

Barre Congregational Church

March 31, 2024: A Pastoral Message by Pastor Margaret Keyser

~ **Easter Sunday**~

“Do not weep, My children. I have Risen!”

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

Scripture Reading: John 20 v 1-18

I. Introduction:

In this life, we have many experiences and moments that make us happy, and then we have our problems, from our personal lives, to what is happening in our homes, at work, in our community, and in this world. These problems can make us anxious and make us angry and make us do things we sometimes regret we had not done... and then, they can make us weep. When last have you been weeping? Good, this is the place to be, to hear the Risen Christ say to us, “Do not weep, my children. I have Risen!” Oh, wait! When He says that, he does not really mean that we should not weep, then what is He implying? Let's have a look.

II. Mary Magdalene and the Risen Christ

In this passage as well as the other accounts of the Resurrection story, we encounter a multitude of emotions from those who followed Jesus. There are those like Mary Magdalene who wept when she didn't see Him in the tomb. Then there are those who were afraid in their homes because they could be persecuted also. And then there are those like Peter and Judas and the rest who denied and betrayed Him, and others who fled the scene. They must have gone through a terrible time, on top of experiencing the loss of the One who lost His life in such a gruesome manner, the One they followed and loved.

It is the tears of Mary that struck the Son of God, at the morning of His resurrection. Those were tears of sadness over His death, but also because they took His body away. They took His body away!!!, she told the angels sitting there. They first killed Him, and now this??? It is important to note that Mary Magdalene, according to the other three Gospels, was one of a few women at the tomb of Jesus that morning, but John is focusing on her story here in his

Gospel. Another note of importance is that this Mary Magdalene, according to Mark 8 verse 2 was healed and cured by Jesus from being possessed by seven demons and must have been extremely grateful for His intervention in her life, and so she became one of His followers. She was also one of the witnesses to His crucifixion, an extremely traumatic experience for her. Here we see Jesus entering the scene, coming into her space as she was experiencing the most profound sorrow in her life. He called her name and asked her why she wept. And then, when she answered, she realized it was Him, and the weight of her sorrow was lifted from her broken heart. She saw the Man who healed her, and cared for her and made her whole again! She rushed to tell the disciples what she had just experienced, that she saw the Risen Lord, that He listened to her, saw her sorrow, and dried her tears. Mary's encounter with Jesus is a powerful Resurrection story that illustrates how being and dwelling in the presence of God altered a life dramatically.

III. To dwell in the sacred spaces of the Most High

In Psalm 91 the Psalmist speaks of the Lord as our Refuge and our fortress. It speaks about those who when they dwell in the sacred spaces of the Lord Most High, shall abide in the shadow of the Almighty. Those who say the Lord is their Refuge and fortress, will surely be delivered and protected. This is what happened to Mary Magdalene, who first received her transformation from being demon possessed, and when she refused to leave the empty tomb, Jesus entered her space again, saw her love and commitment to Him, and changed her life again. They were on holy ground, where she, the sinner dwelled in the presence of the Risen Christ who returned to her as her Refuge and deliverer, and her hope for the future.

IV. Conclusion: His Resurrection is a call to follow Him

This is what His Resurrection message conveys, a call to the wholeness of humanity and the whole of creation, a call to each of us to experience that wholeness in the presence of the Risen Christ. Do not weep, Christ says to us this morning. Do not be in despair. I have Risen. You have hope in Me, and I have everything you need. My God and I with the help and presence of the Holy Spirit are here with you. So, come to Me, and let your mind and your soul be at peace from the troubles in your life. Empty yourselves and leave that stuff

with Me, and I will give you rest. If you experience joy in your life right now, continue on that path and let Me in and let us dwell together, and I will make you all My disciples. Please do not leave Me like Peter and Judas and the others did on that dreadful journey I was on, but come, stay with Me like Mary did, and I will fill your lives with the fullness of God's blessings. We will dwell together in this life of yours. You will talk to Me in prayer, and I will listen, and I will answer you.

The Risen Christ calls us this morning to allow the Holy Spirit to touch us and speak to us anew on this Resurrection Day. To follow the Risen Christ means that we must follow Him, dwell with Him in love and peace and joy, and to have the courage to stay in it and not be afraid to do what is right. To follow the Risen Christ means we must also ask what He requires from us. How shall I follow thee, oh Lord? How shall I live out the compassion You speak of? Where do You call me too still? God will hear, and God will respond, and God will send us to the right places where we will dwell and experience the presence of the Most High in our lives. It requires that we reexamine our relationships with one another, at home, in our communities, at work, at church and in this world. The Risen Christ as the Head of the Church calls us all afresh to come, and be forgiven, and forgive one another, to worship and pray and sing together, and to serve. This is a part of the Easter message for all of us to receive, and to answer to. And so, may you hear God's answer today, tomorrow, or the day after, as you continue to live your life on this earth.

May this Resurrection message be a blessing to all of us. Happy Easter. Amen.