

## **Barre Congregational Church**

March 14, 2021: A Pastoral Message by Pastor Margaret Keyser

~ Fourth Sunday of Lent~

*“Light has Come into the World”*

Our services can be found on our website at [www.barrechurch.com](http://www.barrechurch.com) and Facebook page.

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**Scripture Reading: John 3 v 14 - 21**

### **I. Introduction:**

Sometimes we meet someone, whom we work with, do things together with, and it is when the person leaves our space... maybe we stop doing things together, when we realize we remember specific things about that person, but that we never really got to know each other that well.

It is clear to me that Jesus was and still is a significant and historic person, and the Son of God, but during His time on earth, He may not have been known intimately by many, either because they did not take the time to get to know Him, or were too afraid of His message, and what He represented, or maybe they did not always understand His message and the way He communicated? Let's have a look this morning whether we see some of that in our scripture reading.

### **II. Earthly and heavenly things**

Our passage is preceded by Jesus' interaction with Nicodemus, member of the Jewish Ruling Council, who remarked to Jesus that He, Jesus, must be coming from God, since He was performing all these miraculous signs. Jesus does not give Him a clear answer, but rather talked to Him about the Kingdom of God, and what it takes to see the Kingdom of God. Anyone who wants to see the Kingdom of God, needs to be born again. No, not as in the physical rebirth, as Nicodemus understood Him to say, but a rebirth by the Spirit of God. He challenged Nicodemus, that as a Rabbi he does not understand what He, Jesus was talking about, because He talked about heavenly things, and that not every earthly leader understood this heavenly language. In fact, they do not even listen when He talks about earthly things. How would they understand the heavenly things? Nicodemus, a devout

Jewish leader, who stood there as a Rabbi, listening to another Rabbi, Jesus, did not need more lessons from the law, but a radical rebirth, says Leon Morris.

Jesus must have constantly felt that He only had a short time to bring the Good News to those who followed Him. He became a threat to the leaders of the time, so He performed those amazing miracles, but when it came to His teaching, He spoke in parables, or metaphors, or He answered certain questions indirectly, in ways it was hard for those who challenged Him, to understand. Those who had ears to hear would hear and understand, but those who did not would remain deaf. Every time He answered these challenging questions, however, it came with lessons about life and love and light and goodness.

### **III. A Light was sent into the world.**

So, after the conversation with Nicodemus, we see John address the issue of Jesus' identity. He wants to show that Jesus is the Son of God, sent to this world, so the world would not perish, but have eternal life. He starts by referring to Moses in the Old Testament, who, when the Israelites were bitten by serpents, was summoned by Yahweh to build a bronze serpent, lift it up for the people to look at and be healed. In the same way, the Son of Man must be lifted up, and everyone who believes in Him will have eternal life. These are such interesting and complex metaphors, but not so for the Rabbi's and Jews at the time, like Nicodemus. They understood these examples and symbols, and were confronted with their own religious beliefs, by the One who came to declare that He was the Son of God.

A light was sent into this world, to save the world from darkness. Elsewhere Jesus talks about a lamp that needs to be put on the table to bring light, and not be kept under the table. Verses 19 – 21 talks about the implication for those who, when they recognize the light, and choose to live by this Light, and the truth of the light, will inherit the Kingdom of God. Then there are those who choose not to come into the light, because they live their lives in darkness, and the closer they come into the light, the truth about their lives will be revealed. Their condemnation lies in the fact that they choose darkness over the light. Light has become available to them through the life of the Son of God, but by not choosing to live by His message of light and love and compassion, they miss out on life with God who sent this Child of Bethlehem to save the world, save them.

#### **IV. Conclusion**

The purpose of Jesus' birth and message is not to condemn, but to introduce anyone who needed to understand God's love for humanity, to the message of the Good News. His life was an example of love, compassion, and mercy, but it also became a lightning rod for those who did not uphold the values of love and compassion, who was hiding in the darkness of oppressing the poor and the outcast. Jesus reached out to the ones who felt they did not have a place in society, and those in power would not be ok with that message.

The Christ of Lent, who would go through the darkness of the cross, would still carry the light of God's message with Him, and was the Light Himself then and today. May we get to know Him better in and through the mystery of His life and death and resurrection. May His message be clear to us as we seek Him every day, and may His light bring light and blessings into our lives always, even during times of darkness. Amen