**Christ is not Divided**

Based on [Luke 11:14-28](https://biblia.com/books/esv/Lk11.14-28)

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Third Sunday in Lent ~ Occuli

Pastor Nathan Fuehrer

Today’s scripture records the event in which Jesus utters the words, “A house divided against itself cannot stand.” These words were quoted by Abraham Lincoln during the American Civil War. Fitting words to use to describe a civil war, a war that divides a nation. Jesus uses it as an argument to show that he’s not in league with Satan. The reasoning He gives is this: “Satan has a kingdom, filled with demons, and Satan is not so foolish as to stop his own work. If Satan induced men to cast out demons, he would divide his own kingdom, and it would fall.” Jesus argues, “Satan is not that foolish, Neither am I.”

I love the fact that Jesus Christ is a debater for the Gospel. He makes arguments to challenge people’s thinking. When confronted by his opponents, he doesn’t just ignore them or insult them, he uses their own reasoning against them. He gives arguments.

Jesus makes arguments based on scripture and plain reason. That means we are invited to do it too. So here we go. Jesus says (1) “A house divided cannot stand.” And (2) scripture says that Christians are a house of living stones. Therefore, what can we conclude. (3) If christians are divided, the church cannot stand. Christians should be unified, should agree. Paul writes, “I appeal to you that you all agree, that there should be no divisions among you, but that you should be of the same mind and judgment”. Christians should agree, and when they don’t they should humble themselves and come to a common understanding of the truth. They should be united in doctrine.

Here someone might say, “This is true; christianity should be united. So we shouldn’t disagree on doctrine. We shouldn’t argue over whether women should be pastors or whether women can be men, or whether women can marry women. We shouldn’t disagree on whether Jesus is God’s son or just a holy man, or whether men evolved from apes. We should just all agree that we are christian, and agree to disagree on everything else. After all, Jesus says that if we are divided we will fall.”

This sort of reasoning is not what unites the church, but what has divided humanity from it’s saviour and is continuing to divide. Jesus says, “How I would have gathered you, like a hen her chicks, but you were not willing.” Christ calls and gathers his church, and there are those who refuse to come. This does not mean Jesus’ house is divided, it means that many are called, but few are chosen. It means that Jesus did not come to bring peace but a sword. It means that Jesus is dividing, not his sheep from one another, but sheep from goats.

Many become discontented because they believe the church is becoming divided. But the truth is that the church is bigger today than it ever has been. The church is not people who attend service...the church is true believers. Those who have died are still members of the church, only in heaven now.. It is true that less people per capita identify as christian today, but that doesn’t mean the church has shrunk. It means that fewer hypocrites attend. Those who truly believe remain with Christ and gather with his flock, and that will never change.

Now to be clear, there are divisions in the church, in one sense. There are true believers who do not worship together. This is not because of hypocrisy, but because of false teachers who create confusion that lead people astray. There are false teachers who (1) treat the church like a business, (2) treat believers like customers, and (3) treat worship and doctrine like they are consumer goods. So to unite customers--that means to bring them to their business--a business will phase out products that are the least popular, and will introduce new products to draw in the crowds. All the while, christ’s sheep are told that they need to *not be so stubborn,* but to let the church change its doctrine and worship to attract new customers. Of course they don’t call them customers, they call them “lost sheep.” However, there was never a lost sheep who was carried back to the church by anything but Christ himself.

Scripture gives us many arguments to contradict this foolishness. Let’s consider three, each of which you can return to when you feel like the church is too divided, that there are too many denominations, that Christians who insist on doctrine and worship that is informed by the scriptures and not by the world are just being selfish and stubborn.

***First, the church will never fall.***  There will be believers when christ comes again. Anyone who says “The church needs to change its music, its teaching, or its practice” in order to draw more people in are not speaking in the Holy Spirit. Jesus says, “On this doctrine I will build my church, and the Gates of hell will not prevail against it.”

***Second, the only unity in the church is unity in teaching.***  Anyone who would argue that those who disagree in the church need to agree to disagree about doctrine, are not speaking in the Spirit. If Christ says, “From the beginning God created them male and female”, and some church member says “there are more than two genders”, that doesn’t mean the church is divided, or that church members should agree to disagree. This means that one person is speaking for Christ and the other is speaking for satan. And as Scripture says, “What agreement has Christ with Satan?” None.

***Third, anyone who contradicts Jesus’ teaching is against him.***  To quote Jesus’ own words today, “Whoever is not with me is against me, and whoever does not gather with me scatters.” When Peter contradicts Jesus’ passion, Jesus says “Get behind me, Satan.” Yes there are meek and mild christians who will speak false doctrine. It doesn’t mean they are satan incarnate. It does mean that, in that situation, they are speaking with the influence of Satan.

In conclusion, Jesus gives arguments. Scripture is full of arguments that keep your mind thinking rightly about the things of God. There is division among those who claim the name christian, and there will always be. But those who truly believe are unified in heart and mind by the Holy Spirit. They agree, not to be polite, or to gain more customers for the church. They agree because the Holy Spirit unites them in one Lord, one faith, and one baptism, and because Christ is not divided.

So don’t get angry or anxious when people around you speak as though the church is a business. Speak the truth in love, and remember that your place in the kingdom is secure, and satan cannot prevail. Love, give and forgive as you align with Christ and his church in fighting the good fight of faith.