**First Presbyterian Church Tucumcari**

**Worship 11:00AM**

**Sunday, July 21, 2019, Sixteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time**

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

**Prayer of the Day**

God of our life,

We worship you.

Let your Holy Spirit fall on us

And may we hear your Word afresh.

Compel our hearts to love you more

Serve you more greatly

And share your good news in our ordinary acts of faith.

This we pray in the Lord our Savior Jesus Christ.

Amen.

**Call to Confession**

When we sit still we have time to consider the things we have done and the things we have left undone. This is hard work, but it is necessary for our relationship with God. Let us open our hearts in prayer.

**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 91 (please see bulletin)**

Whoever dwells in the shelter of the Most High  
    will rest in the shadow of the Almighty.   
**I will say of the Lord, “He is my refuge and my fortress,  
    my God, in whom I trust.”**

Surely he will save you  
    from the fowler’s snare  
    and from the deadly pestilence.  
**He will cover you with his feathers,  
    and under his wings you will find refuge;  
    his faithfulness will be your shield and rampart.**You will not fear the terror of night,  
    nor the arrow that flies by day,  
**nor the pestilence that stalks in the darkness,  
    nor the plague that destroys at midday.**A thousand may fall at your side,  
    ten thousand at your right hand,  
    but it will not come near you.  
**You will only observe with your eyes  
    and see the punishment of the wicked.**

If you say, “The Lord is my refuge,”  
    and you make the Most High your dwelling,  
**no harm will overtake you,  
    no disaster will come near your tent.**For he will command his angels concerning you  
    to guard you in all your ways;  
**they will lift you up in their hands,  
    so that you will not strike your foot against a stone.**You will tread on the lion and the cobra;  
    you will trample the great lion and the serpent.

**“Because he loves me,” says the Lord, “I will rescue him;  
    I will protect him, for he acknowledges my name.**He will call on me, and I will answer him;  
    I will be with him in trouble,  
    I will deliver him and honor him.  
**With long life I will satisfy him  
    and show him my salvation.”**

**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: Meet the Colossians**

Who were the Colossians? Well, we are going to hear another reading today from that little letter from Paul to the church in Colossae.

Colossae was a city in Asia Minor (that is where modern-day Turkey is), along a major trade route between Ephesus on the west coast and Iconium and Tarsus to the Southeast. Colossae was about 110 miles from Ephesus and was situated in the Lycus River Valley, in a triangular relationship to two other important cities, Hierapolis and Laodicea. After the Jews were taken into exile by the Babylonians, many Jewish families resettled around the ancient world, including 10,000 or more Jews who lived in that valley.

The letter to the Colossians tells us that Epaphras, a helper of Paul, was the one who evangelized the churches in that area. At the time of the letter’s writing, it says that Epaphras is now with Paul, and Paul is writing from prison. It’s not the only letter he ever wrote from prison. Others we believe he wrote from prison include Philippians and Philemon, and perhaps others.

His purpose in writing was that he had teachings for them. As, Paul was teacher to Epaphras, so Paul can also be a teacher to Epaphras’ church. The occasion was to remind them of the great mystery of God which is revealed in Jesus Christ. And by faith in him, we has access to great hope and joy, no matter what else befalls us.

This is one of the few places in the Bible letters where an ancient hymn is invoked. It’s in Chapter 1:15-20. Philippians also has an ancient hymn in it.

One of the teachings he gives them is what we call a “household code,” where the letter prescribes a certain way of structuring one’s life, family, home, and church, to be aligned with the Lordship of Jesus Christ as head of all. There is very much to be said for such “household codes,” and we would have to spend more time than we have here to get into them. Household codes have their roots in Stoicism, which was an ancient philosophy which calls us to align ourselves to an ethic, which also teaches that suffering for doing the right thing is normally the way the world is supposed to work. There is a lot to say about Stoicism too, but we don’t have time for that today either!

Colossians were being warned in this letter against false teachings. Let’s say it’s not a love letter like that to the Philippian church, but he isn’t berating them either, like he did with those “foolish Galatians.” It’s not clear from the letter whether it is a warning against certain specific false teachings or a more general warning. It is not even clear exactly what those teachings were saying – whether it was to many or just one particular teaching. Colossians is not specific. But being attracted to other religions or traditions or customs, and then choosing them over Jesus Christ, is basically breaking the household code, letting go of the mystery of God in Jesus Christ and seeking something else. This letter tells the Colossians to beware of those opportunities to stray, and understand what it represents.

**Prayer for Illumination**

God, you have come to us again and again,

Calling us to listen

And follow you.

We face many things in this life

And you continue to bear us up

Like on eagles’ wings.

Bear us up again

With the strength and staff of your holy Word.

Amen.

**Colossians 1:15-28**

15He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation; 16for in him all things in heaven and on earth were created, things visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or powers-all things have been created through him and for him. 17He himself is before all things, and in him all things hold together. 18He is the head of the body, the church; he is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, so that he might come to have first place in everything. 19For in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, 20and through him God was pleased to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, by making peace through the blood of his cross.

21And you who were once estranged and hostile in mind, doing evil deeds, 22he has now reconciled in his fleshly body through death, so as to present you holy and blameless and irreproachable before him-23provided that you continue securely established and steadfast in the faith, without shifting from the hope promised by the gospel that you heard, which has been proclaimed to every creature under heaven. I, Paul, became a servant of this gospel.

24I am now rejoicing in my sufferings for your sake, and in my flesh I am completing what is lacking in Christ's afflictions for the sake of his body, that is, the church. 25I became its servant according to God's commission that was given to me for you, to make the word of God fully known, 26the mystery that has been hidden throughout the ages and generations but has now been revealed to his saints. 27To them God chose to make known how great among the Gentiles are the riches of the glory of this mystery, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory. 28It is he whom we proclaim, warning everyone and teaching everyone in all wisdom, so that we may present everyone mature in Christ.

**Luke 10:38-42**

38Now as they went on their way, he entered a certain village, where a woman named Martha welcomed him into her home. 39She had a sister named Mary, who sat at the Lord's feet and listened to what he was saying. 40But Martha was distracted by her many tasks; so she came to him and asked, "Lord, do you not care that my sister has left me to do all the work by myself? Tell her then to help me." 41But the Lord answered her, "Martha, Martha, you are worried and distracted by many things; 42there is need of only one thing. Mary has chosen the better part, which will not be taken away from her."

**Sermon: At His Pleasure**

I find it such an interesting to read about the firstborn of God, Jesus Christ, in whom God was pleased to dwell. To think it is God’s pleasure to choose to fill the body and life of his son Jesus Christ. Remember that famous moment in which God expressed pleasure with Jesus? When Jesus stepped into the River Jordan and was baptized by John, the heavens broke open and the voice of God says, “This is my son in whom I am well-pleased.” He was not an ordinary son, who makes dad proud. He was Lord, God, Prince of Peace. God the Creator and Father was pleased to dwell in Jesus. It was God’s pleasure.

So, it is also God’s pleasure to join us, to fellowship with us in the flesh, and teach, lead and heal, on His way to death on a cross. It was God’s pleasure.

It was God in the flesh, sitting in that room at the house of Lazarus, Mary and Martha. Jesus probably took great pleasure sharing that meal. God, in the flesh, spending time with some of his best friends on earth. Martha sat at his feet, listening to him. Mary busied herself about many things, the usual things that one frets over when they have company. We all know how that can be stressful, overwhelming even. Sometimes we become so busy to make sure people are enjoying themselves that we forget to enjoy the moment ourselves. Mary was probably tending the fire, cooking, setting the table, heating up water, or to wash hands after dinner.

But in any case, Mary becomes frustrated, feeling like her sister needs to step up and help. “Martha, would you get in here and help me? All you’re doing is sitting there talking to our guest. We have too much to do!” Mary was thinking about being a good host. And I have to say, what Jesus tells her here is not the way I would have answered her. Jesus, however, was a close friend of the family; he knows best. And he is saying to her, “Talk to me. I am here, now and pleased to dwell with you.”

This is exactly why we worship God. Sundays are for us to enjoy togetherness and catching up with one another. Sundays are also the time to sit still, and observe our time in the presence of God, and stop with our busy lives. Sundays in church are our time with Jesus, a chance to focus on him, and setting aside all the distractions this world throws at us.

And this rootedness in worship is also where the Colossian Christians were being reminded of. It is a commonly-accepted theory for many different students of Scripture (of many stripes) that what you just heard in our reading, verses 15-20, at least, came straight out of an ancient hymn that Christians sang in worship.

Part of that hymn says, “In Him the fullness of God was pleased to dwell.” God took pleasure in finding a place on this broken earthly plane, not just because in Christ God is well-pleased. It is also because God so loved the world. For instance, some people during their time believed that this world would never be redeemed and that only select people would one day be able to escape this world. But the ancient hymn declares something different. It says God took pleasure to dwell among us, to redeem all things on the earth and in the heavens.

For, God loves His Creation. The only thing that we are told we must do, to take time for God. Don’t let pass by the chance. Busy as we are, as important as our work happens to be, remember that all things, take a back seat to God. For God seeks to redeem all Creation. Our worship not just helps us, and brings us together. It focuses us on holy time in a holy frame of mind. Embrace that time. And remember that it is not just for our pleasure, but it is God’s pleasure. Amen.

**Announcements:**

**Today is Potluck Sunday!** Please stay after to share a meal with the rest of us. The Lord of Loaves and Fishes makes sure there is enough for all.

**Wednesday is Dutch Treat Dames** at the Cornerstone. Hope you ladies are looking forward to some fellowship. We meet every fourth Wednesday of the month at noon.