First Sunday after Trinity 2021  St Andrews Milngavie

Mark 3:20-end

2 Corinthians 4:13-5:1

Genesis 3:8-15

Helen and I had a wonderful walk this week on Wednesday.  In the midst of the Kilpatrick Hills, we sat by a lochan and drank our coffee in the sun.

There was not a soul in sight. It was beautiful, peaceful and calm.

All seemed well in the world and for a while we enjoyed that thought and put to the back of our minds the realities and challenges of our world.

Today our scripture is challenging. It speaks of division and conflict.

That battle which has been around since Adam and Eve separated themselves from God and hid amongst the trees of the garden, and then blamed each other or the serpent, or anyone but themselves!

Thus, Jesus had been dealing with divided houses and kingdoms from the beginning of his ministry. He has cast out demons, healed Peter's mother-in-law, cleansed a leper, and caused a paralytic to walk. The houses and kingdoms of these people were divided, physically emotionally spiritually.

This division and inner conflict continue today.

In fact, division seems to be a major issue which we hear about constantly.

A fact that is promoted, possibly too much, by the media, politics and even the church itself. There's nothing like talking about division to cause division!

Today's Gospel reading comes early in Jesus' ministry. So far in Marks Gospel Jesus has been in a whirlwind of preaching and miracles.  And his magnetism and charisma are as astonishing as his miracles. Huge crowds have been gathering around him and, at his command, people are leaving everything to follow him, including the fisherman Simon and Andrew and the tax collector Levi.

There is a palpable sense of excitement, bewilderment and fear in the first three chapters of Mark. For some people it's an opportunity to seek healing while for others particularly the Jewish establishment it's very alarming.  Jesus had started to meet the authorities head on challenging the entrenched ideas about the Sabbath.

The crowds didn't understand.

"He has gone out of his mind," the people say. The religious authorities accuse him of allegiance to Beelzebul, the ruler of demons.

It's hard to look at the division and inner conflict within our lives. The beginning of wholeness, however, is acknowledging our brokenness. Where is our own house divided? How and to what extent have we created conflict and division within our relationships.

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.

But even in our own personal lives we may feel divided and pulled in different directions as we tried to hold in tension work, family commitments, church and other demands, trying to please all as much as we can.

Even Jesus wasn't exempt from family demanding his time.

"Your mother and your brothers and sisters are outside asking for you."

We are told in Mark 3:32.

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.

Christ is stronger than anything that fragments our lives. He binds the forces that divide, heals the wounds that separate, and refashions pieces into a new whole. There is nothing about your life or my life that cannot be put back together by the love God in Christ.

Of course, Paul in his letters constantly reminds us to look beyond ourselves, to the greater life to come, the bigger picture.

This morning's lesson is no exception.

"Therefore, we do not lose heart. Though outwardly we are wasting away, yet inwardly we are being renewed day by day.  For our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all.  So, we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen, since what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal."   2 Corinthians 4:16-18