

“A House United: The Family of God”
Mark 3:20–35 6-10-18 Pent3B18

We have been blessed to watch the kingdom of God grow as God adds members to this congregation. Through His Spirit God has called people to faith and moved them to desire membership in a family like no other family on earth: the Church--a House united.

That is what God had in mind at the very beginning in Eden. He created male and female and brought them together and the two became one, having many children. But even before the first child was born to them the House United became the house divided. Satan tempted Adam and Eve to sin. They thought they could be like God by disobeying His commandment.

Today’s OT reading starts after that transgression and shows their attempts to hide from God, then to justify their sins. Adam blames Eve and God himself. Her defense is “The devil made me do it.” They had free will not to sin, and yet chose sin. Their house was divided, the man and the woman from each other, and both from God. The world has seen division ever since.

If you listen to the news from different sources, you may wonder

if both sources are on the same planet. Polls reveal deep divisions in values and viewpoints among people about politicians, policies and morality. Unfortunately, this is not new, for thus has it always been. We are a nation at war with itself.

But the house of God is different. It consists of those who were once separated from God by their sin and brought near to him by His Son. God kept His promise to Eve that her descendant would crush the head of Satan who has sown much division, despair and death in this world. By receiving the punishment for sin that we deserve, he has reconciled the world to God, canceling out the guilt and shame of our sin.

But He has done more, He has reconciled us to each other. Paul wrote in Ephesians about how Jew and Gentile were made one people by Christ. Traditionally enemies toward each other, they recognized in God’s law a common need for redemption. They saw in Christ their common redeemer.

In today’s Gospel, we see Jesus describing the family of God in the context of taking the fight to Satan. He is the strong man who binds

Satan so that he may rescue those souls that Satan has stolen through his lies and temptations.

Though accused of casting out the work of the devil by the power of the devil, Christ does so by the power of God. For if Satan is at war with himself he cannot stand any more than a household or nation can stand that fights against itself.

Without unity in Christ the world is divided. Apart from faith in Christ, there are competing false beliefs. Some worship a punishing god whose demands we can never meet. That leads to despair. Others worship the god of self with low standards all can meet, which leads to false security and pride.

We who cling to the one way to heaven through Christ are united by falling short of God's demands but resting in His forgiving love. As God's family we share that mercy with each other. We treat each other truly as brothers and sisters of one house united by that mercy.

In doing so, we understand that God's law applies to us all without partiality. He does not condemn my sin but wink at yours. He judges not only our deeds but also every thought and word. We will sin

differently, but we will sin for sure. So together we repent, together we are forgiven, and together we hold each other accountable in love and gentleness. It also means that we have one mission for which we will work together. Our gifts complete the gifts of others. As a house united, we will do the will of God in calling others to know Him.

God's family does God's will because it is formed by God's will: born not of the same mother but of the same spirit. John wrote about Jesus: *to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God, who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God. 1:12–13*

As you move forward in faith, be united with each other, for by His grace God has made you a house united. He has brought new members and will bring more. By hearing the Gospel of Christ through faithful preachers and by seeing your light shine, those now divided from Him God will unite with him.

You are the family of God by God's will and because you do His will. His will is that first you

believe in His Son, and then that
you share His son. You are a house
united by this faith. Share it
together, in Christ. Amen.