

Barre Congregational Church

June 30, 2024: A Pastoral Message by Pastor Margaret Keyser

~ Sixth Sunday after Pentecost~

“Let us continue and finish what we started”

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

Scripture Reading: II Corinthians 8 v 7 - 15

I. Introduction:

I have seen the generosity of our church, and that means all of you in how you serve God, each other and the community. Whether it is through all the committees you serve, giving of yourselves, your time, and more, or serving the community through our community suppers, sending cards to those who are sick or home bound, taking care of our church building and more, we are a generous church, and it is wonderful to see and experience. But there is also the very personal experience of going that extra mile for one another that is so special and gratifying, and I have seen and experienced that firsthand from you as well. We all know the feelings of being supported, and being helped when in crisis, when a problem needed solving. Those are feelings of relief and utter gratitude towards those who provided the necessary assistance.

II. Let us continue and finish what we started:

Here in the letter to the Corinthians, Paul is complimenting the congregation for their faith and speech and knowledge of spiritual matters, but at the same time encourages them to do what the Macedonians were doing, going out of their way, and despite their extreme poverty showing generosity towards Paul and his fellow travelers, meeting their physical needs as they were doing the work of God. Paul is educating the congregation on matters of giving to others and the building up of their congregation. He also reminds them that giving of themselves and their money and their possessions, is a reminder of what Christ did, when He emptied Himself from the riches of His divine existence with God. Stepping into a world with enormous needs and giving up His life on the cross for humanity, Paul says is something for them to remember. The generosity of His spirit and the gift of His life made Him poor for humanity. He made the ultimate sacrifice for this world. He gave everything, so that they might become rich. They will

therefore be blessed, if their spiritual riches are being manifested in the physical giving to others, because that is the principle of divine living.

Paul goes on to encourage them to finish what they have started. Their intention to do good must be fulfilled in their actions, because that is the life in Christ. He is not asking them to go into debt in their giving or in helping others, but whatever they are able to give they must give from their hearts, because the intent of their giving is what pleases God. To love one another is the starting point, and to finish means to make that love concrete in the giving of what one has. He further explains the aspect of equality, that to give when someone is in need will encourage them to give back or to give to others, creating equality in life, so that no one suffers, and that everyone will have enough.

III. Conclusion:

To feel that one's giving means something, is to understand what the person on the receiving end is feeling and experiencing, the feeling of relief that help was given, and the crisis of not having what one needs has been resolved. That immense relief gives the person in need the breathing space to carry on with life and maybe strengthen their ability to improve their circumstances. To give out of love for the other blesses the heart and life of the giver, because all giving is seen by our Creator and Giver of life. All that we have come from God, and God blesses us in ways that we may not comprehend at first. And so, Paul is encouraging the church in Corinth to become a giving church. It was clear that they had many more resources than the Macedonians, so they will through their giving create conditions of peace of mind and stability in communities in need. They will follow the divine principle of giving because through giving the world will be better for it. This is divine love in action. May God help us all to be loving givers to those in need, and change the circumstances of our church, our community and the world at large. Amen!