



**UNITED WE STAND –
DIVIDED WE FALL.**

**Scripture: Psalm 138
and Mark 3:20-35.**

Have you ever felt fearful that others may find out who you really are?

That people will catch on that you may not be who you say you are or not who you want them to think you are?

Behind this fear lies a divided house – and as we read in Mark’s Gospel, a divided kingdom will crumble.

Jesus was accused of dividing a kingdom – Satan’s by the accusation that He was performing miracles with the power of Satan.

Mark tells us of the work Jesus had been doing in relation to divided houses and kingdoms.

1. Casting out demons
2. Healing Peter’s mother-in-law
3. Cleansing a leper
4. Enabling a paralyzed man to walk

The lives of these people were not their own – they were living with inner conflict and turmoil. They had been cast aside from their own community – a community that provided them with security and identity.

You see, it was their outer conditions of illness, paralysis and possessions that others saw – only Jesus recognized their inner conflict – not only a battle between health and disease, but spiritually.

How many times do we worry about our outer presentation or see the outer presentation in those we meet, perhaps judging the outer and forgetting the inner – where there could be division?

Today we see division and inner conflict more and more:

A marriage divided is a divorce.

A nation divided results in political parties and nations blaming each other and sometimes leads war.

An economy divided yields poverty and injustice.

A community divided becomes individualism and tribalism, prejudice and violence.

Faith divided is sin.

I wonder if you have ever experienced the feeling that you were living a divided life. You know when your outsides and your insides don't match up.

You are one person at work or in one situation and a different person at home.

You act in one way with certain people and a different way with other people.

Life gets divided into pieces, just like a jigsaw puzzle.

As a child I never did enjoy jigsaw puzzles – especially those that had around 5000 pieces. I always wanted to finish it quickly and could never do that, I even tried altering some of the pieces so they would fit. Yet others around me were content in carefully selecting which piece fitted into another piece.

When our lives are in pieces, we need to take the time, energy and dedication and the love of God to restore it.

We have our personal life; social life; work life; prayer life; family life and what have we left – just a bunch of pieces that don't fit together. No matter how hard you try.

And that is why the crowd had gathered around Jesus.

And that is why the religious authorities opposed Him.

And that is why His family tried to restrain Him.

Each, in their own way was trying to put the pieces of their lives together but it was not working – the pieces didn't fit. They have been found out. Their life and their world are not what they thought it was or should be. One reality had fallen and a new one was ready to rise.

And when we have reached the place where we want to toss away all the bits and pieces – along comes Jesus.

He always stands before us as the image of unity, wholeness and integration.

He does for us what we cannot do for ourselves – Jesus puts our lives and house back in order.

Jesus offers us a different image of what life might look like by revealing the division in our lives and the houses that cannot stand and the crumbling of our kingdoms.

But many reject Jesus and His help. It is a hard place to be – change is always that way, even if it is for our own good. Sadly we choose the pain of staying where we are, as we are – instead of taking just one step forward to change, to break the habit, to get the help you need but you procrastinate, you make excuses, you place the blame on someone or something else.

That is what the Religious leaders did when they accused Jesus of allegiance to Satan. Yet their accusations revealed the depth of their own conflict and division. It was their way of avoiding themselves.

Putting the pieces back together can be frightening – but you are never alone. Where is God's hand in all this? Wrapped securely around us, holding us safely, comforting us, strengthening us – for we are His children.

The beginning of wholeness is first to acknowledge our brokenness.

Where is your house divided?

How and to what extent have you created conflict and division in your relationships?

In what ways do you live a fragmented life; parceling out pieces here and there?

What is it that shatters your life? Anger, resentment, greed, insecurity, perfectionism, sorrow, loss, fear, envy, guilt, loneliness – a long list.

There are all sorts of events, circumstances and even people by which our lives are broken which can result in us being separated from others, our self and God.

But Christ is stronger than anything that fragments our lives.

He binds the forces that divide, heals the wound that separates and refashions our scattered pieces into a new whole.

We read in Psalm 138 that God always answers when His children cry out to Him as every good father should do. When we are attacked or hurting God answers us – He may not answer us the way we want Him to or when we want Him to, but He always answers.

Often His answers come in the form of extra strength or confidence in our souls to help us face our troubles. These come, not because we get everything we want at the exact moment we ask for it, but because God is in charge.

There is nothing about your life or my life that cannot be put back together by the love of God through Christ.

And let's not only consider our own lives this morning but the responsibility we all have as followers of Christ and part of the Christian Church.

In our increasingly computerized, impersonal world, warm relationships among members of God's family take on major importance.

Therefore we are called by God to also give the loving, personalized care that we may have to others who may find it nowhere else.