

July 9, 2023: A Pastoral Message by Pastor Margaret Keyser

~ **Sixth Sunday after Pentecost**~

Communion Sunday

"Come to Me, and I will give you rest"

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

Scripture Reading: Matthew 11 v 16-19 & 25-30

1. Introduction:

Many of us take some time off during the summer to get away and to get some rest from a busy year. Others may prefer another season to do so. We all need that time out, to rest and relax, either at home or away. To do this means being away from the busyness and stress which our work and home life can bring upon us. It also means having the opportunity to enjoy other parts of life, having fun, and feeling restored, and then to get back to the normal routine of life. Rest can mean different things for different people...getting more sleep, giving the body time to really recover from being tired. It can also mean doing relaxing activities that feel restful, or finishing up some projects one is passionate about, and giving one that sense of peace and fulfillment when it is done. Rest from it all is what we sometimes need...

2. Come to Me, and I will give you rest:

In our passage Jesus is extending to everyone who feels weary and burdened to come to Him and He will give them rest. He could see people's tiredness, their illnesses, and poverty and how they were trying to deal with their situations. He was also aware of the pressures put on them to uphold the laws and regulations by the Scribes and Pharisees. These laws did not support people in their daily lives, but instead were punitive and created fear in people. Then there were those who did not appreciate what He was teaching, as we read in verse 25, *"I praise you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because you have hidden these things from the wise and learned and revealed them to little children."* He wants them to know that He is the One who will give them rest.

Jesus compares the burdens of the crowd with the yokes animals were tied to, to pull a plow or some other heavy equipment. While these yokes served a good purpose, they carried a load that was heavy, and when the work was done, says R.T. France, it brought great relief to the ones who carried the load. The yoke the crowd was carrying was imposed on them, and He therefore calls upon them to recognize that. He offers them a different kind of yoke, which is He Himself, the Messiah, who is a different kind of leader than the ones who oppress them. He is gentle... and humble. If they turn their hearts to Him, He will give them rest from all their troubles and burdens. His yoke is easy and light, and if they learn from Him, and the message He brought them, and live accordingly, their lives will be transformed, and they will have peace of mind.

3. Conclusion:

Christ always extends Himself to us. His life on earth was a clear indication that He understood the context of His time, the issues, the people, the leaders, and the ones who suffered. He healed the sick because they needed help. He helped the beggars on the street. He opened Himself up to those who were outcasts in the society of His day. He understood what and who caused the pain and suffering, and He came to stand right in front of the perpetrators. His whole person was a challenge to those who oppressed others. For that He Himself suffered and died.

Today we all have our own burdens. We too carry a yoke that makes life hard sometimes. We sometimes are weary from our worries, and even the getaway, which is a good thing to do, and helps us feel restored, cannot fully give us peace of mind. There are things in our personal lives which make us feel helpless, and angry and sad perhaps. We are also confronted with forces in our work, and societal, economic, and political issues that affect us all. We know that decisions need to be made for the betterment of the lives of all people, but we often do not see that. We see leaders with their self-interest, and even we as a people do not always agree on issues, and that creates divisions in our society. One thing that I believe we can learn from Jesus Christ, our Saviour, is to let go of what we are used to, the things we believe in that do not always bring us together as a family, community, or the nation. Once we let go of our own self-interest, we may be able to see what the other sees and believes. Maybe then we can move away from the disagreements and things that cause divisiveness and see our common humanity. Maybe then we can talk and make the burdens lighter for everyone involved. And maybe then we will together see the pain around us, hear the cries from the poor and outcast. The more and more we do that,

we will be sitting in the presence of Christ, because we will see Christ in the ones who are weary and burdened. We will hear Him call us to a place of rest, and in His presence, we will find peace together because He is peace, and love and kindness and gentleness. He provides for us. He heals our bodies, and our minds and our souls. He forgives us. He is the Son of God, and God is complete love and peace and full of compassion.

May God help us all reflect on this message and help us to hear Christ's voice as He calls us to come to Him so that He can give us rest. Amen.