

Barre Congregational Church

March 3, 2024: A Pastoral Message by Pastor Margaret Keyser

~ **Third Sunday of Lent**~

“The Body of Christ as the Temple of God.”

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

Scripture Reading: John 2 v 13 -22

I. Introduction:

The body we possess as human beings is the body we need in this earthly existence, to do what we need to do. It is the body that others perceive and how they recognize us. It is the body we know when it is performing well, and not so well sometimes. It is also the body we have when we come here to worship God. It is through our body, mind, and soul that we are able to serve God and our community. What does this scripture about the Body of Christ then convey to us this morning?

II. The Body of Christ as the Temple of God:

To understand this passage of Jesus' reaction to the merchants in the Temple, we must understand His own history and relationship with the Temple and its practices. Jesus was like other young Jewish boys, circumcised on the eighth day, and His parents brought with them two young pigeons as a sacrifice, according to the Laws of the Old Testament. They were familiar with what was happening on the outer courts of the Temple where the sacrifices took place. In Luke 2 v 41 – 52 we read how Jesus at twelve years joined His parents for the annual Passover at the Temple, and sat among the teachers and Rabbis, learning from them, and asking questions. It states that He grew up in wisdom and stature, due to His knowledge of the Torah and experiences with those who taught in the Temple. So, He too was familiar with all the practices, and saw the Temple in Jerusalem as a Holy place, where God was. When His parents were looking for Him, because He did not return with them back to Nazareth, He asked them, “Did you not know that I had to be in My Father’s house?” They did not understand what He was saying to them then.

Jesus understood that many people from different places and cultures came to the Temple to offer their sacrifices, and could not travel with their slaughtered animals, because of the

distances they traveled, and so it was convenient for them to have the animals available right there at the Temple. They also came with their foreign currency and needed the money changers to change their own money into local currency. It is just what people did! So, why was He so upset?

The key in this passage lies in His own realization that He is now the Messiah, and the Temple was more than just the place where sacrifices were offered. He, therefore, as He drove the merchants out of the Temple court, uttered these words, "How dare you turn my Father's house into a market?" His disciples began to realize who He truly was as they remembered the prophetic words in Psalm 69 v 9, "The Zeal for your house will consume me." The Jews were upset and challenged Him, demanding a miraculous sign from Him to prove His authority for doing what He just did. Instead of giving them a sign, He answered them, "Destroy this temple, and I will raise it again in three days." Thinking He was talking about this very temple which had been built by Herod and was still under construction for forty-six years, they asked Him, how do you think you would restore it? John then revealed He was talking about His own body, the Temple of God, which would be crucified and raised again on the third day. His disciples would remember and believe these words later after His death and resurrection. They all needed to grapple with this dual message about the Messiah among them, and the importance of the Temple as the place of worship, more than just a place of sacrifice.

III. Conclusion:

While the Jews questioned Him, and His disciples did not fully understand the developments at the time, we do, and we remember Him as His Body became the fulfilment of the Temple of the Living God. In the Body of Christ who died and was risen on the third day, God would be victorious over all other gods and sacrifices and all powers that be. God through the Body of Christ is still active in our own lives to fulfil God's purpose in us as well. We are called to respond as His disciples did in their own awakening, to say, yes, Lord, we believe in You, and we are the Body of Christ, with You dwelling among us, ministering to us, healing us, and bringing us closer to You.

May God help us during this period of Lent to surrender our own bodies and minds and souls so that God's will be done through us, transforming us and using us as instruments of God's love and peace. Amen