

Barre Congregational Church

June 16, 2024: A Pastoral Message by Pastor Margaret Keyser

~ Fourth Sunday after Pentecost~

Fathers' Day

"If we are besides ourselves, it is for God..."

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

Scripture Reading: II Corinthians 5 v 6-17

I. Introduction:

We all have different interests in our lives, and special things we are passionate about, such as music, art, reading, poetry, carpentry, sports, gardening, photography, and so forth.

Anything specific you are passionate about? Let us all think about that for a moment...

When we are passionate about something, we love to spend time doing it or being engaged with it, improving our skills and appreciating what we love to do. To be passionate about something brings us inner joy and fulfilment. It can make us smile and put a spring in our step. Creating something we love also gives others the opportunity to appreciate what we have done, and it makes us feel good. Sometimes we are so excited about what we achieved, that some may believe we are a bit crazy!

II. If we are besides ourselves, it is for God:

Paul, we read in 1 Corinthians 4 v 12, loved to work with his hands. His trade was that of tent making, which was quite a difficult task, due to the materials they needed to prepare before building the tent. He made tents for himself and those who traveled with him, but also for the Roman government and private parties who ordered them. He collaborated with the couple, Priscilla and Aquila who were missionaries, and made leather tents. Paul kept this job of tent making to earn money, while creating the churches on his journeys. We do not hear him speak passionately about tent making, or other activities, but he instead, tells the church here in v 13, "If we are out of our mind, it is for the sake of God; if we are in our right mind, it is for you." He was aware that there were people who looked at

him as having a mental instability, as abnormal or strange, because of how passionate he was about preaching the word of God. His intensity about his ministry may have sparked rumors about him being a little crazy! Despite those perceptions, he encouraged the Corinthians to take pride in him and his fellow apostles and defend them against those who think of them as mentally unstable. If it is true, he says that they are out of their minds, then it is ok, because He says in verse 14, "Christ's love compels us...!" and in verse 17," If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation...we are reconciled with God through Christ." This truth about Christ's work in him and those around him, prompted him to work tirelessly to spread the Gospel of Christ, and his passion for this ministry made some people uncomfortable to be in his presence.

III. Conclusion:

I remember in my earlier years as a Christian believer, I was told a couple of times by those around me, that I was too Christian, and too strange ...the way I talked and behaved. It was not easy to hear, but my passion for the word of God and God's work in me, was so much more valuable than what others thought of me. Maybe today, it is a bit too strange to talk too much about God or Christ, or invite people to church, or for some to come to church, because going to church, or believing in God, or talking about God feels too awkward, maybe? Maybe some left the church, to find God in a different way? These are questions for us to examine, and to think what makes church really church? Are we truly being compelled by Christ to become more like Him, a new creation, more loving and kinder, and just, and compassionate, and in our reaching out to others, do we see what Christ sees, the hungry, the poor, the despair, the pain, the suffering, the loneliness? The way of Christ must be the way of the church, and that should not keep people away, but draw them to the place where they feel welcome and safe and joyful and inspired! May God fill us today and every day with love the way Christ taught us to love, and on this Fathers' Day, may God bless every father, uncle, grandfather, sons, and all men out there with the gift of being a little crazy for God, crazy with love and kindness and doing good for the world around them. Amen!