

2nd Sunday after Pentecost, at Immanuel, Mercedes

INTRO: Around 1860, prior to the Civil War in the USA, Abraham Lincoln and Henry Clay warned 'a house divided against itself cannot stand;' borrowed from Jesus. I say it still applies to us today.

I. TYPES OF DIVISIONS

A. In a nation

1. Matt.12:23 people questioned, could this be the 'Son of David'
2. Israel experienced greater unity under David; even Solomon
3. a nation is healthier if its people are in greater agreement
4. a division yields internal strife; defenseless against outside foe
5. yet USA today wants to celebrate our **diversity** (Antifa; BLM)
6. cp. a 200-year melting pot, vis-à-vis a 'rainbow nation' (really?!)

B. In a church (same principle applies)

1. catchword in churches today = reconciled diversity
2. esp. in ELCA since 1980's (probably copied from UCC)
3. also **United** Methodists; UCC pastor re: infant baptism question
4. Bible is/isn't completely God's Word; God did/didn't create world in six days; bread & wine is/isn't True Body and Blood of Jesus
5. in LCMS: women should/shouldn't be elders; Holy Communion is/isn't for those of same confession; everybody deserves a Christian burial (also with military honors?)

C. In a household

1. if belief is important, division in religion is less than ideal
2. in fact, a divided household may fall (in divorce, i.e.)
3. or children will pit parent against parent (boy, are they smart)
4. or kids will forsake faith of both, altogether
5. it's difficult enough if both parents **have** the same faith!

II. THE NATURE OF DIVISIONS

A. Underlying cause is sin, sinfulness

1. Satan separated himself from God in heaven (**he** started it!)
2. Adam and Eve separated and hid from God in Eden
3. by nature, we all are estranged and separated from God
4. naturally opposed to God, like Scribes of v.22

(continued)

B. Division is rooted in unbelief

1. people debated if Jesus were the Messiah
2. v.21 His 'own people' sought to 'lay hold of Him' (nut job)
3. His brothers did not as yet believe (John 7:5; yet James, later)
4. faith unifies, but unbelief divides
5. without God, each becomes a god by himself; a judge of His Word

C. Division leads to downfall and destruction

1. tertium = kingdom/house divided against itself will fall
2. learned Scribes suggest Satan casts out demons!
3. lacks all common sense! Why'd he do that!
4. opposition to, or departure from, Jesus and His Word moves men to all sorts of ridiculous statements, positions
5. most later proven false by common sense or data (millennia of evolution vis-à-vis 6-day creation; e.g. DNA; what 'banged'?)

III. PREVENTION AND HEALING OF DIVISIONS

A. Start with proper faith (fides qua creditur, i.e.)

1. purpose of parable = Jesus is **not** of Satan; He is True God, if fact
2. He is on earth to teach, reveal, fulfill, redeem
3. He is here to show God's reconciliation with fallen mankind
4. Jesus and disciples invite us into union by Spirit-given faith

B. Forgiveness works unity

1. core of healing divisions = God forgives, unites us with Himself
2. all of this **propter Christi**
3. our response to His forgiveness is for us to forgive, also
4. thus beginning the healing of divisions between us
5. forgiveness is the great unifier, reconciler (w/God & w/brother)

C. Fellowship results

1. first and foremost, fellowship with the True God
2. fellowship in Christ, and not 'in Satan' (cp. AA's god as Satan)
3. a true fellowship originating only in our common faith
4. one with Christ, on His terms, according to His teachings

CONCLUSION: I thank God for that faith which is believed and confessed by my wife and me in our household. I thank God for that same faith which we confess here at Immanuel, and within the LCMS. That revealed truth is the only hope for healing of divisions among us. Grow in that faith and strengthen that household of faith, and enlarge it by invitation, even as Christ has invited you and me. Amen.