

Barre Congregational Church

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

~ **Twenty Fourth Sunday after Pentecost**~

“The Fullness of God’s Love”

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

Scripture Reading: Mark 12 v 28 - 34

I. Introduction:

We as human beings have within us the ability to feel deeply, and to act in different ways according to those feelings. When we have feelings of love for others, we want to act lovingly towards those individuals. We want to shower them with good deeds and precious gifts. We don’t want anything bad to happen to them. We will defend them, and we will make them feel special. On the other hand, when we have feelings of negativity, anger, bitterness or indifference, and lack of care, we may act towards others in a way that is not so warm, instead, we may have negative thoughts about them, which may consume us, and those negative thoughts and attitudes can lead to negative behaviors and actions towards them. Both emotions of love and negativity are powerful emotions within us, and those emotions could impact our lives and those around us.

II. The Fullness of God’s love:

God knows us so well, that is why Moses was given the ten commandments to give to the Israelites, so their lives and behaviors towards God and others would be regulated and create living conditions that were loving, kind, peaceful and respectful towards each other. Jesus refers to Deuteronomy 6 v 4-5 and Leviticus 19 v 17 – 18 in His answer to the Scribe who wanted to know what the most important commandment of all the commandments was: Deuteronomy 6:4-5, “Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one. Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength”, and Leviticus 19 v 17 -18, “Do not hate a fellow Israelite in your heart. Rebuke your neighbor frankly so you will not share in their guilt. “Do not seek revenge or bear a grudge against anyone among your people but love your neighbor as yourself. I am the Lord”.

In His response to the Scribe, Jesus explains how human beings should live and act as children of the Kingdom of God. He speaks about the mind, the heart, and the soul as places from within where they should be filled with love for God and other people. Mark L. Strauss in his commentary on Mark describes beautifully the heart as the seat / foundation of physical, spiritual and mental health, the soul as the life principle or seat /center of the inner human life, and the mind the faculty of thinking, comprehending and reasoning. Jesus speaks about love as the force of life that motivates the heart, mind and soul to be living examples of God's love. So, someone could use their life force to love and act lovingly, or use their life force to be angry, hate, hurt and more. Jesus tells the scribe that the commandment to love God requires that inner strength and vitality to express and live a life of deep love towards God. That same love must also be shown to their neighbor, who had been created in God's image. If you say you love God, then that love would be pure and would be expressed in the same way towards all others. Those who follow Jesus Christ must therefore not harbor any negativity in their hearts and minds and souls, and therefore be mindful not to act out their negativity towards others. The Scribe, who is an expert in Old Testament Law, and who was part of many who challenged Jesus and His message, had no objection to Jesus' answer, but instead validated Jesus' response to his question. Jesus pointed out that he, the Scribe was not far from the Kingdom of God, that he was on his way. This interaction between Jesus and the Scribe was the end of any further questions or challenges anyone dared to direct at Jesus.

III. Conclusion:

Today, more than ever, we as children of God, have the opportunity to hear and respond to this answer of Jesus in a new and fresh way. He speaks of a commandment that affirms God as the only God, a God of love for all of humanity, and a commandment that requires that the children of God have the same love for humanity. Whatever and whomever we face in life, we must aspire to love the way God loves, forgive the way God forgives, and seek peace and mutual respect for all human beings, the way God does. This world needs this kind of love and commitment from us, today, tomorrow, this week, the months and years ahead. This is the love that redeems, heals, and make the world a better place. May God help each one of us to live out this message of Christ every day. Amen