**First Presbyterian Church, Tucumcari**

*The Church With the Holy Spirit Window*

**September 19, 2021 25th Sunday in Ordinary Time**

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

**RH 473 Blest Be the Tie that Binds**

**RH 307 O Jesus, I Have Promised**

**BH 322 Spirit of the Living God (Prayer for Illumination)**

**BH 332 Live Into Hope**

**Call to Worship**

Our world offers many wide avenues  
and beautiful boulevards to walk;  
**Our God invites us to walk the road**  
**of service and sacrifice.**  
Our society suggests we put down our roots  
in the shallow soil of pleasure and greed.  
**Our God seeks to plant us on the banks of hope,**  
**watered by the rivers of joy and grace.**  
Our culture promotes achievement, success,  
climbing to the top, ringing the bell.  
**Our God tells us if we want to be first**  
**we need to go to the end of the line.**

**Opening Prayer**

**Help us, Lord, to turn toward your way,  
to fill our minds with your thoughts,  
to fill our hearts with your love,  
to fill our footsteps with your will.  
Guide us as we seek your vision of success,  
though it will mean letting go of our own.  
We pray in the name of the One who turned success upside down.  
Amen.**

**Call to Confession**

Friends, let us confess the ways that we have failed to live up to God’s bountiful invitation.

**Confession  
God, we are prone to think too highly of ourselves. We forget that it is you who are good, you who are the greatest. We forget that you call us to do your will, not the other way around. When we have fallen into arrogance, forgive us. When we have allowed our good intentions to stand in the way of your grace, forgive us. When we have directed attention away from you, forgive us. Empty us of all things that do not give glory to you, so we are ready to be filled with your love.**

***~silence~***

We pray in the name of the One who emptied himself in order to live your will.**Amen.**

**Assurance of Pardon**Hear and live this good news: Love could not be contained in the tomb and will not be constrained by our understanding! Christ is risen, bringing forgiveness and hope to all people. **Alleluia! Amen!**

Friends, Believe the good news of the Gospel.

**In Jesus Christ we are forgiven.**

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.**

**Psalm 1**

Happy are those

who do not follow the advice of the wicked,

or take the path that sinners tread,

or sit in the seat of scoffers;

but their delight is in the law of the LORD,

and on his law they meditate day and night.

**They are like trees**

**planted by streams of water,**

**which yield their fruit in its season,**

**and their leaves do not wither.**

In all that they do, they prosper.

**The wicked are not so,**

**but are like chaff that the wind drives away.**

Therefore the wicked will not stand in the judgment,

nor sinners in the congregation of the righteous;

**for the LORD watches over the way of the righteous,**

**but the way of the wicked will perish.**

**Prayers of the People (responsive:** God of Wisdom, **draw near to us)**

Let us pray to God saying:  
God of Wisdom, **draw near to us**

Ever-present God,  
we look around the world and we see places where people cry out to you:  
in places torn by the ravages of war,  
in countries demolished by natural disasters,  
in areas where there are no jobs,  
in families across our nation who have been devastated by opioid addiction.  
Help us bear your light into the places in the world that need illumination and healing.  
God of Wisdom, **draw near to us.**

Gracious God,  
give us a gentleness born of wisdom  
that we might go out into the world and serve as your ambassadors.  
In order to do that, bless us with the wisdom needed to do so –  
a wisdom that is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, willing to yield,  
full of mercy and good fruits, without a trace of partiality or hypocrisy.  
God of Wisdom, **draw near to us.**

God of all mercy and grace,  
give us the courage to seek you out,  
to search our hearts for your truth,  
and to be guided by the stories of scripture.  
Since our hearts do not rest until they rest in you,  
lead us to the pastures of your protection,  
that we might be faithful members of your flock.  
God of Wisdom, **draw near to us.**

Healing God,  
we pray for those among us this day who need your love:  
for those who struggle with depression’s grip,  
for those who journey with physical disabilities,  
for those who are lonely,  
for those who are hopeless,  
for those who are addicted,  
for those who are angry and bitter,  
for those who are broken and battered,  
and for those we lift up to you in silence this day…  
God of Wisdom, **draw near to us.**

Giver of Hope and Truth,  
hear us today as we pray the prayer you taught us to pray, saying: **Our Father…**

**Offering**

**Prayer for Illumination BH 322 Spirit of the Living God**

**Time out for Teaching: Elements of Christian Worship – The Word**

My “job title” is officially “Minister of Word and Sacrament.” Sometimes it’s called “Teaching Elder.” Word and Sacrament are intertwined in fact. We don’t offer a sacrament without the chance at hearing the Word of God. In fact, we always have the Word of God read and preached before celebrating the sacraments of either Baptism or Communion. It is also so important that we have the Word read during every worship service, some way, some how, even if we do not have the Sacraments to celebrate.

How have we heard the Word of God read? Well, we have all just heard it read from the Bible in the pulpit. How else has it been shared with us during a church service?

(the responsive Psalm reading, it is quoted in our prayers and other liturgy, some of our hymns, in our actions towards one another, hopefully…)

Is hearing the Word of God a passive act on our part, or do we have to work at listening to it? How do you do that?

For those of you who have read the Word of God from the pulpit, what is that like for you?

Preaching the Word of God is also another way that we try to experience the Word of God in action, as an unfolding of the Word itself. (Karl Barth)

**Proverbs 31:10-31**

10A capable wife who can find?

She is far more precious than jewels.

11The heart of her husband trusts in her,

and he will have no lack of gain.

12She does him good, and not harm,

all the days of her life.

13She seeks wool and flax,

and works with willing hands.

14She is like the ships of the merchant,

she brings her food from far away.

15She rises while it is still night

and provides food for her household

and tasks for her servant-girls.

16She considers a field and buys it;

with the fruit of her hands she plants a vineyard.

17She girds herself with strength,

and makes her arms strong.

18She perceives that her merchandise is profitable.

Her lamp does not go out at night.

19She puts her hands to the distaff,

and her hands hold the spindle.

20She opens her hand to the poor,

and reaches out her hands to the needy.

21She is not afraid for her household when it snows,

for all her household are clothed in crimson.

22She makes herself coverings;

her clothing is fine linen and purple.

23Her husband is known in the city gates,

taking his seat among the elders of the land.

24She makes linen garments and sells them;

she supplies the merchant with sashes.

25Strength and dignity are her clothing,

and she laughs at the time to come.

26She opens her mouth with wisdom,

and the teaching of kindness is on her tongue.

27She looks well to the ways of her household,

and does not eat the bread of idleness.

28Her children rise up and call her happy;

her husband too, and he praises her:

29"Many women have done excellently,

but you surpass them all."

30Charm is deceitful, and beauty is vain,

but a woman who fears the LORD is to be praised.

31Give her a share in the fruit of her hands,

and let her works praise her in the city gates.

**Second Reading James 3:13-4:3, 7-8a**

13Who is wise and understanding among you? Show by your good life that your works are done with gentleness born of wisdom. 14But if you have bitter envy and selfish ambition in your hearts, do not be boastful and false to the truth. 15Such wisdom does not come down from above, but is earthly, unspiritual, devilish. 16For where there is envy and selfish ambition, there will also be disorder and wickedness of every kind. 17But the wisdom from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, willing to yield, full of mercy and good fruits, without a trace of partiality or hypocrisy. 18And a harvest of righteousness is sown in peace for those who make peace.

4:1Those conflicts and disputes among you, where do they come from? Do they not come from your cravings that are at war within you? 2You want something and do not have it; so you commit murder. And you covet something and cannot obtain it; so you engage in disputes and conflicts. You do not have, because you do not ask. 3You ask and do not receive, because you ask wrongly, in order to spend what you get on your pleasures.

7Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. 8Draw near to God and he will draw near to you.

**Gospel Mark 9:30-37**

30They went on from there and passed through Galilee. He did not want anyone to know it; 31for he was teaching his disciples, saying to them, "The Son of Man is to be betrayed into human hands, and they will kill him, and three days after being killed, he will rise again." 32But they did not understand what he was saying and were afraid to ask him.

33Then they came to Capernaum; and when he was in the house he asked them, "What were you arguing about on the way?" 34But they were silent, for on the way they had argued with one another who was the greatest. 35He sat down, called the twelve, and said to them, "Whoever wants to be first must be last of all and servant of all." 36Then he took a little child and put it among them; and taking it in his arms, he said to them, 37"Whoever welcomes one such child in my name welcomes me, and whoever welcomes me welcomes not me but the one who sent me."

**Sermon “Upside-Down Wisdom” Rev. Amy Pospichal**

When I was in seminary I got hooked on a comedy called “Arrested Development” about a formerly wealthy family who lost everything, but they pretend to still be rich! The youngest son, Buster, who is the least socially-adjusted person of all, once attended the exclusive Milford Academy for Boys. Milford Academy’s slogan is “where children are neither seen nor heard.” Poor Buster has a heck of a time during the series, including falling in love with his mother’s neighbor named Lucille, accidentally getting his hand bitten off by a seal named Lucille (the seal was an escapee from his brother’s magic show). Even though Buster is all grown up, he still finds that if he ever feels scared, his strategy is to be neither seen nor heard!

Children had a similar status in the ancient world. They were like second class citizens, even at home.

In the first century Middle East, children were just a little bit above servant status in a household. Children were regarded as blessings, especially sons. The Old Testament has compared children to the arrows in your quiver. But children were also seen as property, and – in first century pagan homes, the pater familias (the dad) reserved the right to take the life of one of his children, or his slaves, for being disobedient. Children were not always seen as fully human, more as blank slates that would one day be written on with education and experience. The word for “small child” in the Greek – “paidion” – was also sometimes used to refer to a slave, which tells you something about how people saw children. They might make a quick appearance during the dinner party and then disappear again later.

Jesus spoke highly of children, however. While it seems that people looked down on children, Jesus does not. In other parts of the Bible, Jesus says that in order to enter the Kingdom of Heaven, one must become like a little child. Today, he speaks of children as if they should be welcomed as honored guests, these vulnerable and innocent ones. Children, who might be ignored or written off by others, are to be welcomed and treated with respect.

This is revolutionary stuff. For Jesus uses this child as an example for how we should regard ourselves and others. The child is called forth so that Jesus can settle an argument between two disciples. Often James and John are the ones who got into it, but here we don’t know which disciples are having the argument. In fact, the disciples themselves seem to be acting more like children, arguing about who is the greatest! In fact, they seemed to be a little embarrassed when Jesus asked them what they were talking about! I have wondered what kind of ego you’d have to have to tell your friends that you’re the greatest.

But then, I am guilty of the same. I would be embarrassed to argue with somebody that I am greater than she. But how often do we think of ourselves better than someone else. I often make a mistake in thinking that I deserve more than I have: That I am smarter, better qualified, when I am really just a “know-it-all.” I think that comes in part from being the first born of the first born of the first born…in my family.

But to welcome the least of these requires us to have an upside-down mindset – to become servant to all, including for little children. There is little room for pride in God’s Kingdom. Only gracious service to all. It’s totally upside down. The disciples had hitched their wagon to a star, so they thought, but Jesus’ teachings are not about climbing that ladder. They are about humility, caring even for the littlest of things, creatures that have been dismissed by the rest of the world.

Today we have idealize childhood in a different way. We see them as truly special. Science is making it possible to have a designer child. Medicine has allowed us to choose when to have children and when not. Children are probably more protected today than ever in the history of the world, at least in First World countries. We forget that children were not always seen as we see them. But maybe this is why the Greek word (paidion) for child can be a bit vague. For everyone is a child in God’s eyes. And there are so many we look down on instead of welcome. Sometimes we treat the elderly as if they are children. We may diminish the humanity of a mentally ill person. Some of us see the poor or undereducated as if they should be treated as children, rather than welcomed as full human beings. Jesus says, "Whoever wants to be first must be last of all and servant of all."  Servant to ALL. Including children. Including the poor. And servants to even the rich and powerful.

The children of God come to us in all shapes and sizes, ages, health conditions, and needs. Sometimes the best gift we can give is the gift of welcome to someone who isn’t used to it. And when we do that, we are also welcoming God. It’s upside-down wisdom. The only kind of logic that can save the world. Thanks be to God for that gift. It’s meant to share. Amen.

**\*Benediction**

**Prayer Requests:**

Alarcon Family at loss of their mother

Amy (Glenna Gray’s daughter) chronic medical issues  
Betty (Alzheimer’s) and Dolores (paralyzed) – Glenda’s sisters  
Boy from Atlanta, and his mother – 3 more weeks of medical treatment in Arizona

Dorothy Randals – at Autumn Blessings, for strength and comfort  
Elmer Schuster - leg pain, final dental surgery  
Fay Birch – stage 4 cancer, grief at loss of husband, Larry  
Glenda Coles – torn right rotator cuff and bicep, getting an MRI on 9/7  
Glenna Gray's husband, now home from hospital   
Gloria Martinez (Teresa Gallegos’ sister) – needing leg surgery

Hannah Mericle - stroke

Jenna Morris – injured knee, doctor's visit end of the month  
Dr. Jean Corey – seeking employees  
Lissa – Glenda’s granddaughter (high risk pregnancy)  
Lucy Jasper  – Alzheimers/Dementia  
Lynn Hawkins – still seeking a home closer to her doctor  
Odelia Moya - hospitalized with COVID, not doing well  
Pat Sieglen – health and strength; please pray she can go home  
Paul Estrada - amputation of lower leg, undergoing therapy  
People seeking jobs, and people seeking employees  
Ruth Johnson – for general health  
Sarah Hittson's daughter Marie - surgery  
Schools, students, teachers and families  
Sharon and Wayne Huffman – general health  
Shay – Julie Sursa’s daughter  
Susie – still seeking a car, planning for EMS school  
Tammy Lucero –treatment for cancer  
Travelers  
All those suffering from COVID19

**Announcements:**

**October Bible Study:** Rev. Amy is looking at starting up a brief, Fall Bible Study. Try to make time for an evening, weekly study of 1 Corinthians. This wonderful, 16 chapter letter discusses life together as a Christian community and how we can live our lives in light of the grace of Jesus Christ. Stay tuned for more details.

**No October Rummage Sale:** This fall, the Presbyterian Women will not be having our usual Fall Rummage Sale. However, we plan to have a sale and could use your help. We will be selling items through Facebook and eBay. Please let Marjorie McKenzie know if you are able to help us make it a success!