

Barre Congregational Church

November 6, 2022: A Pastoral Message by Pastor Margaret Keyser

~ **Twenty Second Sunday after Pentecost, and Communion** ~

“Our God is the God of the Living”

Our services can be found on our website at www.barrechurch.com

Scripture Reading: Luke 20 v 27-38

I. Introduction:

There is so much to enjoy about this life we are living. God really gave us a beautiful place to take care of, to cultivate, beautify and nurture. We just need to turn to our neighbors and see how they either take care of their gardens, grow veggies or beautiful flowers, and how we share from the things we grow with one another. We have each other and there is much to share with one another about the things we love doing, the gifts and talents we all have. Our stories, our life experiences can be an inspiration for others as they too navigate their own lives on this earth. Even when we or our loved ones face illnesses or our final moments on this earth, we may be sad about it, but if we look towards God, we know that none of this is the end, but that God is the God of the living, and that God is life, and gives life.

II. Life transformed through the resurrection

In our passage the Sadducees who rejected the resurrection, are questioning Jesus about it, using marriage as an example of how things might be during the resurrection. Who among the seven earthly husbands who have died will be the husband of the wife at the resurrection? How would that be? Sounds a little complicated, right? There could be some conflict with all these husbands around, especially from the side of the first husband, even though it was the practice during Old Testament times for the brother to marry the wife of the dead husband, to keep his honor and his name. The law also ensured that the widowed and childless wife would not be left to fend for herself with no secure place for her in the family or society. There will not be marriage in the way you know marriage on earth, Jesus says. These earthly relationships will not be extended, but rather transcended into a life

with God, like the angels. The dead will be raised into a new existence that cannot be compared to earthly experiences. In answering their question about marriage and the resurrection, which they denied, Jesus wanted them to know that this resurrection existence is not about continuing with life as is. God is not the God of the dead, but the God who raises the dead, the God of the living, meaning those on the other side who are considered worthy of taking part in the resurrection will live with God of the living.

III. The hope of the resurrection

The cycle of life as we know it, involves a time to live and a time to die. When a loved one dies, we live with the hope and faith in God that we will be together again with our loved ones. We believe that and we look forward to that day. Meanwhile the mysterious existence of those who have gone before us is something we cannot fathom with our earthly mind and eye, because they exist in a space with God, which we believe is a space of goodness and glory, through the grace of God. We do not always have the words to express how we feel about their absence, and we do not always know how to comfort others, but we all miss them here and know they exist with God, a reminder that gives us the peace we need as we continue on with our lives on this earth, until we see them again.

Jesus makes it a point to speak to the Sadducees about the reality and hope of the resurrection. The earthly life which we all get used to and for the most part hold onto, leads to death, which is being feared by many, because of its finality, the separation it causes between us and the ones we lose. Jesus emphasizes that for God death is not the final stage of this cycle. He then went on to mention Moses' experience with God in the burning bush, referring to God as the God of Abraham, and Isaac and Jacob, that as the God of the living, all of them are alive in Him. For Jesus the resurrection must be seen in the light of God not being the God of the dead, but the God of the Living.

IV. Conclusion

As we continue to live our lives on this earth, and as we experience the good and not so good, and as we share our lives with one another, may this passage give us the comfort that Jesus who was first resurrected by the powerful hand of God, gives us a powerful message of hope for life, and that we all have purpose, even though we have been touched by death,

and that in the resurrection we will be together again, and may God help us live our lives pleasing to God for when that time comes, when the new life and new existence arrive.
Amen