**First Presbyterian Church, Tucumcari**

*The Church With the Holy Spirit Window*

**Sunday, September 27, 2020 26th Sunday in Ordinary Time**

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

**Hymns:**

**RH 272 Just as I Am, Without One Plea**

**RH 302 Have Thine Own Way, Lord!**

**RH 390 Open My Eyes, that I May See**

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

**Prayer of the Day**

Show us your ways, O Lord! Lead us in your truth, and teach us.   
Open our eyes, minds, and hearts to know your will and to follow it.  
Reveal your vision for us, and keep us focused and faithful to what you would have us do.  
Bring us together to worship and work for your purpose, and move us forward into your future. Amen.

**Call to Confession**

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

**Assurance of Forgiveness**

Hear this good news: God is at work in you. Live this truth: God’s grace is more than enough for whatever you carry. Know that you are forgiven, loved, and free.

**We will rejoice and be glad! Amen.**

The peace of the Lord be with you.

**And also with you.**

**Psalm 78:1-4, 12-16 (please see bulletin)**

**Prayers of the People**

Hear, O Lord, the prayers of your people;  
incline your ears to the words of our mouth.  
We call out to you on account of your faithfulness,  
for you are the Ancient of Days, and your word never fails.  
Keep faith with those in need today,  
as you have forever before,  
so we might sing your praises for generations to come.  
Be faithful to the young, who are just learning the ways of the world.  
Be faithful to those who are older,  
and especially to those who struggle with disease of body or mind.  
Be faithful to those who are poor, injured, grieving, or under threat;  
that your wholeness, your peace, and your joy may be restored.  
We put our trust in you,  
remembering your gracious works  
made real for us in Jesus Christ, in whom we pray:

The Lord’s Prayer

**Presentation of Offering and Offertory**

**Time out for Teaching: “Old Wisdom”**

Today we will be hearing another passage from Exodus, about the Israelites in the wilderness. We will hear today of one of those wilderness miracles to settle down the people, for they have been quarreling with Moses, wanting water. Moses wants them to stop, but they have a pretty good point. They are afraid they will die of thirst. But Moses says “Why do you test the Lord?”

Moses talks to the Lord about it, because he is afraid that the people are going to stone him. The Lord hears his cry. The Lord tells him to go ahead with some of the elders of Israel, strike a rock with his staff and water will gush forth.

There are some good lessons we can gain from this story. Let me ask you this:

What does this say about the people of God?

What is the role of the elders in this story?

What does this, finally, say about God?

**Prayer for Illumination**

**Exodus 17:1-7**

1From the wilderness of Sin the whole congregation of the Israelites journeyed by stages, as the LORD commanded. They camped at Rephidim, but there was no water for the people to drink. 2The people quarreled with Moses, and said, “Give us water to drink.” Moses said to them, “Why do you quarrel with me? Why do you test the LORD?” 3But the people thirsted there for water; and the people complained against Moses and said, “Why did you bring us out of Egypt, to kill us and our children and livestock with thirst?” 4So Moses cried out to the LORD, “What shall I do with this people? They are almost ready to stone me.” 5The LORD said to Moses, “Go on ahead of the people, and take some of the elders of Israel with you; take in your hand the staff with which you struck the Nile, and go. 6I will be standing there in front of you on the rock at Horeb. Strike the rock, and water will come out of it, so that the people may drink.” Moses did so, in the sight of the elders of Israel. 7He called the place Massah and Meribah, because the Israelites quarreled and tested the LORD, saying, “Is the LORD among us or not?”

**Philippians 2:1-13**

1If then there is any encouragement in Christ, any consolation from love, any sharing in the Spirit, any compassion and sympathy, 2make my joy complete: be of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord and of one mind. 3Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility regard others as better than yourselves. 4Let each of you look not to your own interests, but to the interests of others. 5Let the same mind be in you that was in Christ Jesus,  
6   who, though he was in the form of God,  
          did not regard equality with God  
          as something to be exploited,  
7   but emptied himself,  
          taking the form of a slave,  
          being born in human likeness.  
     And being found in human form,  
8        he humbled himself  
          and became obedient to the point of death —  
          even death on a cross.

9   Therefore God also highly exalted him  
          and gave him the name  
          that is above every name,  
10  so that at the name of Jesus  
          every knee should bend,  
          in heaven and on earth and under the earth,  
11  and every tongue should confess  
          that Jesus Christ is Lord,  
          to the glory of God the Father.

12Therefore, my beloved, just as you have always obeyed me, not only in my presence, but much more now in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling; 13for it is God who is at work in you, enabling you both to will and to work for his good pleasure.

**Gospel Matthew 21:23-32**

23When he entered the temple, the chief priests and the elders of the people came to him as he was teaching, and said, “By what authority are you doing these things, and who gave you this authority?” 24Jesus said to them, “I will also ask you one question; if you tell me the answer, then I will also tell you by what authority I do these things. 25Did the baptism of John come from heaven, or was it of human origin?” And they argued with one another, “If we say, ‘From heaven,’ he will say to us, ‘Why then did you not believe him?’ 26But if we say, ‘Of human origin,’ we are afraid of the crowd; for all regard John as a prophet.” 27So they answered Jesus, “We do not know.” And he said to them, “Neither will I tell you by what authority I am doing these things.

28“What do you think? A man had two sons; he went to the first and said, ‘Son, go and work in the vineyard today.’ 29He answered, ‘I will not’; but later he changed his mind and went. 30The father went to the second and said the same; and he answered, ‘I go, sir’; but he did not go. 31Which of the two did the will of his father?” They said, “The first.” Jesus said to them, “Truly I tell you, the tax collectors and the prostitutes are going into the kingdom of God ahead of you. 32For John came to you in the way of righteousness and you did not believe him, but the tax collectors and the prostitutes believed him; and even after you saw it, you did not change your minds and believe him.”

**Sermon: “Because We Want To” Rev. Amy Pospichal**

A long time ago, in a galaxy far, far away, called “Dallas,” I had a boyfriend who enjoyed riding BMW motorcycles. One day, he asked me, “Have you ever ridden on the back of a motorcycle?” I said, “No, I haven’t.” “Would you like to?” he asked. I thought for a moment and said, “I don’t know.” Eventually he persuaded me to at least try it. But before our first ride, he said, “When we go around a curve or make a turn, lean into the direction of the curve.” It is a natural reaction for us to want to lean out because our brains want to correct the feeling of being tilted. That could cause a serious accident. Instead, especially when you are the passenger and your life is in the hands of the driver, you have to do your part, and lean into the turns.

Jesus uses a parable of two sons to illustrate the directions we lean when we are to follow the one in the driver’s seat. The father tells his two sons to go out and work the fields. One son refuses. The other says, “Yes, I will go.” However, each does the opposite of what he says, as the day wears on. The one who initially refused to go, ends up going to work as his father commanded. He doesn’t at first, but in the end chooses to lean into the commands of his father and do his father’s will. He just took his time to get around to it. The other son, who agreed to go and do his father’s will, chose not to do it.

I imagine that the second son, who said he’d go but never did, would have broken his father’s heart. When we are taught to trust our God and do His will, and we have agreed to do it, it does seem a bit two-faced of us to not go out and do it after all. Our Lord God, who we know as “Father” or “Mother,” has reasons for telling us what to do.

To be fair, the parable illustrates the leanings of two different sons. We can see ourselves in both of them, for none of us are perfectly obedient to our God, as much as we might try. In some situations, we are more like the first son and in other situations, we may be more like the second son, who said Yes but never did go. Most of us are less likely to do the commands that frighten us or make us uncomfortable. However, sometimes it is the very thing God wants us to do most.

To lean into the will of God is often the harder choice, calling for us to have faith in Him and where he is leading us. After all, God is definitely in the driver’s seat. But God tells us; God does not force us to follow through. God leads us to what God wants and then gives us room to do it on our own account. And in that space of time, we have the blessed moment in time to make our choices. And often, it will be the harder choice that is the better one.

Now that we’ve dwelled a little on what’s happening in the parable, let’s remember who is listening to this story. It comes about because he is being questioned by the chief priests, in front of a bunch of others following Jesus. Jesus has arrived there to fulfill the prophecy that he will be interrogated, found guilty, crucified to death, buried and then rise again. He knows that he is facing the people who will eventually hand him over to death. They are challenging Jesus’ authority and whether it comes from God. In classic Jesus style, he turns the tables on them, by asking them a question that would get them to think about John the Baptist’s baptism of repentance. Sinners from all around the region, remember, came to John, confessing their sins and receiving this baptism. People received this forgiveness, for they had no salvation from God according to the temple authorities, but here, they could lean on God’s grace, which came to them just in time. That’s the thing about God’s forgiveness. We can do very little to get it achieve it on our own, except by making the choice to lean in the direction of God’s grace, trusting that it is a free gift. That’s the thing about forgiveness and the grace that comes with it is you can do little but simply lean on it.

So, God gives us the space to answer His call. God does not force us to come to Him. God calls us, knowing that we might say No, then waits for us to change our minds to a Yes. So, lean into it. Trust Him, for He is the driver. We all would like to be able to do it, to trust our Lord’s grace and call. The good news about it is, God is patient and is waiting for your mind. This is not just a story for us, the insiders of a church. It is a story for us to share with anyone else who thinks God has written them off, anyone who has felt like and outsider for so long, like the tax collectors and prostitutes baptized by John the Baptist.

So, any time you too have felt lost, or wonder whether you are beyond the reach of God’s love, remember this. God isn’t forcing you. And all you have to do is change your No to a Yes. Lean on him. Amen.

**THE LIFE OF THE CHURCH**

**Holy Communion is Next Sunday!** Being World Communion Sunday, you are encouraged to bring textiles representing your nationality or cultures you have visited. If you want to dress up in a way depicting the count

**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.

**Rummage Sale Donations:**  If you desperately need to make a donation to the church for the next Rummage Sale, please ask Marge McKenzie if we have room in our storage space off-site.

**Alternatives to Church Events** – Anyone who would like to meet for a meal outside at a local restaurant, or gather at someone’s home for fellowship, or go for a walk together, please call the pastor at 575-708-0860. Other suggestions for how we can still fellowship with each other, are welcome.