**First Presbyterian Church Tucumcari**

**Worship 11:00AM**

**Sunday, October 14, 2018, 28th Sunday in Ordinary Time**

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

**Prayer of the Day**

God of Creation,
all of the world proclaims your praise,
from the highest heavens to the deepest recesses of the sea.
Make our voices true and faithful
as we join the voices of all of creation to sing your praise.

Praise be to God the Creator, who breathes life into being.
Praise be to God the Redeemer, who saves us from ourselves.
Praise be to God the Sustainer, who binds us together as one body.
Let God’s children say, **Amen**.

**Call to Confession**

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

**Assurance of Pardon**

Let yourself live and believe this good news:
**In Jesus Christ we are forgiven!**

The Lord be with you.

**And also with you.**

**Psalm 22:1-15 (please see bulletin)**

(introduce as the Psalm of the Great High Priest, Jesus, when he is crucified…also connect this with the statements Job makes today when he feels very far away from God during Job’s suffering.)

**Prayers of the People**

You are a God who leads us, who makes a way when there is no way.
We give you thanks, O Lord, for you are stronger than every foe.
We give you thanks, for your creative Spirit is always at work, making all things new.
We give you thanks, for though we feel scattered or on edge, there is no place we can go beyond the reach of your love.
And so we are bold to lift our voices to you, to admit our need.
We pray this day for your Church, in this community, in this nation, and in the world.
We ask your blessing on your Body, that we may in turn be a blessing to others.
We ask your guidance, strong and sure, for we are not certain of the way forward.
We pray for the gift of discernment, and the courage to follow, even when we feel battered by the waves.
Give us eyes to see and ears to hear…and feet ready to follow…and hands ready to serve.
Take from us any thought that does not glorify you, and lead us on your way.
…
We pray this day for the nations of this world, and for our leaders, that they too may have the gifts of discernment and courage.
Give them wisdom to seek the good of all, not only some.
Give them compassion, and imagination, and love.
…
We pray this day for your people near and far who live each day with fear.
Whether they fear someone in their home, or violence in the streets, or the government, or themselves…bring peace, O God.
Bring peace to those in the midst of war, and to those whose greatest enemy is within.
Bring peace that passes all understanding, peace founded on justice, for the people around your world.
And bring us together, to be creators of justice and peace for all your creation.
…
We pray this day for those who are ill, in body, mind, or spirit.
May your healing presence surround and fill them, may your comfort enfold them.
Guide the hands and minds of doctors and nurses and all who care for others, that they may understand and so treat people toward wholeness.
…
We pray this day for all those who find the news too much to bear—people living with stories they have not been able to tell, with hearts burdened by trauma, with lives upended by choices made by others.
Shield their hearts, O God.
Give them hope, and help, and a listening ear.
Give us courage to hold their stories, their feelings, and their prayers, to be a friend to those who feel alone.
…
You are a God who makes a way when there is no way, who creates paths in the desert and through the storm. You carry our burdens and lift our spirits, that we may bravely walk this earthly way. Lead and guide us to go forward into your future, with faith, hope, and love.
We pray these and all things in the name of the One who is the pioneer and perfecter of our faith, Jesus the Christ. Amen.

**Time out for Teaching: Jesus as High Priest**

What do you know about the priests of ancient Israel?

* **They were physicians**, taught to diagnose and treat medical conditions such as leprosy, and to declare when the person had been healed.
* **They presented sacrifices** to the Lord on behalf of individuals and on behalf of the whole community of Israelites, according to the needs of the congregation
* They provided through their ministries **a circle of holiness around the nation of Israel**, for they were according to Exodus, “set apart,” that is, a “kingdom of priests, a holy nation.”
* **They were Israel’s “divine connection,”** to assure people of God’s faithfulness and protection, including forgiveness of sins and to dispel the effect of evil on the people.

The letter to the Hebrews, which we shall hear read in a few minutes, spends a good deal of time talking about that ancient priesthood and what it meant. It talks about the righteousness that comes from faith, demonstrated by Abraham, but that even in his time there was a priest named Melchizedek, who could intercede for Abraham to the Lord. And because of the blessing of Melchizedek, Abraham, a righteous man, demonstrated his faith by dedicating one-tenth of his property to this priest.

All this said, Hebrews calls Jesus our Great High Priest, even greater than Melchizedek, whom Abraham honored. Hebrews wants us to know the fullness of Jesus’ identity as our priest, intercessor, our empathizer, our healer, our sacrifice, and we are told that this High Priest is Greatest because Jesus was tempted to sin in every way that we are, yet is without sin. This is how Jesus can sympathize with us in our every weakness. As our direct connection to the Almighty God, is it not a comfort to know that God is able to sympathize with us? It may be similar to that moment in Psalm 23, when it says that the Lord who is our shepherd “even though we walk in the shadow of the valley of death, we can fear no evil, for He is with me, my rod and my staff, they comfort me…”

**Prayer for Illumination**

Author of our Lives,
we praise you for writing us into your narrative of salvation.
As characters in this chapter of your story of creation,
help us tell the truth of your steadfast love and mercy
to all who have ears to hear. **Amen**.

**Job 23:1-9, 16-17**

1Then Job answered: 2"Today also my complaint is bitter; his hand is heavy despite my groaning. 3Oh, that I knew where I might find him, that I might come even to his dwelling! 4I would lay my case before him, and fill my mouth with arguments. 5I would learn what he would answer me, and understand what he would say to me. 6Would he contend with me in the greatness of his power? No; but he would give heed to me. 7There an upright person could reason with him, and I should be acquitted forever by my judge.

8"If I go forward, he is not there; or backward, I cannot perceive him; 9on the left he hides, and I cannot behold him; I turn to the right, but I cannot see him.

16God has made my heart faint; the Almighty has terrified me; 17If only I could vanish in darkness, and thick darkness would cover my face!

**Gospel Mark 10:17-31**

17As he was setting out on a journey, a man ran up and knelt before him, and asked him, "Good Teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?" 18Jesus said to him, "Why do you call me good? No one is good but God alone. 19You know the commandments: 'You shall not murder; You shall not commit adultery; You shall not steal; You shall not bear false witness; You shall not defraud; Honor your father and mother.'" 20He said to him, "Teacher, I have kept all these since my youth." 21Jesus, looking at him, loved him and said, "You lack one thing; go, sell what you own, and give the money to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; then come, follow me." 22When he heard this, he was shocked and went away grieving, for he had many possessions.

23Then Jesus looked around and said to his disciples, "How hard it will be for those who have wealth to enter the kingdom of God!" 24And the disciples were perplexed at these words. But Jesus said to them again, "Children, how hard it is to enter the kingdom of God! 25It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for someone who is rich to enter the kingdom of God." 26They were greatly astounded and said to one another, "Then who can be saved?" 27Jesus looked at them and said, "For mortals it is impossible, but not for God; for God all things are possible."

28Peter began to say to him, "Look, we have left everything and followed you." 29Jesus said, "Truly I tell you, there is no one who has left house or brothers or sisters or mother or father or children or fields, for my sake and for the sake of the good news, 30who will not receive a hundredfold now in this age — houses, brothers and sisters, mothers and children, and fields with persecutions — and in the age to come eternal life. 31But many who are first will be last, and the last will be first."

**Hebrews 4:12-16**

12Indeed, the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing until it divides soul from spirit, joints from marrow; it is able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart. 13And before him no creature is hidden, but all are naked and laid bare to the eyes of the one to whom we must render an account.

14Since, then, we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus, the Son of God, let us hold fast to our confession. 15For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who in every respect has been tested as we are, yet without sin. 16Let us therefore approach the throne of grace with boldness, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.

**Sermon: Alive and Well**

 It’s easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter heaven. If Jesus says so, it must be true. If you’re like me, you probably have always thought it was a pretty goofy line. How absurd! The picture of a camel squeezing through that needle! Jesus has used this teaching style before, an approach to teaching us something that sounds so absurd it should make us think a moment. What he is saying is it is so awkward and painful for a rich man to enter heaven, that it’s basically impossible. Now it doesn’t sound so silly, does it? It’s actually kind of sad, so the disciples then lament, “Who then can be saved?” And Jesus says, “For mortals it is impossible, but not for God; for God all things are possible."

 This I believe. There are just some things that are impossible for us. But for God, all things are possible. There’s hope for that poor rich man yet.

 For God, all things are possible. It’s a feel-good statement. It’s probably one of the most popular, top 20 favorite Bible quotes. Many of us cling to it in life and death moments. Many of us put our hope in this when we feel we have no other hope. But I believe it not just because it feels good, but because it comes from the mouth of the Son of God, whom we confess to ***BE*** God poured out into human flesh, to dwell among us. Jesus ***is*** God, sent to speak directly from the heart of God to the world. “For God, all things are possible,” is a statement that we can trust, because God is talking about God’s very own self, God is telling us that He, She - choose your preferred pronoun here – is revealing that God can make things happen, things that mortals cannot do. God is active and alive.

 Theologian Mary Daly once wrote, “God is a verb.” As Prof. Daly tried to come up with new ways of referring to God without male or female images, she conceived that God is an active and living being who never just “sits there” but is alive and well, the embodiment of life and creativity. God can never be reduced to another character in a book, nor another person we know, but who grounds our very souls and at that same time whirls the planets. Remember the story of Moses and the burning bush, when God reveals to Moses His “personal name?” “Yahweh,” meaning, “I am.” God is a verb, active and living, alive and well among us.

 The Letter to the Hebrews talks about the Word of God: its ability to finely separate and discern all things, our inmost thoughts and even our own bodies. Like a skilled surgeon. All of us are naked before the Word of God at work inside us. Don’t let that terrify you, as invasive as that sounds. God has always been at it within you, which is why you are here today. It can be a comfort, to know that nothing is hidden from God. In fact, God understands our motivations and habits better than we do. “Whither shall I go from your presence?” cried the Psalmist. “If I make my bed in Sheol, you are there. If I ascend to the highest heights, you are there also…” We cannot escape God, nor should we want to either.

Hebrews tells us why. We have special connections.

 Hebrews says we have a Great High Priest in Jesus Christ, who can sympathize with us in our every weakness. This same living word that can divide flesh from bone, and spirit from soul, “has also been tested in every respect as we are…”  It then tells us, “Let us then approach the throne of grace with boldness, to receive mercy and grace…” It doesn’t command us, nor say “we sure hope that you’ll approach the throne of grace now…” It is in the vocative tense, “Let us…” It means Jesus is calling to us that we will receive grace and mercy. It calls us, beckons us, to a new way of life in God’s grace and mercy. Every time we return, it is our act of faith, placing our trust in the One who can see us through and through and – in spite of it all - desires to grant us mercy.

 Nothing is impossible for God and God’s Word is inescapable. Nothing is hidden from God’s penetrating eye. God’s living and active Word never stops working on us, long after we became believers. But thanks to Jesus, our special connection to God, who knows us through and through and leads us to fellowship with God. We are in His skilled and gracious hands, from which we cannot escape. And you know what? I don’t want to. Amen.

**Announcements:**

**Sunday, October 21st** is the 3rd Sunday of the month and you know what that means: Fellowship Dinner Sunday! What a great time to invite a friend to share a meal and meet your church family.

**Early Evening of Saturday, October 27th** will be the day of our Halloween Party, hosted by Kenna McKenzie. Start thinking of a costume, and please stay tuned for more details.