

Barre Congregational Church

July 28, 2024: A Pastoral Message by Pastor Margaret Keyser

~ **Tenth Sunday after Pentecost**~

“The Riches of Christ extends beyond all Knowledge”

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

Scripture Reading: Ephesians 3 v 14 - 21

I. Introduction:

We know the familiar expression, “Knowledge is power”. By doing a Google search, one learns that knowledge can help people make significant decisions, create progress, and guide the future. Knowledge can give anyone the tools to do what they need or want to do; be creative, develop skills and impart them, and make this world a better place. Everyone has some kind of knowledge about a specific issue, a subject that matters to them. The more we improve our knowledge of something that interests us, the better we are at that specific issue or subject, or practical things we enjoy doing. This world is composed of various forms of knowledge that are applied in all forms to create systems and structures and different fields of work and more. However, knowledge, as we know, can also be used for less constructive purposes.

II. The Riches of Christ extends beyond all Knowledge:

Paul was fully aware of the power of knowledge in the world he lived in. He himself was well educated and familiar with Greek philosophy and culture, and the Acts of the Apostles portrays him as an eloquent speaker. He was immersed in a culture of knowledge, and the churches during his time were therefore also influenced by the riches of knowledge and culture around them.

In the letter to the Ephesians, he prays that they will receive the riches of the power and love of God and Christ, that surpasses all knowledge, and that they will be filled with the fulness of God. What does this mean? First, he asks God to bestow on them out of God’s glorious riches, the inner strength and power through the work of God’s Spirit. The riches of God’s glory, says Clinton E. Arnold, editor of the Zondervan Commentary on Ephesians, is about God’s brilliance,

majesty, holiness, and power. Glory represents God in all God's mighty power; and riches is about the superabundance of God's power. Paul continues by saying that God possesses extraordinary might, which God is able and willing to impart to God's people. While they may know all about earthly knowledge and power, his prayer is that God will bestow upon them a different kind of power, a deep spiritual strength that will transform their lives, and that they will influence the world around them according to God's will and purpose. He continues to pray that they will experience the indwelling of Christ in their hearts, which Arnold describes so beautifully as more of the nearness of God. Whatever they need, they will have through the glorious riches and nearness of the power of God inside of them. As young Christians they will experience some struggles in their lives, but with the power of God within, they will have the inner strength to withstand the powerful and destructive forces around them.

But more, they will be rooted in and experience how wide and long and high and deep the love of Christ is that surpasses all knowledge. Being filled with the love of Christ, they too will be inspired to love the way Christ loved humanity. They will be filled with that love, not of their own doing, but through the powerful work of the Holy Spirit inside of them.

This prayer of Paul is powerful and consequential for the believers in Ephesus. Later, he tells them to arm themselves with the shield of faith, the helmet of salvation and the sword of the spirit, the word of God, to withstand the works of Satan. To withstand the power of evil, they must have the power and love of God inside of them to transform themselves and the world around them.

III. Conclusion:

We know of many brilliant individuals who brought new and inventive ideas and solutions to problems. Brilliant inventors change the world with their new ideas. But we do not need to be famous to be brilliant. We all have knowledge and some power within us to do something special in this world. Paul's point is this, knowledge is power, and we can do much with knowledge, but the true brilliance and power that change the world from within, in the heart, come from God. To face our problems and fears today, whatever they may be, requires that we cultivate our skills and knowledge on an ongoing basis. But that kind of knowledge and brilliance cannot on its own bring about the loving transformation we need to coexist and love

and forgive and build this world so that all of us can live in it without fear of the other. The power and love of God overcome the fear we have of the other. It brings us together and helps us to be a new humanity filled to all the fullness of God, he says in verse 19. May God help us to explore the riches of Christ and of God and open our hearts to receive all of it, so that the Kingdom of God will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Amen.