

Barre Congregational Church

May 12, 2024: A Pastoral Message by Pastor Margaret Keyser

~ **Seventh Sunday of Easter, and Sunday after Ascension Day**~

Mothers' Day

"Protect them as I come to You."

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

Scripture Reading: John 17 v 6 - 19

I. Introduction:

When I think of Mothers' Day, I think of those who gave birth to us, and those who did not give birth to the children they raised as their own. I think of our sisters and nieces, aunts, and grandmothers, and those who are our neighbors, walking down the street, the ones we meet at the store, the library and so forth. These are all mothers and women who care for us in the best way they can. Then, there are the mothers who may have failed us, some would say...the ones who, in their own weaknesses have been absent, and not there for us. And there are the dear mothers who are not with us today, who passed on, and who have left us with precious memories. These, and more... are the mothers we think of today on Mothers' Day. We think of our relationships with them, the good and not so good, and all that we learned from being around them.

II. Protect them as I come to You, He prayed:

While we celebrate Mothers' Day, we also think of the relationship that Jesus had with His disciples during His time on earth, and how He was preparing them for the day He would ascend into heaven. There was a bond of love and care, and His prayer here in John 17 on their behalf says it all. This is a prayer at the end of the long farewell discourse from Chapter 13 - 16, where He washed their feet, predicted what would happen to Him, comforted them as He talked about His departure from this earth, that as disciples they must stay in Him, who is the true vine. Then He promised the Holy Spirit who would be with them always. These chapters show the heart of the Son of God for those whom, as He says in verse 6, God gave to Him out of this world. In this chapter as He is praying for them

and for the church, He also speaks to God about His relationship with them, how He took care of them, taught them everything about the knowledge of God. His mission was fulfilled in them, He says, knowing that they knew and believed He came from God. He consecrated them and set them apart for the important work of building the Church of Christ.

And so, He prayed to God to protect them, while He is preparing to leave this earth to be with God. He spoke earlier about this world that hated them; in the way they hated Him. This is a world whose message is so opposing to the message of God. It is estranged from God, and it needs the message of salvation, of love and peace and forgiveness. It needs to come together by listening to and respecting each other and their needs. The world needs the help of My disciples to change its ways, to find the joy I give, He says and so, please protect them, because I am sending them out where they will be dismissed, rejected, hated, and persecuted. Protect them from the evil one, He prayed. I sanctify them for this Holy work, oh God, and so surround them with Your love and protection. Send Your Holy Spirit to be with them, so they will always feel Your presence. What an intimate prayer of Christ for His disciples!

III. Conclusion:

Christ is our Mediator to God. When He ascended to heaven, He also took on the role of intervening on behalf of all of us. Christ wants us to be protected from evil. Christ reminds us that our lifeline to God is a life of prayer because that is how God knows that we need and desire God's assistance and protection. Christ wants us to know that in this world we will have opposition to His message, because it is not fancy to many. There are those who oppose this idea of a world of love and peace and kindness. Despite that, the joy He gives is worth the relationship we have with Him and with God. His prayer of protection is for us too, as we speak and serve. Therefore, to all of us, but a special message to all the women here and in this world, may God help us to be examples of this call from Christ, to be set apart and be sent by God, and to bring peace into this world that needs it so much today. Happy Mother's Day! Amen!