

“A House Divided”

Scripture readings: **Acts 28:23-28, Luke 11:14-23**

We sing of a church seeking to continue the story of Jesus by embodying Christ's presence in the world. We are called together by Christ as a community of broken but hopeful believers, loving what he loved, living what he taught, striving to be faithful servants of God in our time and place. God is calling us, and reminding us that we are not alone. *Let us pray. Gracious and loving God, God of every season and every time, we come to you today in this time and this season to listen and reflect together. Challenged us by your words of unity, harmony and togetherness against division. Let the words of my mouth, and the meditation of my heart, be acceptable in thy sight, O Lord, my strength, and my redeemer*

Jesus does a good thing, bringing healing to someone in the community. Yet some rally against the natural impulse to celebrate such an act of kindness and compassion, instead using it as an opportunity to attack Jesus, accusing him of wielding dark powers—specifically accusing him of working with Beelzebul, the ruler of the demons. The reference here is more than mere insult or slander. Those seeking to undermine Jesus' work and ministry—perhaps out of fear or perceived threat to their authority—may have seen this as an opportunity to nullify his religious credibility. The slur is not casual abuse but a calculated attempt to associate Jesus' power not with God, but with the forces of darkness and evil.

This reminds us of the assembly halls and public forums of today—whether physical spaces and arenas of life where spoken word remains in-vogue, or digital platforms like social media. The hurling of insults and nastiness is one thing. But the use of slander and intentional character assassination has become a tool for advancing personal agendas—a power play designed to damage the standing and authority of others. Such a situation has deeper consequences. It is one of the root causes of division in our societies and across the world. Of course, there are other sources of division: intolerance, fear, racial and national hatred, opposing political views, long-standing disputes—the list goes on. But the underlying use of slander and insult is both a symptom of these divisions and a tool wielded by those with no interest in reconciliation and united humanity. Jesus is fully aware of what is happening and of the attempts to sully his name. He is also deeply conscious of the dangers and destructive power of division. He responds with the well-known phrase ““Every kingdom divided against itself is laid waste, and a divided household falls.”

This is a warning to society, to the world at large, and to all spiritual communities. Internal division weakens our collective potential to build just and compassionate communities, and to foster relationships of trust relationships that could help create the kind of world where all can find safety, security, and worth. In terms of faith communities—or, more broadly, the work of God in the world. Division threatens the mission of both local and

global efforts to establish God's Kingdom. It is this very Kingdom that Jesus points to when he states clearly and pointedly the source of his authority: "But if it is by the finger of God that I cast out the demons, then the kingdom of God has come to you." He denounces those who question the origin of his authority and the spirit in which he carries out his work. Jesus could not be clearer—he claims divine authority and presence.

How do you feel when someone disagrees with you? How do we live in a community where different opinions are given? Do you feel free to share your own opinions?

There is a difference between division and debating different ideas. We need to take time to consider what Jesus meant about a house being divided against itself and what gives it strength. We need to talk about the strength of a community that comes from having different opinions. 1 John 2:9 said "Whoever says they are in the light and hates their neighbors is still in darkness.

Are we really open to listen to others? Our first reading in verse 26-27 said "You will indeed listen but never understand, and you will indeed look but never perceive. for this people's heart has grown dull, and their ears are hard of hearing, and they have shut their eyes; otherwise they might look with their eyes and listen with their ears and understand with their heart and turn and I would heal them.'

There are two options, A House is Divided or we Pursue Unity. Not uniformity but Unity. We learned from history that there is no good outcome for divisions. But when we pursue Unity, it will bring strength, our unity is a reflection of God's love and peace. Unity is a sign of maturity and unity is a response to the prayer that they may be one. In all things, as a community of faith we are called to work together in love, kindness, justice and compassion.

What are simple ways we can pursue Unity? As a person, in our family, with our friends, in our community and in the Church? Here are some challenges that we can do in our lives, (1) Listen more than you speak, (2) Seek to understand before seeking to be understood, (3) Resist the urge to be right all the time, (4) Resist the urge to always have the last word, (5) Avoid gossips and Listen from both sides and (6) Pray for Unity.

One of the best examples of Unity is the United Church of Canada. It was inaugurated on June 10, 1925 in Toronto, Ontario, when the Methodist Church, the Congregational Union of Canada, and 70 percent of The Presbyterian Church in Canada entered into a union. Also joining was the small General Council of Union Churches, centred largely in Western Canada. It was the first union of churches in the world to cross historical denominational lines and received international acclaim. Each of the founding churches had a long history in Canada prior to 1925. The movement for church union began with the desire to coordinate ministry in the vast Canadian northwest and for collaboration in overseas missions. Congregations in Indigenous communities from each of the original denominations were an important factor in the effort toward church union. The United

Church continues to be a "uniting" church, and has been enriched by several additional unions since 1925. One of the basis of union during that time is this statement, "We believe in the one only living and true God, a Spirit, infinite, eternal, and unchangeable...who is love, most just in all ways, most glorious in holiness, unsearchable in wisdom, plenteous in mercy, full of compassion, and abundant in goodness and truth. We worship in unity". Our history and stories are all about Unity, that is part of our calling, our mission, and our Ministry. As we look into the future let us be reminded of the significance of Unity in our faith.

Black, white, grey, brown. Left, right, centre. High, low, middle. Formal, informal, in-between. The kingdom of God is not made up of stiff-necked people who can see in only one direction, read from only one doctrine, who never cross their fingers when they read the Apostles Creed, who do not own a hidden space set up for critical thinking and who are unable to hear from another point of view. Our necks are to be loose that we can look in all directions. Our minds open that we can hear the other. Our thinking critical, no place to leave our brains at the door and our compassion wide that we make space to grow towards each other, despite different views. The kingdom is not divided, it is diverse. Let us pray and work together against Unity and Peace in our Church, in our community, in our Country and in the World. Amen