

# A HOUSE DIVIDED

**Lectionary 10B, Pentecost 3B – June 6, 2021 – Mark 3:20-35**

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*Grace, mercy, and peace to you from Christ Jesus our Lord and drum major. Amen.*

When I was in marching band in college at WVU, the band directors would end band camp each night by telling a story about the band's history, and about how much it meant to the people of West Virginia and the alumni of the university.

One story that we heard each year without fail was about a young woman who had been in the band during her college years who was blind. I think her name might have been Sally.

Sally was blind.

Now, imagine how difficult it must be to learn music when you're blind and can't *read* the music. Certainly, there are some notable blind musicians like Stevie Wonder, but for the most part, they're few and far between. But Sally had overcome all of that in high school, and here she was in one of the largest college marching bands in the country.

In order to learn the drill, the movements around the field during shows, Sally had a partner during rehearsals who would help her find her spots. But during performances, it was all Sally, she carefully memorized each and every step she needed to take, and it worked flawlessly. Until one night, she zigged when she should of zagged, and suddenly she wasn't where she was supposed to be, she was out of sync with the rest of the band.

As the band directors watched in horror, wondering what they could do to prevent her being trampled by a tuba, they saw her pause, and begin moving again. She zigged, and zagged, avoiding collisions with other band members until she was right back where she belonged. She was that brilliant to be able to figure out exactly how and where she needed to go in order to get herself back on track.

The band directors told this story as part of conveying one of their mottos: Every Member. Note. Every Ste. Every Time.

You'd think that in a band with 350 people, it would be easy to hide in the crowd when you make mistakes. But one person being out of step, one person playing wrong notes, one person speeding up the tempo... one mistake could throw off the entire band. And that's just if there's an accident, if someone is TRYING to take control and throw things off, the results could be disastrous.

"A house divided cannot stand."

That's what Jesus says when he's being challenged on one side by the scribes and religious authorities, and by his own family on the other. They're concerned that his ministry across Galilee has gotten out of hand, that he's pushed the envelope a bit too far. They seem to be asking Jesus, "can't you just stick with the status quo?"

But anyone who knows anything of the Gospel, knows that the good news is often a challenge to the status quo, that the message of Jesus Christ and the cross can be downright unsettling at times.

And I think Jesus knows this, too. Because for as much as he tries to upset the proverbial fruit basket, he also offers a calm and reassuring presence. He never gives up on the disciples, even when it's clear that they're not understanding his message, even when they're lacking in faith. Jesus doesn't quit

when the things he tries to accomplish don't come easy, you know, even healing the blind man, which is recorded later in the Gospel of Mark, took him TWO tries...

Jesus offers reassurance and comfort in the midst of change and confusion. And all he asks, is that people follow him. That they stay in line. That they stay with him.

The beauty of something like an orchestra. The art of something like a marching band... It all comes from the unity, the shared goal. Every Member. Every Note. Every Step. Every Time.

If the trumpets tried to pull away from the tubas while the drummers were doing their own thing completely separately. It wouldn't work. It would fall apart.

And likewise, when we follow God, when we follow Jesus, we can't try to pull him in one direction or another to suit our own desires. We can't look at the often radical message of Christianity and be like Jesus' family, saying "hey, can we tame it down a bit? Maybe not fling the door quite so wide?"

No, in order to fight the powers of evil in this world, we need to be together, we need to be all in.

In what Jesus says to his family, the scribes, and the disciples on that day, he shuts down all those people who are trying to create division for their own personal benefit. He suggests that there is evil in the world, that we are in a fight against it. That the struggles of the church are not always the fault of its leaders, but rather evidence of that evil that we all need to fight against.

And that rather than pointing fingers... we need to be united in our efforts, we need to allow the Holy Spirit to guide our work. This is our church. This is our family.

As often as possible, I try to use that language. There are some cases where it's more appropriate to use the language of congregation or parish, but often, I call you all my church family, because you are. You are my brothers and sisters in Christ. God chose each and every one of us to be part of this family here, to be one family, one house of God. And a house divided cannot stand.

Just think what it would look like if the choir tried to pull away from the property committee, while the WELCA group was doing their own thing completely separately. It wouldn't work. It would fall apart.

Jesus says, "here are my mother and my brothers. Whoever does the will of God is my brother and sister and mother."

And so, let's stand up together with our brothers and sisters. Stand as a house (of God) that is united, NOT divided. Let's fight the good fight against evil, and do the work of God. Amen.