

Gaines Congregational United Church of Christ

June 9, 2024

Old Testament Reading; 1 Samuel 8: 4-15

Responsive Reading: Psalm 138

Epistle Reading: 2 Corinthians 4: 13-5: 1

Gospel Reading: Mark 3: 20-35

**Sermon: A House Divided Cannot Stand**

By Rev. Jim Gardner

Summary: United we stand, divided we fall.

Try to digest this Gospel lesson.

“How can Satan cast out Satan? If a kingdom is divided against itself, that kingdom cannot stand. And if a house is divided against itself, that house cannot stand. And if Satan has risen up against himself, and is divided, he cannot stand, but has an end,” Shortly after saying this, Christ says, “Who is My mother or My brothers? Here are My mother and My brothers! For whoever does the will of God is My brother and My sister and mother.”

To start to understand this we need to backtrack to last week's scripture. Jesus had confronted the religious authorities by healing on the sabbath and performed many "signs" that caused droves of people to follow Him and be healed and taught. This enraged the authorities and worried "His own people", i.e. those from Nazareth who knew Jesus as that kid that played with them or their children. He was a homeboy; He could not be anyone that special. He must have lost it and gone crazy, and it was their job to stop Him from self-destruction. Even His own family was more concerned about saving His life than what He said and did.

This brings to mind another quote of Jesus. In Matthew chapter 10 Jesus says "Think not that I have come to bring peace, but a sword. For I have come to set man against his father, and daughter against her mother" etc.

We have to pick our friends, our causes and our battles. If we are going to put our lives on the line for something, that something must be of the most importance. Something worth dying for and something worth living for. Whether chocolate or vanilla ice cream tastes better does not make it into that category, or any other petty differences. Drop the drama and let others like what they like, stick to the important stuff. In the bible the choice tends to run between the Kingdom of God and the world of the flesh. This is what Jesus taught and Jesus was willing to make the hard decision between His followers {i.e. God's followers} or His own flesh and blood.

If we are going to strive to keep the house standing it better be a house worth our undivided effort. Paul says in our epistle that

a permanent house is better than a tent. Our bodies are a temporary tent but the Kingdom of God {whether here and now and/or for eternity} is a permanent fortress. This union with God is so good that our pains and suffering will be well worth it. To stand together we must have faith in the plan, God's plan. God raised Jesus; God WILL raise us! Faith in the expected outcome will give us the strength to get through the tuff stuff. Michelangelo said of his sculptures, "The more the marble wastes, the more the statue grows." It is true with us too. The more we experience the trials of life the more we grow in our ability to love and empathize with our brothers and sisters in the family of God. BUT, big but, we have to believe together or accept defeat before we even start. This is true whether the family is personal, church, community, or nation. Dump the petty stuff and concentrate on our similar values and needs as a healthy family. The only family worth standing is the family of the Lord. There are 66 books within one book that are all pressing that point upon us.

Our lesson in 1<sup>st</sup> Samuel says that even if we make bad choices in how we stick together and have to suffer the consequences, HE, will not abandon us.

Our Psalm says, "The Lord will perfect that which concerns me." This is the same thing that Paul was saying in Philippians 1:6, "Being confident of this very thing, that He who began a good work in you will complete it until the day of Christ Jesus." If you hook up with Jesus, you will make something worthwhile of yourself. The good work of God will be completed in you.

God started it. God WILL finish it.

On top of that, standing undivided, that is without constant bickering, will not only be more healthy for you and the family, but it will also be a lot more fun.

Hear again the words of the song that Jackie sang for us today.

Oh, How Good It Is (Getty)

Oh, how good it is when the family of God

Dwells together in Spirit, in faith and unity

Where the bonds of peace, of acceptance and love

Are the fruit of His presence here among us.

So, with one voice we'll sing to the Lord

And with one heart we'll live out His word

Till the whole earth sees the Redeemer has come

For He dwells in the presence of His people

Oh, how good it is on this journey we share

To rejoice with the happy, and weep with those who mourn

For the weak find strength, the afflicted find grace

When we offer the blessing of belonging.

So, with one voice we'll sing to the Lord

And with one heart we'll live out His word  
Till the whole earth sees the Redeemer has come  
For He dwells in the presence of His people  
Oh, how good it is to embrace His command  
To prefer one another, forgive as He forgives  
When we live as one, we all share in the love  
Of the Son with the father and the Spirit.

So, with one voice we'll sing to the Lord  
And with one heart we'll live out His word  
Till the whole earth sees the Redeemer has come  
For He dwells in the presence of His people.

If it is true that they will know we are Christians by our love, let us let our love works so shine before men, that they see our unity and want what we got. All we can do is to bloom where we are planted and let God do the rest!

Hallelujah and Amen!

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