

Barre Congregational Church

June 6, 2021: A Pastoral Message by Pastor Margaret Keyser

~ **Third Sunday after Pentecost** ~

“Jesus and the Holy Spirit”

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

Scripture Reading: Mark 3 v 20-35

I. Introduction:

All of us can stand firm on our beliefs of who we are as women, men, parents, or those with no children, where we come from, our different cultures, our beliefs, and values. We also belong to a family, whether one's own, adopted or in many situations, in foster care, and those whom we have accepted as our own. All of us are on journeys that lead us to have opinions and convictions about things that matter to us. We have been educated in different ways, and that education has helped us along in our life, our work, and in service to others. When our identity is being challenged, or disrespected, which we see happen so often in life, it creates upset, resistance, protests, and more important, it helps us be even clearer about who we are in the face of such attitudes and actions against us. So, let us explore what this means for our passage on Jesus' interaction with the scribes of the time.

II. The Challenge to Jesus:

We find Jesus in the home of probably one of the disciples, and again surrounded by a crowd. He is engaged in His mission to bring the good news, performing miracles, and casting out demons. These are the very things He was sent to do, the things that define His identity as the Son of God, the Messiah. In this instance they have been together for quite some time, attending to the needs of the crowd, without having something to eat. One can imagine the exhaustion, hunger, but more importantly the excitement and rewarding experiences of those who had their needs met by Christ as He was speaking to them about God's love, healing their sick, and quieting their spirits from being demon-possessed. They were at peace because their Lord was with them.

Jesus' family heard about His "crazy" activities. They came from Nazareth to check on Him, and scolded Him saying, "You are out of Your mind!", and forced Him to come home, to leave this stuff He had been doing! This is a normal response, as you can imagine from a family who is concerned about their son, their brother, who is doing things he did not learn from them. To be followed by crowds, and speak in terms that sounded outlandish, (and they must have heard how He was perceived by the religious leaders of the time), must have been a huge concern for them.

Meanwhile, they were not the only ones checking in on Him. We see in our passage the teachers of the law, coming down from Jerusalem...Jesus was in Capernaum... checking on Him also, investigating Him and accusing Him of being demon-possessed, driving out demons through the spirit of Beelzebub, the prince of demons. He is getting it from both sides, from His family and the religious leaders of the time.

Jesus' response about His family is, that those who do the will of God, and those who follow Him, are His true family members, the ones who are sitting with them in the house. His biological family members, including His mother, are regarded as secondary in the context of His calling and ministry. His identity is tied up with God and the Holy Spirit, whom He is defending now with the scribes who are challenging Him about the works He is doing, as well as His earthly ministry.

III. Jesus and the Holy Spirit

In His response to the teachers of the law, Jesus is instructive, and clear about where He gets His power from. If He, as they claim He does, casts out demons through the power of Satan, Beelzebub, that means, that Satan is acting against his own, and that means they are divided, and if a house is divided against itself, then it will fall. What a clever response by Jesus. And more, no one would enter a strong man's house, overcome him, and rob him of his possessions, unless that person is stronger than the strong one. The Strong One in this case, is He, the Son of Man, who can defeat the powers of the demonic one. He is Christ, the Son of God! He then emphatically clarified for them by Whose power He is doing what He is doing, and that is the Holy Spirit. William Lane in his book on the Gospel of Mark, refers to the blasphemies of the scribes as the defiant hostility toward God, because of their denial of the power of the Spirit of God that is working through Jesus Christ. They will never accept Him as the Son of God, and in

doing so, they become blasphemous against not just Him, but against the Holy Spirit, who is highly regarded by Jesus, and Who is the Spirit of Jesus Christ. All their sins will be forgiven, but not the sin against the Holy Spirit. Jesus' point is clear. He defends His identity as the One who was sent by God, and everything He does, He does through the power of the Holy Spirit, not the prince of demons. It is about His identity as the Christ, Who is rejected by the religious leaders and those who were teachers of the law.

IV. Conclusion

We as individuals hold on to our identity as we embrace our humanity, culture, beliefs, values and more. As Christians and as a church we also have embraced the identity of the Body of Christ, led, and guided by the Holy Spirit, who was poured out onto all people. In so doing we live our lives as followers of Christ, like the disciples and the crowds. We are encouraged to live our lives through the power of the Holy Spirit, as we speak, and as we serve God and our neighbor.

May we be reminded and encouraged this morning, to make the Holy Spirit part of everything we do and say. When we pray, let us pray through the Spirit. When we speak and act on things we believe in, let us do that through the power and presence of the Holy Spirit. This is the period of Pentecost, during which we journey with the Holy Spirit, who was and is in Christ always.

Amen