**First Presbyterian Church, Tucumcari**

*The Church With the Holy Spirit Window*

**July 4, 2021 14th Sunday in Ordinary Time**

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

BH 267 All Things Bright and Beautiful

BH 272 God of the Sparrow (Just before we do the Responsive Reading)

BH 261 My Country Tis of Thee (Before the Offering)

RH 510 America the Beautiful (Just before the Prayer for Illumination

BH 356 Come Thou Fount of Every Blessing (Closing Hymn)

**Call to Worship**

We sing because God does marvelous things!  
**He opened salvation to all and revealed his righteousness to the world.**Make joyful noise the Lord, all the earth!  
**We join in joyous song and sing God’s praises!**It’s not only us, but the sea, the rivers, even the mountains rejoice out loud.  
**The whole cosmos sings because the Lord is coming to establish justice on earth!**

**Opening Prayer**

It is well with our souls, O God, for we are in your presence. We come with all of the baggage of our lives and entrust all that we are to you. For nothing in this world comes close to your glory. Open our eyes to see your kingdom at work right under our very noses, and help us to participate in your work of salvation. Amen!

**Call to Confession**

**Prayer of Confession**

**God of justice, in baptism you anointed us to live boldly in the reality of your coming kingdom. We confess that we have not fulfilled our calling. We have not used your power to serve our neighbors. We have walked away from oppression and injustice. We have turned our backs on your beloved children who hunger and thirst in a world of plenty. Forgive us, Lord. Make us courageous servants of your justice, peace, and wholeness, in Jesus’ name.** (silence) **Amen.**

**Assurance of Pardon**

Friends, live and believe this good news:

**In Jesus Christ, we are forgiven! Thanks be to God!**

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.**

**Psalm 48**

Great is the LORD and greatly to be praised

in the city of our God.

**His holy mountain, beautiful in elevation,**

**is the joy of all the earth,**

Mount Zion, in the far north,

the city of the great King.

**Within its citadels God**

**has shown himself a sure defense.**

Then the kings assembled,

they came on together.

**As soon as they saw it, they were astounded;**

**they were in panic, they took to flight;**

**trembling took hold of them there,**

**pains as of a woman in labor,**

**as when an east wind shatters**

**the ships of Tarshish.**

As we have heard, so have we seen

in the city of the LORD of hosts,

in the city of our God,

which God establishes forever.

**We ponder your steadfast love, O God,**

**in the midst of your temple.**

Your name, O God, like your praise,

reaches to the ends of the earth.

Your right hand is filled with victory.

**Let Mount Zion be glad,**

**let the towns of Judah rejoice**

**because of your judgments.**

Walk about Zion, go all around it,

count its towers,

consider well its ramparts;

go through its citadels,

that you may tell the next generation

that this is God,

our God forever and ever.

**He will be our guide forever.**

**Offering**

**Time out for Teaching: Freed for Freedom!**

There is a phrase towards the end of the letter to the Galatians, in which Paul reminds his readers that “You were freed for the purpose of freedom.” That statement of faith has stuck with me for years. We are set free by God, through Jesus Christ, for the purpose of freedom. This statement comes into a spot just before Paul reminds them of the fruit of the Spirit, which may suggest that the fruit of the Spirit happens best when we live for God, free.

I want to tell you a story of Sir Ludwig Guttman. He is the father of what we now know of the Paralympic Games. Guttman was a Jewish doctor living in Germany up until just before WWII. Yesterday, July 3, would be his 122nd birthday. Dr. Guttman was trained as a neurosurgeon, but when the rising Nazi Party formed the Nuremburg Laws, he was expelled from the university where he worked and his title as a doctor at the local hospital of medicine was demoted to “one who treats the sick.” He was then moved to an all Jewish hospital because Jews were no longer allowed to treat the sick. In 1938, after Kristallnacht, when Jewish homes and businesses were destroyed by the Nazi party, he was told to admit all Jews to the hospital without question, but he took them on a case by case basis, thus saving 60 people from concentration camps. Soon after that, he and his family managed to flee to England, where he pursued his research and patient care in spinal injuries and neurological disorders. It is because of his work, he developed the Paralympic Games, an Olympic-level competition for people with paraplegia. Guttman was knighted by Queen Elizabeth and is recognized worldwide for his work.

To me, this story is about using our freedom for the freedom of someone else. It is also about a man who resisted the temptation to give into evil, at his own peril, because he exercised his freedom of conscience. And when he was limited by his options, he found a way around them. Our freedoms come to us in many different ways. We sometimes look at the ways our inhibitions stymie us, in our lives of faith and in this church. But freedom is always there, even if it is a dream and a hope that the Holy Spirit is feeding us. What freedom we have can be shared and even multiplied through our good works and forgiveness. Set someone free this week. And remember Sir Ludwig Guttman, whose name means “Goodman.”

**Prayer for Illumination**

**2 Corinthians 12:2-10**

2I know a person in Christ who fourteen years ago was caught up to the third heaven — whether in the body or out of the body I do not know; God knows. 3And I know that such a person — whether in the body or out of the body I do not know; God knows — 4was caught up into Paradise and heard things that are not to be told, that no mortal is permitted to repeat. 5On behalf of such a one I will boast, but on my own behalf I will not boast, except of my weaknesses. 6But if I wish to boast, I will not be a fool, for I will be speaking the truth. But I refrain from it, so that no one may think better of me than what is seen in me or heard from me, 7even considering the exceptional character of the revelations. Therefore, to keep me from being too elated, a thorn was given to me in the flesh, a messenger of Satan to torment me, to keep me from being too elated. 8Three times I appealed to the Lord about this, that it would leave me, 9but he said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for power is made perfect in weakness." So, I will boast all the more gladly of my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may dwell in me. 10Therefore I am content with weaknesses, insults, hardships, persecutions, and calamities for the sake of Christ; for whenever I am weak, then I am strong.

**Gospel Mark 6:1-13**

1He left that place and came to his hometown, and his disciples followed him. 2On the sabbath he began to teach in the synagogue, and many who heard him were astounded. They said, "Where did this man get all this? What is this wisdom that has been given to him? What deeds of power are being done by his hands! 3Is not this the carpenter, the son of Mary and brother of James and Joses and Judas and Simon, and are not his sisters here with us?" And they took offense at him. 4Then Jesus said to them, "Prophets are not without honor, except in their hometown, and among their own kin, and in their own house." 5And he could do no deed of power there, except that he laid his hands on a few sick people and cured them. 6And he was amazed at their unbelief.

Then he went about among the villages teaching. 7He called the twelve and began to send them out two by two, and gave them authority over the unclean spirits. 8He ordered them to take nothing for their journey except a staff; no bread, no bag, no money in their belts; 9but to wear sandals and not to put on two tunics. 10He said to them, "Wherever you enter a house, stay there until you leave the place. 11If any place will not welcome you and they refuse to hear you, as you leave, shake off the dust that is on your feet as a testimony against them." 12So they went out and proclaimed that all should repent. 13They cast out many demons, and anointed with oil many who were sick and cured them.

**Sermon “Jesus Means Freedom” Rev. Amy Pospichal**

Paul boasts about his weakness, the mysterious “thorn” in his flesh. Through the centuries, we have been fascinated with his thorn. We imagine it might have been an illness, which could have been a “handicap” for him. We all know how it feels when our health holds us back from being and doing all that we wish to be. Or maybe Paul struggled with some kind of other condition, like a mental illness, which could also affect his ability to do all he wanted to do. Paul was definitely a highly motivated doer.

Maybe Paul’s weakness was a sense of guilt. Theologians have hypothesized that while he celebrated – even exulted – in the fact that Jesus Christ forgives, he may also have had to live with the guilt of being complicit in the murder of Christians, before he converted and was baptized.

Whatever it was, it held him back, at least that’s how it seemed. He tells of his struggle with that “thorn in the flesh” and that it had been instrumental at keeping him from being too “elated,” meaning so that he cannot boast about himself, not even about his holiness. At first, he considered that thorn in his flesh as a limitation, an imperfection in his ability to be all that he could be.

We all know how that can feel. Especially as we get older and begin to have more aches and pains. Or maybe for you, you have lived with the limitations of a financial matter, wish you could give more or do more, but just don’t have any. No matter how we look at things, none of us truly know perfect freedom. We are all weak in our own individual ways. From the youngest and smallest child, on up to eldest person, none of us are perfectly free to be and do anything we wish. For God made us with our individual special limitations and weaknesses. You might even call them sacred, holy, in their own ways. For God’s power is made perfect in our weakness.

I would like suggest a book to you by Henri Nouwen. It is called The Wounded Healer. By now, it is considered a legendary book about taking the woundedness of our lives and turning it into compassion. The premise of the book is to help us discover what God can do: to turn our own knowledge and experience of weakness into a means of helping someone else.

How God does it, I don’t know and I don’t have to know. But God’s power shines through us when we are humbled in our own weaknesses. Not too elated, not too puffed up nor boasting about our special powers. But humbly understanding that even our pains and aches of life could be the key to knowing what God would like to do with us, to set someone else free. To minister to those whose pain you know all too well. That thorn in the flesh may seem like a limitation, but it can instead turn into our greatest strength, when we let God use us to glorify God. And God is best glorified when we are not boasting about ourselves.

Can you think of a moment at all in the gospel stories where Jesus boasted about himself or his own powers? I cannot. And, he freely gave of himself on the cross, to serve all of us. This freely-given gift of grace could not have happened if Jesus had boasted about Himself. But He was all about the business of His Father. He also did it, not out of need for anything, but fully in service to God’s business, freely, and out of love for the world. Jesus means freedom: freedom from our sin, freedom from the feeling of not being good enough, freedom to try harder. It takes a certain amount of courage I think, to embrace what freedoms we have, especially when we feel very, very weak. For no matter how low we think we are, we can still glorify God the best way we can. Thank all of you for choosing to be here today, exercising your freedom to worship God. Have fun, be safe and don’t do anything I wouldn’t do. Amen!

**Service of Holy Communion**

**Invitation**

Jesus said, “Come to me, all who are heavy-laden and I will give you rest.” Jesus Christ our Lord is our host of this holy meal. Here let us expect to find comfort, even rest, renewal and grace, through the host and the cup. Here, let us expect to meet God.

**Great Prayer of Thanksgiving**

The Lord be with you.

**And also with you**

Lift up your hearts

**We lift them up to the Lord.**

Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

**It is right to give Him thanks and praise.**

God of Every People,  
you created the world long before this nation or any other.  
In the first days of creation, you said, “Let there be light,”  
and light separated itself from the night.  
How can we ever comprehend your power?  
How can we ever be worthy of your love?  
How can we ever measure up to your goodness?

You came to this world as a helpless infant,  
showing us that our weakness is not beyond redemption.  
Born as a refugee in a scary and violent world,  
you came as one of us to show us the way.

Being born, Jesus is a vehicle of your love.  
Walking many miles, he teaches us to travel to the unknown.  
Teaching love, he helps us understand our capacity for compassion.  
Healing the sick, he inspires us to share your healing power.  
Teaching the broken, he reminds us that we are works in progress.  
Sacrificing himself, he shows us that love triumphs over hate.

Giver of All Goodness and Grace,  
bless this our gathering in your name.  
Bless our worship of you  
and bless those who worship in your name around the world.

Through Christ, with Christ, in Christ,  
all glory and honor are yours, Holy God,  
both now and always. (The Lord’s Prayer… **Amen.)**

**Words of Institution**

We give you thanks that the Lord Jesus,  
on the night before he died, took bread,  
and after giving thanks to you, he broke it,  
and gave it to his disciples, saying:  
Take, eat. This is my body, broken for you.

In the same way Jesus took the cup, saying:  
This cup is the new covenant sealed in my blood,  
shed for you for the forgiveness of sins.  
Whenever you drink it, do this in remembrance of me.

**Receiving the Elements**

**Prayer after Communion**

Christ our Lord,  
at this table you have given us a taste  
of the joyful feast you promise to your blessed ones.  
Let this meal strengthen us for the work of discipleship,  
and let us serve you in all that we do. Amen.

**\*Benediction**

**Prayer Requests:**

Amy (Glenna Gray’s daughter) multiple upcoming surgeries  
Betty (Alzheimer’s) and Dolores (paralyzed) – Glenda’s sisters  
Dorothy Randals – at Autumn Blessings, for strength and comfort  
Elmer Schuster - ongoing dental surgeries, leg pain  
Fay Birch – stage 4 cancer, prayers for her husband, Larry too  
Glenda Coles – injured rotator cuff, waiting for MRI results this week  
Julie Sursa – pain with walking  
Lissa – Glenda’s granddaughter (doing better, still in need of prayers)  
Lucy Jasper – Alzheimers/Dementia  
Lynn Hawkins – looking for a new home in town  
Marty Garcia – severe pain, awaiting MRI and answers

Mela Otero (Loretta’s mom) - cancer  
Patsy (Glenda’s niece) – hospitalized with COVID

Ruth Johnson – for general health, preparing to move to Wisconsin  
Sharon and Wayne Huffman – general health, Wayne preparing for surgery Wednesday  
Shay – Julie Sursa’s daughter

Stephanie Sparks – breast cancer  
Susie - knee injury, in a leg brace, planning for EMS school  
Teresa Gallegos-Brake – continuing to heal from leg surgery

Those in Florida affected by building collapse  
Travelers  
All those suffering from COVID19

**Announcements:**

**Tomorrow:**  Green Chile Gals might be meeting. Please let me know after church if you think you can be there.

**Ruling Elders:**  We shall meet again after church next Sunday, July 11th. Hope to see you there. If you have a report you want to submit early, or something to add to the agenda, please call/text Rev. Amy before Thursday this week. Thank you!