

Barre Congregational Church

March 17, 2024: A Pastoral Message by Pastor Margaret Keyser

~ **Fifth Sunday of Lent**~

“The Hour has Come.”

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

Scripture Reading: John 12 v 20 - 33

I. Introduction:

All of us are faced with moments when we must work on something we had postponed, to finish a project, to go somewhere, and to say goodbye after a visit with loved ones. Those are moments of change and can be quite fulfilling when the projects are completed, and we look back at our visits with loved ones. There are also moments in our lives when things change not for the better, but when we are faced with difficulties and challenges in our lives. Those are the moments or the hours we do not look forward to, but we know we must face them, and put our hope and faith in God to give us the strength to do so.

II. For Jesus the hour had come:

Jesus must have enjoyed life on earth, having made friends and encountered all kinds of people, having enjoyed the food that was offered to Him, and enjoying the beauty of the earth. He also had a group of close friends and disciples with whom He spent His precious times with. But through it all, He must have been filled with feelings of “when this all would come to an end”. It is difficult to comprehend the challenge and pull He must have endured, knowing that He had a purpose, fulfilling the will of God to become the sacrifice for the salvation of the world, and drawing us all to God.

So, here He is, at the temple in Jerusalem, the place He had come to know where the crowds gathered to worship, and where He learned from the Torah, and where He experienced the resistance from the religious leaders of His time. FF Bruce in his commentary on John suggests that when the Greeks came to speak to Him, He saw that as a message that the hour had come to let the world and all its different cultures know that He was going to die. The Son of God’s hour of change has come. It would be a bloody suffering, and a tremendous change for Him, giving

up, dying, and leaving behind life as He knew it, to create something new. Through this experience God's Name would be glorified, and the salvation of this world has been opened for all to experience, to accept and to be reconciled with God. God's voice confirmed for Him that this was the hour, and Christ would convey to the crowd that all this would be for their benefit. He would die and be raised again and draw humanity to Him. This was not an hour He could reject, but an hour that was necessary to alter the course of history and of humanity.

III. Conclusion:

Lent is therefore a time for us to look inward and to remember why He came. It is a time to look around and observe our lives on this planet, to examine how things are going, and to be reminded that He died for us, so that we can be reconciled with God, be healed, and saved from the prince of this world, He says in this text. It is a clear direction He sends us into, away from darkness and destruction, and into the light of God. It is a call for us to love this life less than we love Him, God, and the Person of the Holy Spirit. It is our hour of coming to grips with the temporary nature of this world and its pleasures, and to integrate the salvation of God through Christ into our daily lives and our earthly existence. We must therefore open ourselves up for the sacrifice of our walk with Christ. We will not always experience the joy that we have in Christ, because the force of this life brings with it the challenge of suffering and illness and death. We are here therefore not to cling to this world as if it presents to us a permanent state of being, but to prepare ourselves as He did, to be reconnected to our God and to look forward to the state of permanent bliss. This does not mean that we need to sit and wait for that day, but to still enjoy the life God has given us, until our hour has come, like His did. It is also a time to have faith in God for our healing and peace in this world because everything about God through Christ is given to us, the blessings and the fullness of love and peace and joy. We can enjoy those blessings now as we are fulfilling our own calling here on this beautiful earth, and we can give all our challenges into God's hands. May God bless this message to our hearts and show us the way during this Lent and Holy Week and experience the joy of the Resurrection. Amen.