**First Presbyterian Church, Tucumcari**

*The Church With the Holy Spirit Window*

**September 26, 2021 26th Sunday in Ordinary Time**

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

**RH 464 Morning Has Broken**

**Green Book 14 It Only Takes a Spark**

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

**Green Book 20 Just A Closer with Thee**

**Call to Worship \* (please see announcements)**

Are any among you suffering?

**We will pray with you.**

Are any cheerful?

**We will sing songs of praise with you.**

Are any among you sick?

**We will be the church for you.**

**We will pray with you.**

**We will anoint you with oil.**

**We will bless you with all the goodness of God.**

Do you feel wandering and lost?

**We will be salt for you.**

**We will bring you God’s peace.**

**Opening Prayer**

Divine Spirit,  
surround us with your wisdom   
that we might dance in your love  
and be messengers of your truth in this world. **Amen**.

**Call to Confession**

God saves us despite us being unworthy of that salvation.  
In response to that grace, let us confess the ways we have fallen short.

**Confession (based on Psalm 124)**Lord, we confess that we have put stumbling blocks in front of others.

**We confuse people about what it means to be your disciple when we say that we are Christians but then we treat others poorly, use our words as weapons, and deny love to others who are different from us.** … silence …

Lord, we confess that our hands have caused us to stumble.

**We have clenched our fists in anger, closed our hands in greed, and shoved our hands into our pockets instead of reaching out to others.** … silence …

Lord, we confess that our feet have caused us to stumble.

**We have walked away from those who are in need, stood still when we should have acted, and dug our heels into the ground out of stubbornness and spite.** … silence …

Lord, we confess that our eyes have caused us to stumble.

**We have been too focused on ourselves, pretended not to see those around us who are hurting, and overlooked opportunities to serve you.** … silence …

Gracious God, please walk beside us, guide us, catch us when we stumble.  Strengthen us by your Spirit that we may live lives that are true reflections of your love, grace, and mercy.  In Christ’s name we pray.  Amen.

**Assurance of Pardon**Friends, our help is in the name of the Lord  
who has heard our plea and answered our confession with absolution.  
**In Christ’s name, our sins are forgiven! Alleluia! Amen.**

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 124:1-8**

If it had not been the LORD who was on our side

— let Israel now say —

**if it had not been the LORD who was on our side,**

**when our enemies attacked us,**

**then they would have swallowed us up alive,**

**when their anger was kindled against us;**

then the flood would have swept us away,

the torrent would have gone over us;

**then over us would have gone**

**the raging waters.**

Blessed be the LORD,

who has not given us

as prey to their teeth.

**We have escaped like a bird**

**from the snare of the fowlers;**

the snare is broken,

and we have escaped.

**Our help is in the name of the LORD,**

**who made heaven and earth.**

**Prayers of the People**

O Lord our help,  
you stand on the side of the oppressed  
and give your goodness to all in need.  
We pray for all who are in danger today from enemies –  
individual people, groups, countries, and social structures.  
For those who are overwhelmed by broken relationships,  
mistrust, anger, abuse, or trauma,  
we pray for your protection and wholeness.  
For those in danger of being swept away  
by floods of illness, hunger, homelessness, or grief,  
we pray for escape and healing.  
Blessed are you, O Lord, who protects and saves your people.  
Our help is in your name,  
maker and savior of heaven and earth.  
We pray through Jesus Christ, who taught us to pray, saying:

*The Lord’s Prayer*

**Offering**

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

**Time out for Teaching: Elements of Christian Worship – The 5 Senses**

“O Taste and See that the Lord is Good!” are the words of the Psalms. We love to say those words around the time of a good dinner, or better yet, during the sacrament of Holy Communion, AKA “The Lord’s Supper,” AKA “Eucharist.” All of these names are appropriate to describe that holy meal hosted by our Lord.

Taste and See…represents 2 of our 5 senses. The ability to savor the flavor of things, but all the other things that are involved in taste too: the sensation of soft warm bread on our tongues, chewed with appreciation by our molars, the activation of our taste buds as we throw back that tiny cup of sweet grape juice. Most of us chew in the backs of our mouths. And to See: an ability to take in shapes, colors, movement, as we gaze upon the beautiful loaf of bread on the table, see the juice as I pour it from the small, cut-glass pitcher into the golden goblet. I like to leave a little juice in the pitcher so that we can all appreciate its rich, deep purple color. Having a little bit left in the pitcher and the big loaf of bread broken in two is also meant to convey a sense of God’s abundance.

What are the other senses that you remember hearing about in school, and how do they help us with worship? Let’s brainstorm…

Hearing - what do you hear in church that conveys the gospel to you? (music-making, talking about God, greeting each other, laughter, crying, the sound of sirens down the street, creaking ceiling boards, wind, silence…)

Smelling – the smell of candles burning, the smell of decorations (pine cones, greenery, flowers…), the smell of an old building, warm bread, certain perfumes (maybe)…

Feeling – hugs, handshakes, fist bumps, the cushions of the pews, the wood grain pattern of our pulpit, the feel of the cushy carpet beneath our feet… and other furnishings

Some of you are acquainted with the word “mindfulness,” which is a term that has come over from Eastern Religions, but not a new concept to Christians. Sometimes using a different word for something we’re familiar with can help refresh our understanding of it, however. Mindfulness is a kind of meditative approach to the mundane details of our lives. It is about paying careful attention to details that help us enhance our experience of something. Mindful eating for instance is to consider approaching your food by noticing the smell, the color, anticipating what it will be like to eat it, and enjoying using all 5 senses. It can help us enjoy and appreciate what we are doing so much more.

Taste and see, hear, feel and smell your worship hour here in God’s house. We often do it unconsciously, but mindfully, we could enhance our worship experience and it becomes a more active, not passive experience.

**Esther 7:1-6, 9-10, 9:20-22**

1So the king and Haman went in to feast with Queen Esther. 2On the second day, as they were drinking wine, the king again said to Esther, "What is your petition, Queen Esther? It shall be granted you. And what is your request? Even to the half of my kingdom, it shall be fulfilled." 3Then Queen Esther answered, "If I have won your favor, O king, and if it pleases the king, let my life be given me — that is my petition — and the lives of my people — that is my request. 4For we have been sold, I and my people, to be destroyed, to be killed, and to be annihilated. If we had been sold merely as slaves, men and women, I would have held my peace; but no enemy can compensate for this damage to the king." 5Then King Ahasuerus said to Queen Esther, "Who is he, and where is he, who has presumed to do this?" 6Esther said, "A foe and enemy, this wicked Haman!" Then Haman was terrified before the king and the queen.

9Then Harbona, one of the eunuchs in attendance on the king, said, "Look, the very gallows that Haman has prepared for Mordecai, whose word saved the king, stands at Haman's house, fifty cubits high." And the king said, "Hang him on that." 10So they hanged Haman on the gallows that he had prepared for Mordecai. Then the anger of the king abated.

9:20Mordecai recorded these things, and sent letters to all the Jews who were in all the provinces of King Ahasuerus, both near and far, 21enjoining them that they should keep the fourteenth day of the month Adar and also the fifteenth day of the same month, year by year, 22as the days on which the Jews gained relief from their enemies, and as the month that had been turned for them from sorrow into gladness and from mourning into a holiday; that they should make them days of feasting and gladness, days for sending gifts of food to one another and presents to the poor.

**James 5:13-20**

13Are any among you suffering? They should pray. Are any cheerful? They should sing songs of praise. 14Are any among you sick? They should call for the elders of the church and have them pray over them, anointing them with oil in the name of the Lord. 15The prayer of faith will save the sick, and the Lord will raise them up; and anyone who has committed sins will be forgiven. 16Therefore confess your sins to one another, and pray for one another, so that you may be healed. The prayer of the righteous is powerful and effective. 17Elijah was a human being like us, and he prayed fervently that it might not rain, and for three years and six months it did not rain on the earth. 18Then he prayed again, and the heaven gave rain and the earth yielded its harvest.

19My brothers and sisters, if anyone among you wanders from the truth and is brought back by another, 20you should know that whoever brings back a sinner from wandering will save the sinner's soul from death and will cover a multitude of sins.

**Gospel Mark 9:38-50**

38John said to him, "Teacher, we saw someone casting out demons in your name, and we tried to stop him, because he was not following us." 39But Jesus said, "Do not stop him; for no one who does a deed of power in my name will be able soon afterward to speak evil of me. 40Whoever is not against us is for us. 41For truly I tell you, whoever gives you a cup of water to drink because you bear the name of Christ will by no means lose the reward.

42"If any of you put a stumbling block before one of these little ones who believe in me, it would be better for you if a great millstone were hung around your neck and you were thrown into the sea. 43If your hand causes you to stumble, cut it off; it is better for you to enter life maimed than to have two hands and to go to hell, to the unquenchable fire. 45And if your foot causes you to stumble, cut it off; it is better for you to enter life lame than to have two feet and to be thrown into hell. 47And if your eye causes you to stumble, tear it out; it is better for you to enter the kingdom of God with one eye than to have two eyes and to be thrown into hell, 48where their worm never dies, and the fire is never quenched.

49"For everyone will be salted with fire. 50Salt is good; but if salt has lost its saltiness, how can you season it? Have salt in yourselves, and be at peace with one another."

**Sermon “No Flavor, No Favor” Rev. Amy Pospichal**

Everyone loves a good story. The 1970s musical “Godspell” features thrilling rock and roll and soulful tunes to the story of Jesus Christ, based on Matthew and the Psalms. The word, “godspell” is the Anglo-Saxon word for “good story,” which is indeed what the Gospel is – the Good News – the Euangelion! A good story that we should all hear and live. Just before the intermission of “Godspell,” “Light of the World,” which is based on Jesus’ Sermon on the Mount. It goes like this: “You are the light of the world. You are the light of the world, but if that light’s under a bushel, Brr! It’s lost something kind of crucial. You’ve got to live right to be the light of the world.” And then they sing about salt. “You are the salt of the earth. You are the salt of the earth. But if that salt has lost its flavor, it ain’t got much in its favor. You can’t have that fault and be the salt of the earth.” This song reminds us that the way we live – the choices we make – either proclaim the gospel, or they don’t.

Mark’s reading for this morning uses some of the same sources as Matthew used for his Sermon on the Mount. But, Mark tells it **his** way! Mark has taken these familiar sayings and strung them together in a way different from what we are used to hearing. So, let’s map it out right now. If you would like to pull out your pew Bibles to page \_\_\_ and follow along with me for a moment, please do so…

First, Jesus receives word from His disciple, John, that they witnessed someone performing acts of mercy in Jesus’ name. John says this as if that’s a bad thing, because he felt they should not use the name of Jesus if they aren’t one of his special Twelve Disciples. Jesus disagrees with John, however. Because, if you are doing good deeds in His name, He says, you won’t regret it, neither will be that person whom you’re helping! It will be impossible after that healing, to say anything bad about Jesus.

He says that anytime we do deeds of power and grace in His name, we won’t regret it! But then Jesus takes it a step further. He declares what a terrible thing it would be to cause one of “these little ones” to stumble. What “little ones? you might ask.” It’s pretty unclear, but those “little ones” could be those John was complaining about in the earlier paragraph. Those “little ones” were not Jesus’ disciples, but apparently had a growing faith in Jesus’ name. To discourage these new believers could cause them to stumble.

This leads Jesus to speak about stumbling. Our actions could lead someone else to “stumble,” when it comes to their faith. Not everyone’s faith is ironclad at all times. I would venture to say that we all have times when our faith feels as delicate as an eggshell. So, we are ALL prone to stumbling from time to time, and we are all prone to affecting the faith of another by our own actions. How very important it is that we give consideration for the ways we conduct ourselves, if we recognize that we have a lot more power than we realize.

Then, Jesus takes it another step further… how important it is that we not cause anyone to stumble, ourselves included. So important, Jesus says, that if there is anyone causing you to stumble in sin, you’d better cut off! It sounds gory, but this is a traditional rabbinic style of argument, by using very extreme examples that sound almost ludicrous - to drive home the point of just how important this is.

Jesus then ends with a statement about being salted with fire. We should have salt in ourselves and be at peace. The fire statement has stumped scholars. How would fire make us salty? It might be the fire of sacrifice or fire of the Holy Spirit. No matter the case, what matters more is that we be salty.

You are the salt of the earth. If we read this little piece from Mark, we might surmise that to be salty would mean to give consideration to others, especially the “little ones” of this world. James’ letter today offers ideas on how to be salty: anoint the sick, pray over them, visit them. Consider their needs. Folks may be struggling in faith when alone with illness or other difficulty.

No one is perfect. I suppose this is also why being salty means to also be able to say we’re sorry or “I forgive you.” To be salty means to have the flavor of Christ around us. Taste and see that the Lord is Good. If we don’t have salt, then our lives of faith don’t mean much to anyone else. If that salt has lost its flavor, it ain’t got much in its favor. You can’t have that fault and be the salt of the earth. So, be salted with the good story of Jesus Christ.

After all, remember what salt does, when it is used properly…

There are people who like to salt their fresh fruit. They do it because it brings out the flavor of the fruit more profoundly. Oranges taste “orangier” and tomatoes “tomatoeier.” When I bake brownies, salt enhances the flavor of the chocolate. I believe that our faith, listening to His Words, and when we choose to follow Him, makes us all better people, and the flavor of our lives more profound. We become more of who God wants us to be: concerned for our neighbors, including the most vulnerable people in the world. What we do and say affects the faith of others and it can give us a little inner glow. That’s gospel. Amen

**\*Benediction**

**Prayer Requests:**

Amy (Glenna Gray’s daughter) chronic medical issues  
Betty (Alzheimer’s) and Dolores (paralyzed) – Glenda’s sisters  
Boy from Atlanta, and his mother – 2 more weeks of medical treatment in Arizona

Family of Clay Schuster, who are recovering from COVID

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 – shoulder surgery (likely to be on 10/8)  
Gloria Martinez (Teresa Gallegos’ sister) – needing leg surgery

Hannah Mericle - stroke

Jenna Morris – injured knee, doctor's visit end of the month  
Lavone Bond – for good health!

Lissa – Glenda’s granddaughter (high risk pregnancy)  
Lucy Jasper  – Dementia  
Lynn Hawkins – still seeking a home closer to her doctor

Family of Marlon Terry  
The Nava Family – has COVID

Odelia Moya - hospitalized with COVID, not doing well  
Pat Sieglen – health and strength; please pray she can go home  
People seeking jobs, and people seeking employees

Family of Rudy Pacheco  
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 – 1 round of chemo, thanksgiving for successful surgery  
Travelers  
All those suffering from COVID19

**Announcements:**

**About the Call to Worship:** We call ourselves together in worship through the words of James 5:13-20. If your answer to any of these questions is “yes,” you are invited to rise in body and spirit to hear the church respond to your needs. The Call to Worship was written by Rev. Elsa Peters of The United Churches of Olympia, WA.

**October Bible Study:** See if you can make time for a short-term Fall Bible 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. We will start on Wednesday, October 6 at 6:00PM. If you wish to participate online, I can set it up to work through either Skype or Google Hangout, since Zoom limits the amount of time we can use at no cost.

https://www.usccb.org/prayer-and-worship/prayers-and-devotions/prayers/prophets-of-a-future-not-our-own