

## **Barre Congregational Church Outdoor Service**

November 1, 2020: A Pastoral Message by Pastor Margaret Keyser

~ **Twenty Second Sunday After Pentecost**~

**Communion Sunday**

***“We are Children of the Living God”***

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**Scripture Reading: 1 John 3 verses 1 – 3, and Revelations 7 verses 9-17**

### **I. Introduction:**

I do not have children of my own, but I have numerous nieces and nephews, grandnieces and nephews in South Africa. I grew up in a home with several other siblings, and I have seen how my parents worked hard to be good parents to us. I have also seen my siblings working hard to be good parents to their children. I have seen my husband’s love for his son, and how he worked hard to be a good parent. There are those of you who are parents, have or had parents, biological or other adults who are or have been in your life, so you know what I am talking about, right? Being a parent or adult in a child’s life brings with it a huge responsibility and being a child also brings with it the responsibility to honor our parents and adults in our lives. There is love and care, however imperfect that love is, because we do the best we can.

### **II. We are called Children of God**

Being called children of God here in our John passage, has such a special meaning, because it tells us that we are related to God, the One who wants to be our parent, our guide, the One who whispers in our ears when we don’t know what comes next, when we feel stressed. The One who is even more perfect than an earthly parent, who is the perfect Parent to the parents or caregivers who feel they aren’t enough, who feel they have failed their children. We all can be in relationship with God, our Heavenly Parent, who cares for the world, and made this relationship possible, and in that relationship, gives us hope for every day. Being called children of God, drives out all fear for today and tomorrow, but gives way for a trust in this God, our heavenly Parent.

There is a reason why we are called children of God. In Chapter 3 verse 1, we read how John describes the great love God has for us. Great as described here by John means incredibly and, astonishingly great! This is a love (agape) that is beyond our human understanding and

experience. This love is about giving one's life for another, which is what God did. God gave God's only Son for us, and the Son gave His life for His friends, us. This love drives us to give back, to remember and to celebrate communion as a symbol of a deep divine love for humanity. Because of that love, we as children of God, must consider living a holy, and righteous life before God.

### **III. Being called Children of God, has some responsibilities to it:**

In the same way as we expect from our children, as my parents did from us as children, to be obedient, to come home at a certain time, to be loving and respectful, and to recognize our home as the place where we learnt certain values, that's what God wants from us as God's children.

#### Abide in Him

In 1<sup>st</sup> John 2 verse 28 right before our passage, we read, "And now, dear children, continue in him, so that when he appears, we may be confident and unashamed before him at his coming". Continue in Him or abide in Him, are words that Jesus has used before in John 15, where He says abide in me as I abide in you. Jesus knew what it meant to be connected to Him, the vine, that they would bear fruit, the fruit of all the good things that should come from the child of God, and directly from God, from Christ who lived in them, in us today. To abide in Him also meant that the children of God will be confident in the way they live their lives until the time when Christ returns. They will be unashamed and stand ready to be judged and received by Christ.

#### Remain truthful to the Christ we follow:

Secondly, the child of God remains steadfast and truthful and focused on their faith in Christ. One of the gifts of Stewardship month is faith given to us as Christians. This faith in Christ sustains us through everything we go through, because we know we have the Living Hope inside of us.

It means that we learn more and more who this Christ is as we study God's word. Verse 29 says, "if you know he is righteous, you know that everyone who does what is right has been born of Him". We must be confident and unashamed. The Greek word for confident is *parresian*, which means to be outspoken and bold in our beliefs about who we are as children of God, and if we know and understand that Christ is righteous, just, and seeks what is good for humanity, then we

will know by experience who are God's children, because they will do the same. They will be righteous, seek justice and be humble as God wants God's children to be. As children of God we will experience each other not as what we claim to be, but as in our pursuit of righteousness and the values of the Kingdom of Heaven.

At the end of time, says Chapter 3 v 2, when Christ appears, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him like He is. The passage continues saying that everyone who has this hope in Him, purifies himself or herself just as He is pure. Being in Christ, therefore, means that as children of God, we have a transformation going on all the time. We are drinking from the true Vine, and our lives, our behaviors and our words are transformed to be like him, purified and holy until he comes again.

#### **IV. Conclusion: God's Children until the end of time:**

We are God's children until the end of time, as John described it in one of several of his visions in Revelations Chapter 7 where he saw multitudes of crowds from every nation standing in front of the heavenly throne, worshipping God. They have gone through the tribulations of life and are now protected by God forever. It is through Christ, the Lamb's love and sacrifice that they are being purified, as the white robes in the text indicate. They have a larger body of heavenly beings with them, worshipping God.

We today, are called to be children of God, to live through our trials and tribulations, and to stay focused on Christ, abide in Him, and give birth to the fruits of the Spirit of Christ every day, and to be confident in how we live and speak about the values of Christ, of love, and human dignity and justice and peace, all the things that God, the God of righteousness stands for, so that when we stand before the throne one day, we will not be ashamed to appear before our God.

May God bless ad help us on our journeys as children of God.

Amen