**First Presbyterian Church, Tucumcari**

*The Church With the Holy Spirit Window*

**Sunday, March 8, 2020 2nd Sunday in Lent**

**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**

Lord, you gather us into your dwelling  
and lift us up into your holy presence.  
Make us worthy of you  
and teach us always to do what is right. May our imperfect prayers and songs be found acceptable in your sight. Hear us now as we worship you with joy and gratitude. Amen.

**\*Opening Hymn RH#15 “Sing Praise to God Who Reigns Above”**

**Call to Confession**

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

**Assurance of Pardon**

Believe and live the good news:

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

The peace of 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 121** (please see bulletin)

**Hymn RH#378 “My Faith Looks Up to Thee”**

**Prayers of the People**

God most high,  
God with us,  
we praise you with every word we speak  
and with every moment we fall silent.  
You hear our prayer  
and sustain us along with all living things.  
You forgive our sins  
and bring us close  
to live in the goodness of your holy presence.

We pray for your awesome deeds of salvation,  
for us and to all the farthest edges of the earth.  
With the strength that raised mountains,  
calm the roaring seas of conflict;  
calm the waves of violence and oppression;  
draw all nations and peoples close to each other.

We pray for everyone who longs for your joy:  
for those who are sick or in pain from morning to night;  
for those whose grief weighs them down;  
for those who hunger and thirst  
for guidance, righteousness, or food.

Rain down your love once again, O God.  
Soften our hearts, so our lives can bear your fruit.  
Crown our lives with your goodness,  
and let everything we do overflow with blessings for your people.  
We pray in the one who bring us joy,  
Jesus the Christ, who taught us to pray:

*The Lord’s Prayer*

**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 “Something to Boast About”**

Many of the letters of Paul were written to churches he had visited and even helped to plant. He felt like he was their “spiritual father,” because he had fostered the faith of many of them. Romans was a little different. Paul had not been a part of their faith journey. He had never visited them. He had hopes to come and visit them, which he mentions at the end of his letter.

Some scholars believe that this letter was written as a way of summarizing many of the doctrines Paul believed and had discussed before. One of the things that he speaks of here and had in other letters is this concept of “boasting.” He speaks in Romans about having something to boast about. He said that if Abraham was justified by his good works, he was still not justified by God.

So what are we to boast about in the presence of God? It does not mean that we should not do good works, for we should. But it is not the good works about which we should be boasting, for these are not what save us.

Faith without works is dead. But by faith we are saved. So what do we have to boast about?

Recently I was visiting a church who declared that they had 3 new people join the church. They weren’t boasting about it. They had been humbled over and over by the fact that no one had joined the church for several years. They had a reason to boast about the Lord, however. They gave God the glory for this happy news of new people. They received it as a gift and it was God about whom they could boast, seeing it as a blessing from God.

Maybe this is the direction in which we also may boast – not in our own efforts – but as a celebration of God, working through us, in us, and yes, even in spite of us. That gives us all something to boast about.

**Old Testament Genesis 12:1-4a**

1Now the LORD said to Abram, “Go from your country and your kindred and your father’s house to the land that I will show you. 2I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you, and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing. 3I will bless those who bless you, and the one who curses you I will curse; and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed.”

4So Abram went, as the LORD had told him; and Lot went with him.

**Romans 4:1-5, 13-17**

1What then are we to say was gained by Abraham, our ancestor according to the flesh? 2For if Abraham was justified by works, he has something to boast about, but not before God. 3For what does the scripture say? “Abraham believed God, and it was reckoned to him as righteousness.” 4Now to one who works, wages are not reckoned as a gift but as something due. 5But to one who without works trusts him who justifies the ungodly, such faith is reckoned as righteousness.

13For the promise that he would inherit the world did not come to Abraham or to his descendants through the law but through the righteousness of faith. 14If it is the adherents of the law who are to be the heirs, faith is null and the promise is void. 15For the law brings wrath; but where there is no law, neither is there violation.

16For this reason it depends on faith, in order that the promise may rest on grace and be guaranteed to all his descendants, not only to the adherents of the law but also to those who share the faith of Abraham (for he is the father of all of us, 17as it is written, “I have made you the father of many nations”) — in the presence of the God in whom he believed, who gives life to the dead and calls into existence the things that do not exist.

**Gospel John 3:1-17**

1Now there was a Pharisee named Nicodemus, a leader of the Jews. 2He came to Jesus by night and said to him, “Rabbi, we know that you are a teacher who has come from God; for no one can do these signs that you do apart from the presence of God.” 3Jesus answered him, “Very truly, I tell you, no one can see the kingdom of God without being born from above.” 4Nicodemus said to him, “How can anyone be born after having grown old? Can one enter a second time into the mother’s womb and be born?” 5Jesus answered, “Very truly, I tell you, no one can enter the kingdom of God without being born of water and Spirit. 6What is born of the flesh is flesh, and what is born of the Spirit is spirit. 7Do not be astonished that I said to you, ‘You must be born from above.’ 8The wind blows where it chooses, and you hear the sound of it, but you do not know where it comes from or where it goes. So it is with everyone who is born of the Spirit.” 9Nicodemus said to him, “How can these things be?” 10Jesus answered him, “Are you a teacher of Israel, and yet you do not understand these things?

11“Very truly, I tell you, we speak of what we know and testify to what we have seen; yet you do not receive our testimony. 12If I have told you about earthly things and you do not believe, how can you believe if I tell you about heavenly things? 13No one has ascended into heaven except the one who descended from heaven, the Son of Man. 14And just as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up, 15that whoever believes in him may have eternal life.

16“For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life.

17“Indeed, God did not send the Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him.”

**Sermon: “Living Like We’re Dying“ Rev. Amy Pospichal**

In the very popular TV series, “House, M.D.” one of Dr. House’s best friends is Dr. James Wilson. He is an oncologist. In a particular episode, we see Dr. Wilson in his office, as usual, talking to a patient. But, unlike many of his patients, he has what he believes is good news. He confesses to his patient that they made a mistake in his diagnosis. And the good news is the patient doesn’t have cancer after all! Wilson thinks the news will be well-received.

But to his surprise, his patient complains. He had prepared to die. At first, he was told that he had incurable cancer. He complains that he sold his house, liquidated his assets, and purchased a trip to Europe. But now he is supposed to go forth and live, cancer free. Dr. Wilson feels so sorry for the mistake, he is prepared to write a check for $6,000 to his patient to apologize. It’s a rather preposterous situation. But it does make one think…

What would you do, if you were this patient? If you were prepared to die, but then were sent forth to live? Would you be optimistic? Or would it make you angry or fearful of life? For some of us, the problems we face may make living more frightening than dying.

We face such choices every day of our lives, whether we are sick or not. For every day we have a new opportunity to reckon our lives to God. That reckoning – a bit like what Paul is talking about in his letter to the Romans – happens at a deep level within us, and is between us and God.

Paul reminds the Romans of their Jewish ancestry, and it is a very important theme throughout his letter. Today you just heard his description of Abraham, one of the great founders of the faith, who came along before Moses was even born. Abraham came along a long time before God gave the Law to Israel. It was, in a way, a story of God and Abraham and the blossoming of the great care that God had for Abraham and his offspring. It was not good works of the Law that could save Abraham, for he did not yet have the Law to guide him. He had the guidance of God alone. And whether he did good or bad things, because of his trust in God, God reckoned him righteous.

Therefore, it is faith in God that makes us righteous. This is why it says elsewhere in this letter to the Romans that it is “by faith, not works,” that we are saved. Works alone do not necessarily lead us to salvation, if they are without faith. James’ letter also says, “faith without works is dead.”

From a purely spiritual standpoint, if we tried to achieve salvation from God purely based on our hard work but without faith, we would never earn it. Eventually we run out steam because it is spiritually unhealthy. It doesn’t mean we shouldn’t contribute our good works. They just should come out of faith, not fear. It just means they need faith to go along with them. If done in this way, our good works are because of faith, not fear.

It may have been fear, not faith, that causes us to react Dr. Wilson’s patient, disappointed and even angry to learn that he was sentenced to a life cancer-free. Fear, not faith, and anxiety instead of gratitude. It means a huge adjustment to receiving good news, when we are used to receiving bad news. It is the Holy Spirit which can give us the courage we need.

In the Presbyterian, “A Brief Statement of Faith,” courage and faith are gifts of the Holy Spirit. It says, “In a broken and fearful world, the Spirit gives us courage:

to pray without ceasing,

to witness among all peoples to Christ as Lord and Savior,

to unmask idolatries in Church and culture,

to hear the voices of peoples long silenced,

and to work with others for justice, freedom, and peace.

In gratitude to God, empowered by the Spirit,

we strive to serve Christ in our daily tasks

and to live holy and joyful lives,

even as we watch for God’s new heaven and new earth…”

…”we rejoice that nothing in life or in death can separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.”

This is where we get the strength to live like we’re dying. Do you remember that song, which came out a few years ago? To Live Like You Were Dying, by Tim McGraw. Here are the lyrics. I’m not a big country fan, but I am of this song. It sings about a guy who finds out he may be dying. And then asks the doctor what he would do. The doctor said, "I went skydiving, I went Rocky Mountain climbing. I went 2.7 seconds on a bull named Fumanchu. And I loved deeper. And I spoke sweeter  
And I gave forgiveness I'd been denying. And he said, "Someday I hope you get the chance  
To live like you were dying"

Why does this matter? God wants us to live like we were dying. God wants us to embrace this sacred moment in time, for time is a gift from Him. Waste no more of that precious gift. God has the power over death, which gives us every reason to live! So go forth and live, as one who is dying. Before you miss your chance. Amen.

**Closing Hymn RH#399 “Love Divine, All Loves Excelling”**

**THE LIFE OF THE CHURCH**

**Potluck Hosts needed:** April 19th and June 21st are Potluck Sundays at our church. However, we do not have hosts to for those days. Please consider being host, or sharing that responsibility with another person. It makes all the difference in the world!

**Please,**

Pray for peace in the Middle East, including Iraq and Afghanistan

Pray for a safe return of daughters and sons from combat

Pray for our global community and those in the midst of disaster

Pray for America and her enemies, that all would seek peace!

Pray for all the people and leaders in our local community

Pray for those who are seeking a deeper spiritual life.

Pray for all first responders

Pray for our church, national and local

Pray for our Presbytery and our pastor

**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 – broken foot and injured knee

Sharon Huffman – continued health problems

Tom Anderson – chemotherapy and side effects

Sheila Martinez – Heart Trouble, diabetes, vision problems

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

Misty Tompkins – stiff person syndrome

Levi Mericle – thyroid cancer

Ida Macias – broken femur

Kaylie McKnight and her family

Betty (Glenda’s sister) – awaiting a diagnosis

Nancy Sallee – two health problems

Julie Sursa – difficulty walking