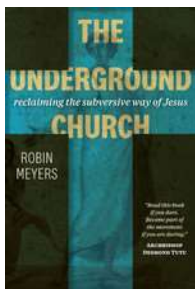


## Sermon for 6<sup>th</sup> June 2021 – First Sunday after Trinity – Deborah Simpson

2 Corinthians 4.13-5.1, Mark 3.20-end



Today's gospel reading paints a daunting picture of the perceptions of the people of Jesus' hometown. The people who knew Jesus, including his family, worried that he might just be "out of his mind." This is indeed a contrast to the ways in which Jesus is typically portrayed. This is a dangerous Jesus who ran the risk of being perceived as deranged. In his book "The Underground Church: Reclaiming the Subversive Way of Jesus" Robin Meyers captures some of this danger when he points to Mary Oliver's poem "Maybe" in which Jesus' "melancholy madness" is seen by his fellows as more dangerous than a storm. Are we prepared for the stormy waters that would be stirred up should we take Jesus at his word?

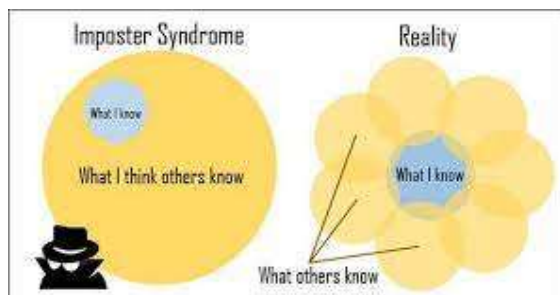
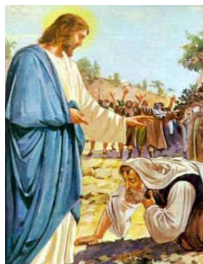


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I'm sure most of us have heard of Imposter Syndrome, or maybe even experienced it for ourselves! Its the fear that one of these days you are going to be "found out", that people will realise that you are not who you say you are or not who you want people to think you are or who you want to be. In most people such thoughts are completely unjustified, except to themselves. It's a fear that there are metaphorically cracks in your house that will lead the smooth façade to eventually crumble and expose what is behind.



From the beginning of his ministry, as told by St. Mark, Jesus has been dealing with divided houses and kingdoms. He has cast out demons, healed Peter's mother in law, cleansed a leper, and caused a paralysed man to walk. The houses and kingdoms of these people are divided. As Jesus puts it, the strong man has invaded their homes. Their lives are not their own. They live with inner conflict and turmoil. They have been separated from their community and all that gave them security and identity. Their outer conditions of illness, paralysis, and possession point to the inner conflict, not just physically but also spiritually. Both need to be healed.

That battle and interior conflict has been around since Adam and Eve separated themselves from God and hid amongst the trees of the garden. It is seen in Israel wanting a king so it can be like all the other nations; forgetting that it has a unique calling, that it is to be different from other nations, that it is through Israel, the people of God, that God will act for the benefit of all people.



This division and inner conflict is a reality of today's world and our lives.. A nation divided results in vitriolic politics and in the extreme, civil war. An economy divided yields poverty and injustice. A community divided becomes individualism , prejudice and violence. Humanity divided is all these things on a global level.

We all know what it is like to live divided lives, those times when your outsides and your insides don't match up. That's what it means to be a house divided. You're one person at work another at home. You act one way with certain people and a different way with other people. Life gets divided into pieces. There is the work life, the family life, the prayer life, the personal life, the social life. If we're not careful we can be left just with a lot of pieces.



It seems that we are forever trying to put the pieces of our lives together. That's why the crowd has gathered around Jesus. That's why the religious authorities oppose him. That's why his family tries to restrain him. In their own way each is trying to put the pieces of their life together but it's not working. They won't fit. They have been found out. Their life and their world are neither what they thought they were nor what Jesus knows they could be. One reality has fallen and a new one is ready to take over.

Jesus always stands before us as the image of unity, wholeness, integration. He is the stronger one. He does for us what we cannot do for ourselves. He puts our lives and houses back in order. Jesus offers a different image of what life might look like. He does so by revealing the division in our lives, the houses that cannot stand, and the crumbling of our kingdoms.

Even when it is for our own good, with the offer of new life and intended for wholeness, that's a hard place to be. It means that one way or another change of some sort is coming. Most of us don't like that. It can be frightening.



"He has gone out of his mind," the people say. The religious authorities accuse him of allegiance to Beelzebul, the ruler of demons. They project onto Jesus their own conflict and division. They have declared that which is holy, sacred, and beautiful to be unclean, dirty, and bereft of God. Their accusations say more about themselves than Jesus. Their accusations reveal the depth of the conflict and division within them. Their accusations are a way of avoiding themselves.

It's hard to look at the division and inner conflict within our lives. The beginning of wholeness, however, is acknowledging our brokenness. How and to what extent have we created conflict and division within our relationships. In what ways do we live fragmented lives, laying out pieces here and there like a jigsaw.?



There are all sorts of forces, things, events, sometimes even people by which our lives are broken and through which we are separated from God, others, and our self. Christ is stronger than anything that fragments our lives. He refashions pieces into a new whole. In this morning's reading, the concept of house and family are mentioned a lot. This event takes place in someone's house (possibly Peter's) and Jesus' family hears about it and comes to seize him, Jesus talks about a house divided and a strong man's house, and it ends with him saying whoever does the will of God is part of his family.



Because of Jesus, we have been adopted into God's family, all of us are the realization of God's covenantal promise to Abraham. We show ourselves to be 'in the family' by our love for Jesus, our love for each other and by doing God's will in the power of the Spirit. Jesus is not out of his mind; Jesus is not filled with demonic spirits. Rather, Jesus has the mind of God; Jesus is filled with the Holy Spirit - and invites all of us to be of the same mind and same Spirit in a new family as his sisters and brothers.