

Barre Congregational Church

August 1, 2021: A Pastoral Message by Pastor Margaret Keyser

~ Tenth Sunday after Pentecost ~

“We must grow together in Christ.”

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

Scripture Reading: Ephesians 4 v 1-16

I. Introduction:

In any home, or workplace or institution, it is important to agree on certain values or ways of living and being together, to function in a way that everyone feel comfortable. At home, we try our best to love one another and care for one another. At work we try to be respectful of one another in our different roles and responsibilities. We know that it is not always the case, but we try our best. In our passage Paul writes to the Ephesians about how they're supposed to be, the values they need to uphold, and worship together as the church of Christ. Let's have a look.

II. Paul's plea to the Ephesians

An important twofold theme in Paul's writing to the churches he founded, was firstly, to explain to them the blessings they have received from God as children of God, and that their identity is being shaped by their relationship with Christ. Secondly, he then goes on to tell them about their obligations as children of God, how they need to be, and live. He does this in an encouraging way, reminding them of God's love for them, and the riches they will experience if they surrender themselves to God. In the Letter to the Ephesians, we are reminded that he is in prison while writing to them, but he also lets them know that he lives his life as a prisoner for Christ, surrendering every day, and sacrificing himself for the sake of Christ, and God who saved him from his destructive ways on the Road to Damascus.

In our passage we see him do the same, but he starts off on a very serious note, pleading and begging with them, to live their lives worthy according to the calling they have received. They have been touched by Christ through the Holy Spirit, and because of that they need to live as children of God. He gives them specific instructions as to what that means: They need to be

humble. The Greek term for humility is to think or judge with lowliness, that is, to have lowliness of mind and heart. Humility is key to the life in Christ, and it involves being in communication with Christ daily. They need to be gentle, which is a form of meekness that is mild-spirited, says John MacArthur in his Commentary on Ephesians. It does not mean that they are weak, but that they must operate under the control of the power and will of God. They need to be patient, which means they must endure and wait with and be guided by God as they go through life. They need to do all of this in love for one another, the agape love of Christ in and through them, a love that binds them together through everything. Finally, they need to keep the unity among each other through the bond of peace. What an incredible, but foundational instruction to this church about who they are supposed to be and how to behave with one another.

As a congregation, they need to remember that they are one church under God, with Christ as the Head, and the Holy Spirit within and among them. They have been given gifts, in the same way the prophets and the apostles have been given gifts by God, the prophets receiving the word of God for the people of Israel, and the apostles laying the foundation of the church. And now they have evangelists who proclaim the good news of Christ through their missionary activities; and the pastors, and teachers, who care for and teach the flock. They have been given all they needed to be strong and mature in the knowledge and wisdom of God, and through prayer, so they need not be swayed this way or that way by those who want to trick them.

III. We must grow together in Christ

In verses 15 – 16 Paul appeals to them to find their strength in Christ, who is the Head of the Body, the congregation. By speaking the truth about Him in love, they will grow together in Christ, who will keep them together with all the gifts they have received and how they, being equipped with the spiritual gifts they have received grow the church with their gifts. They must surrender to Christ so that He can bind them together. They must live out their spiritual calling in relationship with Him and staying close to Him. Spiritual growth does not come from the outside, through external powers, but from Christ, who is the source of life. They must build the Body in love and strength through the power and presence of Christ.

IV. Conclusion

Paul's letter is relevant for us as a congregation and the church in the world today. He is reminding us of who we are as children of God, and as a congregation. He reminds us of the values and Christian life we are called to live, that of humility, gentleness, patience, and love, and he reminds us of our relationship with Christ as the Head of the church, with whom we need to have a relationship so that we can be filled with love for one another, the love that supports, forgives, encourages, the love that builds the church and all its activities. We are reminded of our spiritual calling, each one of us. We need to ask the question to ourselves, "What is my calling, and do I lean on Christ as the Head for what I need to do? Is Christ in on what I'm thinking and planning? Is what we all do, done in recognition of Christ, the Head?"

We also have an opportunity to renew our calling with Christ. It may be a new calling, a different one which Christ wants us to fulfil here at Barre. Am I tuned in to the voice of Christ, of God, calling me here or there? May God help us as we continue to discern our calling as children of God, blessed with Christ as the Head of our church, as we are growing together in Christ.

Amen.