and those who buy as though they had no possessions, 31and those who deal with the world as though they had no dealings with it. For the present form of this world is passing away.

**Mark 1:14-20**

14Now after John was arrested, Jesus came to Galilee, proclaiming the good news of God, 15and saying, “The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God has come near; repent, and believe in the good news.”

16As Jesus passed along the Sea of Galilee, he saw Simon and his brother Andrew casting a net into the sea — for they were fishermen. 17And Jesus said to them, “Follow me and I will make you fish for people.” 18And immediately they left their nets and followed him. 19As he went a little farther, he saw James son of Zebedee and his brother John, who were in their boat mending the nets. 20Immediately he called them; and they left their father Zebedee in the boat with the hired men, and followed him.

**Jonah 3:1-5, 10**

1The word of the LORD came to Jonah a second time, saying, 2“Get up, go to Nineveh, that great city, and proclaim to it the message that I tell you.” 3So Jonah set out and went to Nineveh, according to the word of the LORD. Now Nineveh was an exceedingly large city, a three days’ walk across. 4Jonah began to go into the city, going a day’s walk. And he cried out, “Forty days more, and Nineveh shall be overthrown!” 5And the people of Nineveh believed God; they proclaimed a fast, and everyone, great and small, put on sackcloth.

10When God saw what they did, how they turned from their evil ways, God changed his mind about the calamity that he had said he would bring upon them; and he did not do it.

**Sermon: “The Final Frontier” Rev. Amy Pospichal**

“Space: the final frontier. These are the voyages of the starship *Enterprise*. Its continuing mission: to explore strange new worlds, to seek out new life and new civilizations, to boldly go where no one has gone before.” The Star Trek has one of the most exciting and inspiring introductions in TV, in my opinion. The spirit of those words place humans and space aliens on the same level, for they have the same purpose: to seek out new worlds, boldly, and to understand new life forms. Science Fiction as a genre usually tried to break new ground. It often places ordinary humans into unusual situations, often to make us think and dream of bigger things than we ordinarily do. The first interracial kiss on TV happened on an interplanetary journey, for instance. Race relations on the Starship Enterprise were naturally harmonious – more so than they were in the city streets in the 60s.

The Presbyterian Book of Order speaks the frontier of our own relationships. In the beginning “Foundations of Presbyterian Polity,” there is a short list of ideas called “The great ends of the Church.” One of them is to proclaim salvation to humankind. This I know, is not a very easy thing. But it is one of the major reasons for our existence. Humankind needs to hear that message of salvation. That’s everybody. Not just other Christians, or our fellow Jews and Muslims. Everybody. It is hard to forget about everybody else when we are hiding from viruses, or from political arguments, or dump our membership on certain social media. But the call to the church has not changed just because this world has. The church’s purpose is needed more than ever.

Now, Jonah and we have a good deal in common. He was an insider to the Jewish Faith, which is how he became a prophet in the first place. So are we; we are the “church insiders,” who assume that others understand what they are missing from the Church, but this is not always so. Someone told me the other day that he thought Jonah was a woman. My initial reaction to that person was a feeling of mistrust or maybe even disgust. It became an opportunity to tell the story of Jonah and show why it mattered so much. We still have so much to tell the world.

God wants Jonah to go to that wicked Gentile city of Nineveh and tell them that they need to repent of their sins before God chooses to destroy them. Jonah doesn’t want to go. The Oxford Bible Commentary states that Jonah is a “nationalistic” Jew, believing that no one but the Jews deserve to be treated with grace, especially those Ninevites. According to the story, Jonah lists out their shortcomings and sins: human sacrifice, prayer to foreign gods, for example. But to Jonah’s chagrin, the Ninevites actually hear the call to repentance and they do it. Jonah sits under a broom tree, sulking, that God changed His mind about them.

This is not the only place in the Old Testament where we know God has a heart for the Gentiles. The prophets Zecheriah and Malachi tell us that God is concerned not just about the Jews but also the Gentiles[[1]](#footnote-1). Gentiles have often been a subject of controversy in the New Testament too. Those Jewish “insiders” were anxious about sharing space with Gentiles, for they not only had a history of doing things that offended God’s Law, they were even considered “impure” and dangerous to be around. You will see similar struggles about Gentiles in the New Testament, such as in the Book of Acts 15, when the first apostles agreed together that they should reach out to non-Jews, and that God wanted them to do that. Gentiles became the fastest-growing segment of the early church. Gentiles, those awful outsiders, were now accepted, if they repent and profess their faith in Jesus.

The outsiders are exactly the ones that the Church needs. They are able to see things differently from the insiders, bring in fresh perspectives and ask questions that we have taken for granted. Those Outsiders can break us all of our own insularity and help defrost us Frozen Chosen some. They can remind us that it is safe for us, it is God’s will for us to go where no human has gone before. To seek out new civilizations and more. God has even bigger plans than we could imagine.

We can easily forget that God wants to save even those you and I think cannot be saved. But we exist for the great ends of the church – particularly for the salvation of humankind. How easily we can forget the largesse of God’s heart for Creation.

This morning’s Prayers of the People, I pulled out a prayer I used last year, written in March by a pastor, Katherine Kussmaul. It is based on the story of Lazarus, whom Jesus brought back from the dead, but the spirit of the prayer rings true for Jonah too. It prays for God to come into our lives, when we are living a life of isolation and quarantine. It calls upon our God to save us from a life of isolation. It asks God to help us see and be more than what we are now when we are hiding away. If we just go out that door and straight home, we might not see where God is calling us. For there are many who are also stuck in their homes. They need us. And we need them. Be it using our mission funds, be it thinking outside the box. Be it going for a walk in the neighborhood around us to look at it with fresh eyes.

Jonah’s story has many layers. Unlike other prophetic books, this one reads like a short adventure story. Many of God’s prophets struggle to answer the call. But in Jonah’s case, he actually runs as far as he can, only to find out that no one can run from God. He jumps on a ship, to avoid going to Nineveh. He ends up inside a big fish. The fish puts Jonah right where God wants him. In spite of Jonah, God saves the Ninevites.

Jonah got himself into a jam, because he refused to what God wanted him to do, only to find out that you cannot run from God. It’s a great lesson for us all about what not to do when God calls on us. It’s a lesson to remind us that when someone repents, it is something to celebrate, not to have sour grapes. And, you see, God can use us, despite ourselves.

Salvation to the Gentiles has always been a point of question for the Old Testament Jews. But the Gentiles are also what added numbers to the ancient church in our gospel stories. We need the outcasts, the ill, the isolated. We need the poor and the lonely. God builds the church with the likes of these. They may not all be as wicked as the Ninevites. But let us not lose sight of God’s purpose for us, to let God’s grace lead us to places we’ve never seen before, and to proclaim God’s salvation of humankind. 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.

1. Zecheriah 8:23 and Malachi 1:11 [↑](#footnote-ref-1)