**First Presbyterian Church, Tucumcari**

*The Church With the Holy Spirit Window*

**Sunday, October 11, 2020 28th Sunday in Ordinary Time**

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

**Hymns:**

**RH 11 Holy, Holy, Holy! Lord God Almighty!**

**BH 404 Precious Lord, Take My Hand**

**RH 368 My Hope is Built on Nothing Less**

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

**Prayer of the Day**

Merciful God,
you do not call us to you because we are worthy,
but because you yearn for our hearts.
Create clean hearts in us, O God,

Renew us in our worship of you today,

Teach us your song, so we can go forth and glorify you in our everyday lives and work,

Set our minds on lofty things that please you most,

So that as we live, breathe and work, all who we are may reflect you. Amen.

**Call to Confession**

In all honesty and humility,
let us confess our sins before God
and be freed of the burdens that weigh us down for the journey ahead.

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

**Assurance of Forgiveness (musical meditation; words by Terry Talbot, performed by The Acappella Company)**

Create in me a clean heart oh God
Let me be like You in all my ways
Give me Your strength
Teach me Your song
Shelter me in the shadow of Your wings
For we are Your righteousness
If we've died to ourselves
And live through Your death

Then we shall be born again
To be blessed in Your love

You have prayed for God’s forgiveness. In your sincerity of heart, and through God’s mercy, you are forgiven. Friends, believe the good news of the gospel.

**In Jesus Christ, we are forgiven!**

The peace of the Lord be with you.

**And also with you.**

**Psalm 106:1-6, 19-23 (please see bulletin)**

**Prayers of the People**

O Lord, you are our shepherd;

we shall not be in want.

Your creative grace is visible in lush green pastures

and revealed in still, clear waters.

Your restoring resurrecting Spirit revives our souls and our communities,

and you guide us in ways of righteousness for the sake of your earth.

We pray for the earth you create and love:

for people, families, nations, and species that dwell in the valley of the shadow of death;

for all who fear the evils of pollution, violence, depredation, and illness;

for those whose suffering is on our hearts this morning, and for those whom we will never meet.

We hold our concerns and thanksgiving up to you in prayer:

Tom Anderson and Jean

Glenda

Susie

Sharon and Wayne

Christie

TJ

Marcus

Kathy Martinez, on her 6th day in the hospital with COVID

Those who are seeking work

Those who struggle with mental or emotional health

Those who are overwhelmed with their troubles

The homeless and hungry

Those victims of violence, even at the hands of those who should love them

Those who have hostility towards your Church

Those who are working to pass on your message of joy and hope

Students, families and school administrations

Our Local, State and National leaders

Shepherding God, be with your people;

with your rod and your staff, restore us and lead us.

Spread your table of abundance before those who hunger and thirst;

set us free from enmity and division.

Anoint us with your calling to reconciliation,

and let the cup of our life overflow

with justice and life for all your creation.

Let your goodness and mercy follow us all the days of our life,

and make this earth your home forever,

in Jesus’ name. Amen.

**Presentation of Offering and Offertory**

**Time out for Teaching: “Changing God’s Mind”**

Today we will hear another reading from Exodus, involving a conversation between Moses and the Lord. You will probably remember the story when the Israelites, along with the incitement of Aaron, Moses’ brother, when the Israelites have yet another breakdown of faith in the Lord. They call for everyone to bring out their gold and silver, and Aaron makes an idol in the form of a calf, so that they can worship it. So they do. They built an altar, and brought sacrifices and rose up to revel.

How do you think the Lord reacted to this? Remember, this is exactly the thing that the Lord said NOT to do. It is so important that it is one of the top 10 commandments. Do not make a graven image.

The Lord is not happy. The Lord tells Moses to go down to tell them what they have done wrong, and that the Lord is going to pour wrath on them for choosing a golden god over Him who brought them out of slavery in Egypt. The Lord wants to destroy them all and just keep Moses to start a new nation. But Moses intercedes on behalf of these stiff-necked, wayward Israelites. He tells the Lord that there will be some who will say that the Lord brought them out of Egypt in order to kill them in the desert. The Lord hears this and changes His mind. Literally, God changed His mind after listening to Moses’ pleas for mercy.

I am fascinated with the idea that we might be able to “change” God’s mind. There are just a few places in the Old Testament where we are literally told that God has changed His mind by a human who pleads for someone else. Can you think of a few examples from Scripture?

*Genesis 18: 16-33*: Abraham and the Lord have a conversation about destroying Sodom and Gomorrah because the Lord thinks that the city is completely wicked. But Abraham speaks up, “Suppose five of the fifty righteous are lacking? Wilt thou destroy the whole city for lack of five?” And he said, “I will not destroy it if I find forty-five there.” **29**Again he spoke to him, and said, “Suppose forty are found there.” He answered, “For the sake of forty I will not do it.” **30**Then he said, “Oh let not the Lord be angry, and I will speak. Suppose thirty are found there.” He answered, “I will not do it, if I find thirty there.” **31**He said, “Behold, I have taken upon myself to speak to the Lord. Suppose twenty are found there.” He answered, “For the sake of twenty I will not destroy it.” **32**Then he said, “Oh let not the Lord be angry, and I will speak again but this once. Suppose ten are found there.” He answered, “For the sake of ten I will not destroy it.”

*1 Samuel 15:11* is an interesting place. God says that he “regrets” having made Saul the first king of Israel, for the Lord chose a man who ended up turning against God and God’s commandments. Saul’s replacement was David.

*Jonah 3:10* is another example where we are told that God changed His mind. When the people of Nineveh actually DID repent of their sins, even though Jonah didn’t want to go in the first place, God decided not to destroy them after all.

*And lastly,* the coming of Jesus Christ Himself might be a final example of God’s choice to change His own mind. For the same message is for us as it was for Nineveh. If we change our minds, that is, to repent, we will find that God is ready to receive us and forgive us.

**Prayer for Illumination**

**Exodus 32:1-14**

1When the people saw that Moses delayed to come down from the mountain, the people gathered around Aaron, and said to him, “Come, make gods for us, who shall go before us; as for this Moses, the man who brought us up out of the land of Egypt, we do not know what has become of him.” 2Aaron said to them, “Take off the gold rings that are on the ears of your wives, your sons, and your daughters, and bring them to me.” 3So all the people took off the gold rings from their ears, and brought them to Aaron. 4He took the gold from them, formed it in a mold, and cast an image of a calf; and they said, “These are your gods, O Israel, who brought you up out of the land of Egypt!” 5When Aaron saw this, he built an altar before it; and Aaron made proclamation and said, “Tomorrow shall be a festival to the LORD.” 6They rose early the next day, and offered burnt offerings and brought sacrifices of well-being; and the people sat down to eat and drink, and rose up to revel.

7The LORD said to Moses, “Go down at once! Your people, whom you brought up out of the land of Egypt, have acted perversely; 8they have been quick to turn aside from the way that I commanded them; they have cast for themselves an image of a calf, and have worshiped it and sacrificed to it, and said, ‘These are your gods, O Israel, who brought you up out of the land of Egypt!’” 9The LORD said to Moses, “I have seen this people, how stiff-necked they are. 10Now let me alone, so that my wrath may burn hot against them and I may consume them; and of you I will make a great nation.”

11But Moses implored the LORD his God, and said, “O LORD, why does your wrath burn hot against your people, whom you brought out of the land of Egypt with great power and with a mighty hand? 12Why should the Egyptians say, ‘It was with evil intent that he brought them out to kill them in the mountains, and to consume them from the face of the earth’? Turn from your fierce wrath; change your mind and do not bring disaster on your people. 13Remember Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, your servants, how you swore to them by your own self, saying to them, ‘I will multiply your descendants like the stars of heaven, and all this land that I have promised I will give to your descendants, and they shall inherit it forever.’” 14And the LORD changed his mind about the disaster that he planned to bring on his people.

**Gospel Matthew 22:1-14**

1Once more Jesus spoke to them in parables, saying: 2“The kingdom of heaven may be compared to a king who gave a wedding banquet for his son. 3He sent his slaves to call those who had been invited to the wedding banquet, but they would not come. 4Again he sent other slaves, saying, ‘Tell those who have been invited: Look, I have prepared my dinner, my oxen and my fat calves have been slaughtered, and everything is ready; come to the wedding banquet.’ 5But they made light of it and went away, one to his farm, another to his business, 6while the rest seized his slaves, maltreated them, and killed them. 7The king was enraged. He sent his troops, destroyed those murderers, and burned their city. 8Then he said to his slaves, ‘The wedding is ready, but those invited were not worthy. 9Go therefore into the main streets, and invite everyone you find to the wedding banquet.’ 10Those slaves went out into the streets and gathered all whom they found, both good and bad; so the wedding hall was filled with guests.

11“But when the king came in to see the guests, he noticed a man there who was not wearing a wedding robe, 12and he said to him, ‘Friend, how did you get in here without a wedding robe?’ And he was speechless. 13Then the king said to the attendants, ‘Bind him hand and foot, and throw him into the outer darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.’ 14For many are called, but few are chosen.”

**Epistle Philippians 4:1-9**

1Therefore, my brothers and sisters, whom I love and long for, my joy and crown, stand firm in the Lord in this way, my beloved.

2I urge Euodia and I urge Syntyche to be of the same mind in the Lord. 3Yes, and I ask you also, my loyal companion, help these women, for they have struggled beside me in the work of the gospel, together with Clement and the rest of my co-workers, whose names are in the book of life.

4Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, Rejoice. 5Let your gentleness be known to everyone. The Lord is near. 6Do not worry about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. 7And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

8Finally, beloved, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is pleasing, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence and if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things. 9Keep on doing the things that you have learned and received and heard and seen in me, and the God of peace will be with you.

**Sermon: “Create in Me” Rev. Amy Pospichal**

A few months ago, when our church was just doing the online worship, to the best of our ability, I stumbled upon an a cappella singing group, all men, who sang,

“Create in me a clean heart oh God
Let me be like You in all my ways
Give me Your strength
Teach me Your song
Shelter me in the shadow of Your wings
For we are Your righteousness
If we've died to ourselves
And live through Your death

Then we shall be born again
To be blessed in Your love”

It is a prayer for God to cleanse us. It is also a beautiful meditation with a peaceful yet bold harmony. Several lines start with calling on God to do things for us, and it sounds like a command. I would say it is more like a plea for help from God, or maybe song of surrender. “Create in me a clean heart, O God. Let me like you in all my ways.” It prays for God’s protection, strength and to teach us God’s song. Then it ends with our own responsibility in this covenant: “If we’ve died to ourselves and live through Your death, then we shall be born again to be blessed in your love.” This song lists out several things, all of which I think sum up what a “clean heart” looks like. To be like God in all our ways, dying to ourselves and living through the cross, filled with God’s strength, singing God’s song, sheltered under God’s wings.

Our life of faith requires a certain kind of balance, if we allow God to create clean hearts in us. It is a combination of work and surrender. Sort of like relaxing while you stand on your head. Depending on what’s going on and what you’re trying to do, sometimes it is easier to strike that balance and sometimes it isn’t. And each of us finds certain aspects of our faith more difficult than others, for no two of us are exactly alike.

Paul the Apostle describes this balance in a fresh way as he wrote to the Philippians. And what he says here just cannot be done well without a clean heart. It’s quite a balancing act. He loves the Philippian congregation, for they have been truly supportive of his ministry and he praises them throughout for their faithfulness to his work as an evangelist. He calls them his “joy and crown,” but still urgently passes on to them a sort of “Honey Do List” of what to do in order to continue to live in that image of God, that clean-hearted living. He singles out two women, Euodia and Syntyche, who have had division between them and tells the church to help them becoming of the “same mind.” Not only that, Rejoice! And, make your needs known before God, with prayer and supplication. And then he says, “whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is pleasing, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence and if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things.” It takes a clean heart to keep focused on all of these things, a balance between work and surrender. And, this “Honey-Do List” is a comprehensive list. It doesn’t say “do this or that…” It says to do it all. And not just to do it. To also have the mindset. “Think on these things,” he says. Reconcile. Rejoice. Pray. Do. Adjust your mind and heart to everything that will please God. Integrity. When we fail at one of those things, then we have to have a talk to God.

There are other lyrics from a song I like called “Everyday Glory,” because it inspires me to seek a cleaner heart, with integrity and purpose. They go like this:

“If the future's looking dark, We're the ones who have to shine
If there's no one in control, We're the ones who draw the line
Though we live in trying times, We're the ones who have to try
Though we know that time has wings, We're the ones who have to fly.” (lyrics by Neil Peart)

We are the ones who have to shine. In this dark and fearful world, we have to shine. When we fail God and do only the easy parts of the Honey-Do list, we have to keep trying. Our integrity is a way for us to wear our faith inside out. In trying times, the world is watching what we do, and even judging Christians by how we have chosen to balance it all out.

Friends, Paul the Apostle is telling us what we need to hear. God’s “Honey Do List” tells us everything we need to know on how to maintain a clean heart. It’s a balancing act, and we will never ever be perfect at it. But we have to try. Let us pray:

Create in us clean hearts, O God. Let us be like you in all our ways. Give us your strength. Teach us your song. Shelter us in the shadow of your wings. For we are your righteousness. Help us to die to ourselves and live through your death. So we will be born again to be blessed in your love. Amen.

**THE LIFE OF THE CHURCH**

**Tomorrow at 6: Green Chili Gals meet.** We’re going to do it potluck-style. Ladies, let’s get together to share a meal and finish assembling the Go Bags for the Tucumcari Domestic Violence Program.

**Social Distancing and Personal Protection.** Please respect one another’s space, observing the 6-foot distancing between one another. Please remember to wash your hands on the way out today. If you need a protective face covering, please notify the pastor and she can help you.

**Session Meets after Church Today:** Please stay after, Elders, to attend our regularly-scheduled Session Meeting.