**First Presbyterian Church Tucumcari**

**Worship 11:00AM**

**Sunday, March 10, 2019, First Sunday in Lent**

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

**Prayer of the Day**

God of mercies that stream from everlasting to everlasting

Your mercies of sunshine, snow and spring

Rain down on your earth

Bespeaking of your glory.

Grant that our worship today be for only you.

Grant that our hearts be made full of your healing love.

Grant that you send us to serve you and love you

In the myriads of ways you call to us.

May our worship be a blessing to someone today. Amen.

**Call to Confession**

**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 91:1-2, 9-16 (please see bulletin)**

**Prayers of the People**

O Lord, you are our light and our salvation;  
we are not afraid of anyone or anything.  
When terrible things happen, we put our trust in you,  
and we know you are always with us.  
Help us to see you at work in our lives always.

We pray for people who are suffering or frightened today,  
and for everybody who is sick or grieving;  
wrap your arms around them,  
give them healing,  
and keep them safe.  
We pray that everyone would be able to sing your praises  
and tell that you have done wonderful things for them.

Show us how to follow you, O Lord,  
and help us live as your disciples  
as long as we live.  
We pray in Jesus’ name,  
who taught us to pray, saying:

The Lord’s Prayer

**Time Out for Teaching: The Temptation of Christ**

Uncle Screwtape wrote to his nephew, Wormwood: “Work hard, then, on the disappointment or anticlimax which is certainly coming to the patient during his first few weeks as a churchman. The Enemy allows this disappointment to occur on the threshold of every human endeavour. It occurs when the boy who has been enchanted in the nursery by Stories from the Odyssey buckles down to really learning Greek. It occurs when lovers have got married and begin the real task of learning to live together. In every department of life it marks the transition from dreaming aspiration to laborious doing. The Enemy takes this risk because He has a curious fantasy of making all these disgusting little human vermin into what He calls His ‘free’ lovers and servants—’sons’ is the word He uses… Desiring their freedom, He therefore refuses to carry them… He leaves them to ‘do it on their own’. But also, remember there lies our danger. If once they get through this initial dryness successfully, they become much less dependent on emotion and therefore much harder to tempt.”

Jesus and we have certain things in common. He took flesh and dwelled among us, and enduring everything that we ourselves endure. His baptism and testing in the wilderness are two individual events but are inseparable in reality. He goes straight from baptism to testing. This is a little how it goes with many of us. Like Wormwood’s patient, who has become a Christian, they hope that he will become bored, disappointed or dulled by the experience of believing and eventually fall away.

After all, we are told from the very beginning of Luke’s gospel, from Jesus’ conception, that the Holy Spirit is with Him. We are reminded in his childhood stories that he is continuing to grow in the Spirit. Then, remember what happens with the Spirit as soon as Jesus emerges from the River Jordan? It descends upon him as like a dove. And finally, how did Jesus end up in the wilderness where fasted for 40 days and was then tempted by the devil? The Spirit drove him there. The Holy Spirit is an important part of Luke’s writing – is who propels Jesus, John the Baptist, all the prophets of old, the apostles and us. If only we thought more about that on a regular basis.

It says in the 1984 Brief Statement of Faith in our Book of Confessions “The Spirit gives us courage…” It’s no accident that our purple parament for Lent and Advent includes the three rings of the Trinity, and the third person of the Trinity out front, symbolized by the dove.

**Prayer for Illumination**

God our Parent,  
your voice calls us back to the wilderness,

Where we are at times tested

And then confirmed

Forgive us when we are too distracted to hear your Word.

So open our hearts anew to see for even a moment, as you see.

Through our Savior and Lord,

Amen.

**Deuteronomy 26:1-11**

1When you have come into the land that the LORD your God is giving you as an inheritance to possess, and you possess it, and settle in it, 2you shall take some of the first of all the fruit of the ground, which you harvest from the land that the LORD your God is giving you, and you shall put it in a basket and go to the place that the LORD your God will choose as a dwelling for his name. 3You shall go to the priest who is in office at that time, and say to him, "Today I declare to the LORD your God that I have come into the land that the LORD swore to our ancestors to give us." 4When the priest takes the basket from your hand and sets it down before the altar of the LORD your God, 5you shall make this response before the LORD your God: "A wandering Aramean was my ancestor; he went down into Egypt and lived there as an alien, few in number, and there he became a great nation, mighty and populous. 6When the Egyptians treated us harshly and afflicted us, by imposing hard labor on us, 7we cried to the LORD, the God of our ancestors; the LORD heard our voice and saw our affliction, our toil, and our oppression. 8The LORD brought us out of Egypt with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm, with a terrifying display of power, and with signs and wonders; 9and he brought us into this place and gave us this land, a land flowing with milk and honey. 10So now I bring the first of the fruit of the ground that you, O LORD, have given me." You shall set it down before the LORD your God and bow down before the LORD your God. 11Then you, together with the Levites and the aliens who reside among you, shall celebrate with all the bounty that the LORD your God has given to you and to your house.

**Gospel Luke 4:1-13**

1Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, returned from the Jordan and was led by the Spirit in the wilderness, 2where for forty days he was tempted by the devil. He ate nothing at all during those days, and when they were over, he was famished. 3The devil said to him, "If you are the Son of God, command this stone to become a loaf of bread." 4Jesus answered him, "It is written, 'One does not live by bread alone.'"

5Then the devil led him up and showed him in an instant all the kingdoms of the world. 6And the devil said to him, "To you I will give their glory and all this authority; for it has been given over to me, and I give it to anyone I please. 7If you, then, will worship me, it will all be yours." 8Jesus answered him, "It is written, 'Worship the Lord your God, and serve only him.'"

9Then the devil took him to Jerusalem, and placed him on the pinnacle of the temple, saying to him, "If you are the Son of God, throw yourself down from here, 10for it is written, 'He will command his angels concerning you, to protect you,' 11and 'On their hands they will bear you up, so that you will not dash your foot against a stone.'" 12Jesus answered him, "It is said, 'Do not put the Lord your God to the test.'" 13When the devil had finished every test, he departed from him until an opportune time.

**Sermon: All I Want for Lent is…**

Presence. Presence of God is the best gift that I could possibly receive for this Lenten Season. And if you think there is something wrong with wishing for a gift for Lent, think again.

What do you seek when you are trying to deepen your faith journey? Why did you give up chocolate, or staying up too late on Facebook? Why do you at times yearn for a retreat, a moment to regain your breath, to take time and let the presence of God sink into your bones deeply?

So, we seek signs and symbols. We do things like place ashes on the forehead. Smeary ashes tell us of the finality of death, that we are impermanent and therefore depend on God’s presence to help us in our weakness. We are stardust and to dust we will return.

C.S. Lewis astutely observes in his book The Screwtape Letters that as soon as our hearts start to wander and wonder about things, God already there at our elbow. This book which I highly recommend, is written from the point of view of a devil named Screwtape, who talks, even boasts, about how he distracts humans from having faith in our Lord and Savior. One day, as his patient sat there reading a book, his thoughts began to turn towards God. Screwtape said, “the Enemy [Our Lord] of course, was at his elbow in a moment… I struck instantly at the part of the man which I had best under my control and suggested it was about time he had some lunch… and this was much too important to tackle at the end of the morning…” Did his patient ever get back to it after lunch? No way! There was the newspaper, the train to catch and other distractions.

C.S. Lewis is one of the best at revealing human nature at our best and at our worst and always God’s grace. I love how he points out, that as soon as the mind begins to wander, God’s Holy Spirit is right there at his elbow. This is good news for you and for me, for just in our wanting to know Him, God is present. Even when such temptations are calling us to lunch, God is never out to lunch.

**We would be nothing without God’s presence in our lives. Giving our presence to a situation is to sit in the presence the power of God’s Holy Spirit. We need this and others need to see it in us. Let me tell you another story of a pastor who got a new a cell phone. He gave up his iPhone because he thought it would help him be more “present” to God’s Spirit. He thought his smartphone was too distracting so he got an older one. No more fast texting. No more Siri to call for help. No more GPS. He was late to meetings. He thought it would make him feel more “present” and he liked it. The new “old” phone was named after a favorite author who had inspired him to try this experiment. His old/new phone was named “Fitch.”**

*He says: “*In a world crunched by antagonisms and ideologies (for which my iPhone was sometimes a homing device!), Christians – says Fitch – are called to open space, to make space, to be present to God’s presence in our midst, with one another and others, and to proclaim that “[Jesus is Lord and at work renewing all things – making a new creation (2 Cor 5:17)](http://www.missioalliance.org/proclaiming-the-gospel-in-the-neighborhood/).” And he says, we are called to make space. To live *with*. To proclaim. To be present.

That’s what I want for Lent. More presence : The greatest gift I think God has to give us to help us live our lives in faith and discipline.

But we also have to practice and cultivate our awareness of God’s presence. And that takes work for us. What affects your sense of presence? If not a smartphone, maybe it’s the hundreds of TV stations we have to choose, or a ginormous to-do list around the house? Or, maybe it’s the day to day obligations or worries that weigh your mind. We have to cultivate and carve out our ways to tap into God’s presence. Lent is the perfect opportunity to do that.

Unlike us, Jesus never struggled like we did with. He was centered always on who he was and why he was put on earth. He was focused, tapped into God’s presence, and he had just the right answers to every challenge. While this proves His extraordinary powers of resistance, it also reveals to us resistance to evil can be scary, for it plays on our basest urges and fears. In today’s story, the Devil tempts the famished Son of God with food, then with earthly power and riches and to force God’s hand to save Him by leaping from the highest point of the Temple. Jesus sees right through it all. He knows that these temptations are NOT in his nature. And He, still wet behind the ears, knows he is being tested.

He has the presence of mind, the discipline and endurance that I don’t have, but aspire to have. He inspires us to stay awake and aware when we are being bombarded with tests. Whether we are weary of too many test, or it was a pop test just when we thought life was going our way. God understands, for Jesus has endured everything we have and more.

All I really want for Lent this year is to know more deeply of God’s presence. We never do achieve that perfectly, but don’t forget God is always near your elbow. Let’s cultivate that presence of God more together. Let’s carve out a moment so we never lose sight of who we are and Him whose example we have to follow. May you this season more deeply feel God’s presence. Amen.

**Announcements:**

**Don’t forget the Brown Bag Bible Study** for this Lenten Season! We meet this Wednesday at 6:00PM to study another of the Psalms. Discover what Psalm speaks most to you and make it a part of your life. Bring a sandwich you’re going to get hungry.

**Deacons** – you have a brief meeting to discuss this year’s communion schedule, directly after church today. Just stay in the pews and we’ll have a conversation. Thank you!

**Elders** – you have a meeting this Tuesday, March 13th at 5:30PM in the Library. An Agenda is coming. See you then!

**Prayer is good for your health:** Want to help at the Wellness Fair, April 7th? Amy is looking for one or two souls to assist her at the Prayer and Spiritual Health table during the morning at the Convention Center.