**Divided House**

**Luke 11:14-28**

Oculi – Lent 3 – 03.12.2023

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

*Now He (Jesus) was casting out a demon that was mute. When the demon had gone out, the mute man spoke, and the people marveled. But some of them said, “He casts out demons by Beelzebul, the prince of demons,” while others, to test Him, kept seeking from Him a sign from heaven. But He, knowing their thoughts, said to them, “Every kingdom divided against itself is laid waste, and a divided household falls. And if Satan also is divided against himself, how will his kingdom stand? For you say that I cast out demons by Beelzebul. And if I cast out demons by Beelzebul, by whom do your sons cast them out? Therefore, they will be your judges. But if it is by the finger of God that I cast out demons, then the kingdom of God has come upon you.”*

Dearly beloved of God, Abraham Lincoln used this quote of Jesus by saying, “A house divided against itself cannot stand,” as part of his campaign speech delivered at the 1858 Illinois Republican State Convention. He was saying that slavery was an issue which divided the nation, people wanting slave states and free states. This would not work. It made a divided house. We had to be united either for it or against it.

Jesus isn’t talking about human slavery in our text, although we could mention slavery to sin. And He is being blasphemously accused of casting out demons by Beelzebul, a prince of demons. Dear friends, as Jesus notes, demons are not that stupid! If demons are casting out other demons, they are fighting against themselves. This doesn’t work!

Jesus is casting out demons by the finger of God, meaning that the kingdom of God has come upon the people. Interesting that this text would fall immediately after we considered the 2nd Petition of the Lord’s prayer this past Wednesday – Thy Kingdom Come!

Jesus shows His divinity by knowing their thoughts. Did they pick up on that? He goes on to explain that a kingdom divided against itself cannot stand. He takes their argument against Him, and uses it against them. It appears that others were doing exorcisms. Who is doing these? If Jesus is doing them by the devil, then so are they.

What is the problem? Is it the casting out of demons? They do not like what Jesus is doing –how He is presenting Himself and therefore God. Jesus is bringing the power and might of God to bear – teaching with authority. His casting out demons, His doing of signs is evidence that everything He is teaching is true and correct. He is doing it in a way that is different than it was been being taught in the church of that day.

Some examples may help to illustrate.

They complain that Jesus’ disciples eat with unclean hands. They do not like that He heals on the Sabbath. He eats with the worst sinners.

It is unfortunate, but what the church of the day taught revolved around obedience to the Law as the means for securing a place in God’s kingdom. It was all about following the Law.

Jesus said that it isn’t what goes into a man’s mouth that makes him unclean, but what comes out of a man’s heart – that from the heart is where all sin begins, and this is what makes a man unclean. Is healing on the Sabbath working on the Sabbath? Or does it give life?

To further see how this works, maybe you remember that a group brought a woman caught in adultery to Jesus. They rightly claimed that for her sin, she was to be stoned. They tested Him asking, “What do you say?” Jesus called out all the sinners, not just the woman. Think about it, if she was caught in adultery had to be two sinners – who was caught with her? So, Jesus declares as he turns to write in the dirt, “Whoever is without sin may cast the first stone.” When He looks up from writing in the dirt, there is only the woman – the rest have gone.

Today, people point out that Jesus forgave didn’t do anything, He didn’t accuse her. Hmmm, is that what happened? Did God, who gave the law declaring that the penalty for adultery was stoning to death, simply do nothing? Listen to what He says, “Neither do I condemn you! Go and sin no more.”

He does not condemn her, He forgives her. He goes to the cross to die for her sin! He will endure in His flesh the guilt of her sin, and endure the shame of it, being crucified unto death to remove her condemnation. But also tells her to “sin no more.” Once forgiven – the guilt and shame of sin removed – you turn from sin. You and I are to live in forgiveness, and sin no more.

Jesus speaks about the truth that a house divided against itself cannot stand. He is speaking in regard to the accusation against Him that He is casting out demons by the power of demons. He is also speaking against those who are making such accusations.

He says that whoever is not with Him is against Him, and whoever does not gather with Him, scatters.

They are supposedly God’s house! They are to be those pointing forward to the coming of God’s Christ. They are to be heralds of Messiah! There He is in the midst of them and they are pointing elsewhere – they are pointing at Moses, at Torah, at the Law – and in so doing, they are pointing at their own works.

They are the people of Israel. They have the temple. What is the purpose of the temple and all that takes place there? To make one holy.

Looking at Torah, there is almost nothing that *does* ***not*** make one unholy. The whole purpose of the temple is the sacrifices made to restore holiness to God’s people. It is a ministry of reconciliation with God – for there is no way they can keep the Law.

Christ’s Church is not to be a house divided. There is be ***NO*** division in it – all are to be united in The Truth – all are to be united in Christ. But even where there is a church which claims unity in doctrine, there is often division. The demonic creeps in, the church is often possessed by the spirit of the times as culture trumps Truth. A divided house cannot stand

Personalities may clash and a congregation may become a house divided. How often do the members of a single family have problems getting along, the same thing can happen in the family of faith.

What bring unity in a house divided? The forgiveness of sins.

Christ came to bring reconciliation and peace in the forgiveness of sins. That which is unclean is made holy by the sacrifice of Him who is holy.

Today, in our text, a demon was cast out by the finger of God, by the very Son of God. Unity with God was restored in this man, and it was done by God Himself.

Today, Christ comes to bring unity, healing the divisions between us that were brought about by our sinfulness – against God and against one another.

Wednesday we prayed, “Thy Kingdom Come!” We want unity restored between God and man – we want unity restored between ourselves and one another. We do not want to be a divided house but a united one.

Have you noted that we gather at Christ’s table and it is called “Holy Communion?” Communion – common unity! There is oneness at this table.

Yes, you are receiving the body of Christ and drinking of His blood for the forgiveness of ***your*** sins. But you do not do so alone.

At this table, you are one with Christ! One with Christ, you are also one with one another – with those who are also one with Christ.

At this table unity is a necessary requirement for gathering together. Your Christ and mine better be the same Christ. My Christ gives us His body to eat and His blood to drink for the forgiveness of sins. If someone’s Christ cannot give His flesh sacramentally united to the bread we eat, and if that Christ cannot or DOES NOT give us His blood sacramentally united to the wine we drink – there division among us, a division which cannot be tolerated. “Whoever is not with Jesus is against Him!”

Where we have brought division by our sinfulness, it is a meal which heals division. Division between individuals is healed in the forgiveness consumed. It is a meal in which unity is restored to divided houses.

Dearly beloved of God, a house divided cannot stand. Thanks be to God that in Christ Jesus, God’s house is a place where unity is restored. In the name of Jesus. Amen.