**A HOUSE DIVIDED CANNOT STAND**

Civil unrest. Throughout history, including our American history, there has always been periods of social confrontations that threatened to divide us into factions. What we are now experiencing in Minnesota, and throughout the nation, is a small example of what our country, and all countries, must go through to build a union. The current crisis is but a snapshot of what has happened since God confused the languages at the Tower of Babel (Genesis 11). Divided tongues, divided cultures, divided skin colors, divided powers, and divided economic standards have always created barriers among people. Barriers lead to prejudices that inevitably cause strife, even war.

Jesus famously said, *“Every kingdom divided against itself is brought to desolation, and every city or house divided against itself will not stand“ (Matt. 12:25).* Abraham Lincoln used this quote in a famous speech he gave June 16, 1858 while running against Stephen Douglas for the U. S. Senate seat. It cost him the Senate race, but won him the presidency two years later. It revolved around the issue of slavery. He said,

“We are now far into the *fifth* year, since a policy was initiated, with the *avowed* object, and confident promise, of putting an end to slavery agitation. Under the operation of that policy, that agitation has not only ***not*** *ceased*, but has *constantly augmented.* In *my* opinion, it *will* not cease, until a *crisis* shall have been reached, and passed.

"A house divided against itself cannot stand."

I believe this government cannot endure, permanently half *slave* and half *free*. I do not expect the Union to be *dissolved* -- I do not expect the house to *fall* -- but I *do* expect it will cease to be divided. It will become *all* one thing or *all* the other.”

It did indeed take a crisis reached, and passed – a bloody Civil War, to resolve the slavery issue. Over 500,000 citizen soldiers died to resolve it. We are now the “United” States because a divided house cannot stand. By the time that war was drawing to a close Mr. Lincoln won reelection and only days before his assassination gave his second inaugural address. In that short, pithy, brilliant (perhaps his most powerful) speech on the steps of the capital building, and just days before his death, he spoke to “bind up the nations wounds.” Here is an excerpt we all need to read and remember at this present hour:

On the occasion corresponding to this four years ago, all thoughts were anxiously directed to an impending civil war. All dreaded it--all sought to avert it. While the inaugural address was being delivered from this place, devoted altogether to *saving* the Union without war, insurgent agents were in the city seeking to *destroy* it without war--seeking to dissolve the Union, and divide effects, by negotiation. Both parties deprecated war; but one of them would *make* war rather than let the nation survive; and the other would *accept* war rather than let it perish. And the war came.

Neither party expected for the war, the magnitude, or the duration, which it has already attained. Neither anticipated that the *cause* of the conflict might cease with, or even before, the conflict itself should cease… Both read the same Bible, and prayed to the same God; and each invokes His aid against the other. It may seem strange that any men should dare to ask a just God's assistance in wringing their bread from the sweat of other men's faces; but let us judge not that we be not judged. The prayers of both could not be answered; that of neither has been answered fully. The Almighty has his own purposes.

"Woe unto the world because of offences! for it must needs be that offences come; but woe to that man by whom the offence cometh!"

If we shall suppose that American Slavery is one of those offences which, in the providence of God, must needs come, but which, having continued through His appointed time, He now wills to remove, and that He gives to both North and South, this terrible war, as the woe due to those by whom the offence came, shall we discern therein any departure from those divine attributes which the believers in a Living God always ascribe to Him?

Fondly do we hope--fervently do we pray--that this mighty scourge of war may speedily pass away. Yet, if God wills that it continue, until all the wealth piled by the bond-man's two hundred and fifty years of unrequited toil shall be sunk, and until every drop of blood drawn with the lash, shall be paid by another drawn with the sword, as was said three thousand years ago, so still it must be said "the judgments of the Lord, are true and righteous altogether"

With malice toward none; with charity for all; with firmness in the right, as God gives us to see the right, let us strive on to finish the work we are in; to bind up the nation's wounds; to care for him who shall have borne the battle, and for his widow, and his orphan--to do all which may achieve and cherish a just and lasting peace, among ourselves, and with all nations.”

Brilliant! Wise! Prophetic. And very, very Biblical. Oh that we had statesmen like that now at this crisis to bring God into the solution for our divided nation. With race riots started by a rogue police officer we now find ourselves running the pendulum of emotions. From anger at the injustice, to weeping for the insanity of mob actions, we are all hurt by what we are now seeing. But Lincoln’s words, pulled right from the pages of God’s fingers, remind us of our course of action. Reworded to fit our own day we read:

“Fondly do we hope – fervently do we pray – that this mighty scourge speedily pass away... The judgments of the Lord are true and righteous altogether… With malice toward none, with charity for all, with firmness in the right… let us strive… to bind up the nation’s wounds… to do all which may achieve and cherish a just and lasting peace among ourselves, and with all nations.”

Whether it is our family, our church, our local or national communities, what Jesus said when charged with casting out demons by the power of Beelzebub, is wise advice for this present civil unrest: “*“Every house divided against itself will not stand.”* Start with your family, then your local fellowship, then your community, then your nation. Pray for malice toward none, charity for all, firmness in the right to bind up the nation’s wounds. Amen.

Until tomorrow… “Love suffers long and is kind… does not behave rudely… thinks no evil… bears… believes… hopes… endures all things.”

Agape.

Rick