**First Presbyterian Church, Tucumcari**

*The Church With the Holy Spirit Window*

**Sunday, May 17, 2020 6th Sunday of Easter**

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

**Call to Worship (by Rev. Lucus Keppel, First Presbyterian Church, Bixby, OK)**

As we gather together, we remember that we are not alone in our faith:

**God is our Companion.**

Though the Way is not easy, and we may suffer in righteousness,

**God is our Comfort.**

When anger fills our hearts, and grief crushes our spirits,

**God is our Counselor.**

And through it all, we are together:

**For we are all children of God, our Companion, our Comfort, and our Counselor.**

**Prayer of the Day**

Lord, we come before you as a congregation, not just united by your Holy Spirit, but one in this place. We remember those who are staying home, missing church, because they have special health concerns. We find joy in your grace, for it is by your grace that we make such choices, trusting that you are with us no matter where we are. Strengthen us in our faith today as we worship you. And strengthen your church. In Christ our Lord, Amen.

**Call to Confession**

**Prayer of Confession (prayer by** Rev. Teri Peterson, [Ridgefield-Crystal Lake Presbyterian Church](http://www.rclpc.org/), Crystal Lake, IL*)*God, sometimes you work too slowly for us.  
**We want something we can see,**  
**something we can do now,**  
**something quick and easy.**  
So we turn our eyes toward “the way it’s always been”  
**and we try to re-create the days when everything was simple and good.**  
But you call us to hear your promise of a future with hope,  
**a promise we can’t understand, or see—**  
**a promise for which we must wait and look and work.**  
Forgive us our impatience with mystery and promises,  
and turn our eyes toward your future.  
**Lead us, Lord, to walk your way on any road we travel. (silence) Amen.**

**Assurance of Pardon**

The Lord’s abundant mercy is from everlasting to everlasting.

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.**

**Psalm 66:8-20**

Bless our God, O peoples,  
let the sound of his praise be heard,  
who has kept us among the living,  
and has not let our feet slip.  
**For you, O God, have tested us;  
you have tried us as silver is tried.**You brought us into the net;  
you laid burdens on our backs;  
you let people ride over our heads;  
we went through fire and through water;  
yet you have brought us out to a spacious place.

**I will come into your house with burnt offerings;  
I will pay you my vows,  
those that my lips uttered  
and my mouth promised when I was in trouble.**I will offer to you burnt offerings of fatlings,  
with the smoke of the sacrifice of rams;  
I will make an offering of bulls and goats.

**Come and hear, all you who fear God,  
and I will tell what he has done for me.**I cried aloud to him,  
and he was extolled with my tongue.  
**If I had cherished iniquity in my heart,  
the Lord would not have listened.**But truly God has listened;  
he has given heed to the words of my prayer.

**Blessed be God,  
because he has not rejected my prayer  
or removed his steadfast love from me.**

**Prayers of the People** (based on Psalm 66:8-20)

We bless you, O God,

for you hold our souls in life

and will not allow us to stumble or fall.

We pray for those whose faith is being tested,

who are ensnared in the troubles of life,

or who are burdened with injustice or fear.

We pray to you, O Lord, for you are good;

**your mercy endures forever.**

We pray for all who watch chaos swirl around them:

refugees, victims of war or natural disaster, and those in poverty.

We pray to you, O Lord, for you are good;

**your mercy endures forever.**

We pray for those who seek spiritual peace,

who long to hear the promise of your love made real;

we pray that we might have the courage to speak your word.

We pray to you, O Lord, for you are good;

**your mercy endures forever.**

We pray for those who cry out due to pain, illness, or grief.

Pour out your healing, so that everyone might tell of your goodness.

We pray to you, O Lord, for you are good;

**your mercy endures forever.**

We pray for those who seek forgiveness,

and for those who might extend the hand of reconciliation.

We pray to you, O Lord, for you are good;

**your mercy endures forever.**

Blessed be God, for you hear our prayers,

even as we pray together as Jesus taught, saying:

*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.**

**\*Let us pray with gratitude:**

**\*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: Heinz’s Dilemma**

I have a story to tell you. It is one used as an example of how difficult it can be to discern right from wrong.

A woman was on her deathbed. There was one drug that the doctors thought might save her. The drug was expensive to make, but the druggist was charging ten times what the drug cost him to produce. He paid $200 for the drug and charged $2,000 for a small dose of it. The sick woman's husband, Heinz, went to everyone he knew to borrow the money, but he could only get together about $1,000 which is half of what it cost. He told the druggist that his wife was dying and asked him to sell it cheaper or let him pay later. But the druggist said: “No, I discovered the drug and I'm going to make money from it.” So Heinz got desperate and broke into the man's laboratory to steal the drug for his wife. Should Heinz have broken into the laboratory to steal the drug for his wife? Why or why not?

From a theoretical point of view, it is not important what the participant thinks that Heinz should *do*. Kohlberg's theory holds that the justification the participant offers is what is significant, the *form* of their response. Below are some of many examples of possible arguments that belong to the six stages:

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| 1 | Obedience | It is only worth $200 and not how much the druggist wanted for it; Heinz had even offered to pay for it and was not stealing anything else. | He will consequently be put in prison which will mean he is a bad person. |
| Self-interest | He will be much happier if he saves his wife, even if he has to serve a prison sentence. | Prison is an awful place, and he would more likely languish in a jail cell than over his wife's death. |
| 2 | Conformity | His wife expects it; he wants to be a good husband. | Stealing is bad and he is not a criminal; he has tried to do everything he can without breaking the law, you cannot blame him. |
| Law-and-order | His wife will benefit, but he should also take the prescribed punishment for the crime as well as paying the druggist what he is owed. Criminals cannot just run around without regard for the law; actions have consequences. | The law prohibits stealing. |
| 3 | Social contract orientation | Everyone has a right to choose life, regardless of the law. | The scientist has a right to fair compensation. Even if his wife is sick, it does not make his actions right. |
| Universal human ethics | Saving a human life is a more fundamental value than the property rights of another person. | Others may need the medicine just as badly, and their lives are equally significant. |

The dilemma of Heinz highlights the complexity of our choices and how hard it is for us to know just what is right and wrong. In our reading from 1 Peter today, Christians were really stuck in determining what was right and wrong. The letter points out that they would be persecuted for their faith, possibly mistreated by their superiors, for no other reason than their beliefs. The question was whether to hold onto their own beliefs, or recant them?

**Prayer for Illumination**

**Gospel John 14:15-21**

15“If you love me, you will keep my commandments. 16And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Advocate, to be with you for ever. 17This is the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees him nor knows him. You know him, because he abides with you, and he will be in you.

18“I will not leave you orphaned; I am coming to you. 19In a little while the world will no longer see me, but you will see me; because I live, you also will live. 20On that day you will know that I am in my Father, and you in me, and I in you. 21They who have my commandments and keep them are those who love me; and those who love me will be loved by my Father, and I will love them and reveal myself to them.”

**Acts 17:22-31**

22Then Paul stood in front of the Areopagus and said, “Athenians, I see how extremely religious you are in every way. 23For as I went through the city and looked carefully at the objects of your worship, I found among them an altar with the inscription, ‘To an unknown god.’ What therefore you worship as unknown, this I proclaim to you. 24The God who made the world and everything in it, he who is Lord of heaven and earth, does not live in shrines made by human hands, 25nor is he served by human hands, as though he needed anything, since he himself gives to all mortals life and breath and all things. 26From one ancestor he made all nations to inhabit the whole earth, and he allotted the times of their existence and the boundaries of the places where they would live, 27so that they would search for God and perhaps grope for him and find him — though indeed he is not far from each one of us. 28For ‘In him we live and move and have our being’; as even some of your own poets have said,  
     ‘For we too are his offspring.’  
29Since we are God’s offspring, we ought not to think that the deity is like gold, or silver, or stone, an image formed by the art and imagination of mortals. 30While God has overlooked the times of human ignorance, now he commands all people everywhere to repent, 31because he has fixed a day on which he will have the world judged in righteousness by a man whom he has appointed, and of this he has given assurance to all by raising him from the dead.”

**1 Peter 3:13-22**

13Now who will harm you if you are eager to do what is good? 14But even if you do suffer for doing what is right, you are blessed. Do not fear what they fear, and do not be intimidated, 15but in your hearts sanctify Christ as Lord. Always be ready to make your defense to anyone who demands from you an accounting for the hope that is in you; 16yet do it with gentleness and reverence. Keep your conscience clear, so that, when you are maligned, those who abuse you for your good conduct in Christ may be put to shame. 17For it is better to suffer for doing good, if suffering should be God’s will, than to suffer for doing evil. 18For Christ also suffered for sins once for all, the righteous for the unrighteous, in order to bring you to God. He was put to death in the flesh, but made alive in the spirit, 19in which also he went and made a proclamation to the spirits in prison, 20who in former times did not obey, when God waited patiently in the days of Noah, during the building of the ark, in which a few, that is, eight persons, were saved through water. 21And baptism, which this prefigured, now saves you — not as a removal of dirt from the body, but as an appeal to God for a good conscience, through the resurrection of Jesus Christ, 22who has gone into heaven and is at the right hand of God, with angels, authorities, and powers made subject to him.

**Sermon: “There Goes the Neighborhood” Rev. Amy Pospichal**

Sal had a pizzeria. The neighborhood had changed over the years. No longer was it so populated with Italians, but now it was mostly Cubans, Puerto Ricans and African Americans. Mookie, his delivery boy, has a girlfriend and a baby. He’s not happy with his job, and he’d begun to complain about it to Sal. But on the hottest day of the summer, tension in the neighborhood has also hit the boiling point. Along comes Mookie’s friends, complaining to Sal that he only has portraits of white people on the wall of his restaurant. Their boombox blaring, they complain to Sal, who demands they turn down the music. A fight ensues. Then a riot. Sal’s restaurant is destroyed. But Mookie and Sal do the right thing. They make amends. The movie ends with a glimmer of hope, that people can reconcile, even if doing the right thing is not always clear.

The story comes from the Spike Lee movie called “Do the Right Thing.” It comments on the tensions and questions that happen from neighborhoods that have changed over the years, particularly along racial lines. Even though it’s called “Do the Right Thing,” it leaves us wondering about what the “right thing” is. The movie ends with a dilemma: does one follow the peaceful path of Martin Luther King, Jr, or the more violent path of Malcolm X? These two thinkers overshadow the best message of the film - when Sal and Mookie reconcile, man to man.

It is not always clear is it? We have different formulae for helping us “do the right thing.” The Rotary Club for instance, uses the Four-Way Test for the things we think, say and do, which are: Is it the truth? Is it fair to all concerned? Will it build goodwill and better friendships? Will it be beneficial to all concerned? And then the unwritten 5th rule: “Is it fun?” These questions can ordinarily help us sort out what is the right thing to do, most pleasing to the Lord, but not in every case.

The changing world provides with ample opportunity to continually assess what is the right thing to do. Our faith tradition, fortunately, offers the priority for how we assess that, for it is according to whatever our Lord and Savior desires that we do. For the people during the time 1 Peter was written, the world had changed forever. The neighborhood had changed. No longer was it just populated with Jews and Greeks. It also had begun to be populated with these new persons called “Christians.” These Christians were not trusted by their neighbors. They were eyed with suspicion and others talked about them behind their backs. Some would have probably thought, “there goes the neighborhood,” as Christians proliferated.

And the Christians were persecuted for their faith. For this reason, 1 Peter reminds them that they will be punished, at times severely and unjustly punishment, merely because of their faith. He reminds them to always keep their integrity, even when they receive unjust punishment. He wants them to be thankful that they are not being punished for breaking the law, but for something they’re doing right. In other words, don’t get punished for something you did wrong, for what credit is that to you? It says, “For it is better to suffer for doing good, if suffering should be God’s will, than to suffer for doing evil.” This does not justify the actions of those who have hurt us for our faith, nor does it mean we should go out looking for opportunities to be hurt by others. But it does remind us that it can be unclear as to the right thing to do when we are put in such a position.

Dr. Sanjeet Singh-Saluja, a Sikh and a physician in Canada, and his brother also a doctor, were put into that position recently. With the recent surge in coronavirus, they made the very difficult decision to shave their beards. The reason was so that they could treat their patients, they had to wear the N95 protective face masks, but with a beard these masks do not fit right. His decision was based on the pillar of the Sikh faith which is “seva,” or “service to humankind.” Another pillar of faith is “kesh,” which is respect for the perfection of God’s creation, the reason why Sikh men don’t cut their hair. He and his brother faced a crisis and had to make a choice. They chose the path of service, by cutting their beards. And it has created waves of criticism from their own faith community.

But when the neighborhood has changed, however that may be, we face choices, faith-related choices.

In such cases, we might feel just like someone who is simply groping for God, trying to find out from God what is the right thing to do. This is where grace comes in. As Paul reminded the Athenians at the Areopagus, the maker of Heaven and Earth offers us a way to search Him out, even “grope” for God as the Scripture says. God has made it possible in the grace of Jesus Christ to grope for God when we have no other knowledge of how to proceed.

Paul admits this to a diverse group of people, many who are hearing this good news for the first time in their lives. That anyone earnestly wanting to know God is invited to grope for Him. Even for us seasoned Christians, all it takes is just one bad day or a difficult week and we might find ourselves on our knees praying for answers. Even those who have been praying to God all of their lives have times when they don’t know what the right thing is to do.

Peter does not want us to give up, nor let go of our faith convictions, when the world is changing around us. Remember that God has already searched us and knows us, such as in Psalm 139. “O Lord, you have searched me and known me. You are in my lying down and in my waking up…”

The good news, friends, is we face difficult choices each day. Our decisions matter and affect others’ lives, as with Dr. Sanjeet and his brother, or like with Sal and Mookie. With God’s grace, we may not always do the right thing, but we can be comforted in knowing that God walks alongside those who faithfully continue to grope for Him. That alone is an act of faith. Thanks be to God. Amen.

**Benediction:**

Beloved, we have heard and trusted in  
the good news of Jesus Christ.  
Go now into the world to do and see still greater things,  
to open heaven upon earth  
and bear witness to eternal life today;  
in the name of the Father,  
and of the Son,  
and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

**THE LIFE OF THE CHURCH**

**Potluck Hosts needed:** June 21st is Potluck Sunday at our church. However, we do not have a host/s for that day. Please consider being host, or sharing that responsibility with another person. It makes all the difference in the world!

**During the Pandemic, Face Masks:** Several people in our church are making protective face masks for us to wear in public from fabric. If you need one, please let me know. I have 3 new ones available and more are being made!

**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**

Betty (Glenda’s sister) – awaiting a diagnosis

Family and friends of Becky Bryant in their grief

Cheryl Brewer – cancer hospice

Emma Lowther, Lou Sims’ great niece – ongoing heart trouble

Davis (Russell’s son) – Air Force boot camp in San Antonio

Glenda Coles – broken foot and injured knee

Gloria (Teresa Gallegos-Brake’s sister) – still having health problems

Gracie Whitson – still recovering

Ida Macias – broken femur

Jenna Morris, knee problems

Jim Enriquez & family - medical problems

Julie Sursa – difficulty walking

Karen Foster – chemo for cancer

Kaylie McKnight and her family

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

Kurt Goldston - chemotherapy

Levi Mericle – thyroid cancer

Misty Tompkins – stiff person syndrome

Nancy Sallee – two health problems

Family and friends grieving for Paul Quintana

Roseann Mendez battling liver cancer

Ruth Johnson – physical problems

Sharon Huffman – continued health problems

Sharon McCauley – awaiting surgery

Shay – requested by Julie Sursa

Sheila Martinez – Heart Trouble, diabetes, vision problems

Sondra Moore Carlson – chemotherapy

Sonia (Betty Faye’s daughter) recovering from stroke

Stacie (Glenda’s friend) – medical problems

Tom Anderson – chemotherapy and side effects