

Genesis 11:1-9. Now the whole world had one language and a common speech. ² As men moved eastward, they found a plain in Shinar and settled there. ³ They said to each other, "Come, let's make bricks and bake them thoroughly." They used brick instead of stone, and tar for mortar. ⁴ Then they said, "Come, let us build ourselves a city, with a tower that reaches to the heavens, so that we may make a name for ourselves and not be scattered over the face of the whole earth." ⁵ But the LORD came down to see the city and the tower that the men were building. ⁶ The LORD said, "If as one people speaking the same language they have begun to do this, then nothing they plan to do will be impossible for them. ⁷ Come, let us go down and confuse their language so they will not understand each other." ⁸ So the LORD scattered them from there over all the earth, and they stopped building the city. ⁹ That is why it was called Babel—because there the LORD confused the language of the whole world. From there the LORD scattered them over the face of the whole earth.

Believe that the LORD is in control.

He carefully watches over all.

He acts in love and wisdom.

Suddenly everything changed. Barriers of understanding and language sprung up and were difficult to handle. Confusion and frustration were the common lot of the people and it showed.

Maybe we can relate. It certainly hasn't happened in an instant, but all the same, it feels like many things are changing around us so quickly. Barriers of language and understanding may have snuck up on you. A neighbor, a co-worker, speaks a different language or comes from a different background and you struggle to understand or relate with them. You may speak the same language as your neighbor and others around you, but challenges such as generation perspective and a different worldview still exist. Maybe you live in town and it has dawned on you that the neighborhood is changing right around you so suddenly and that can be intimidating and a little bit scary.

As we consider the world that we are living in and the sinful world that our young people and those graduating this year will be heading out into and we might be concerned and anxious. Our world today has certainly seen its fair share of confusion and challenges. The latest news makes you cringe when we consider the racist words and actions that are so prevalent especially where confusion and lack of understanding and compassion abound. It makes your head spin and your stomach churn to see an issue like the clear understanding of male and female being made murky as this distinction is questioned and challenged. We have now reached the point that there is even confusion and much consternation about which bathroom a person should use when out in public. This is the strange and changing world that we live in. Such a change may not have happened in an instant, but it can seem that way. And so as we look out onto a world full of confusion, as the high school graduate looks at the challenges of life at a bigger school and more people, as they prepare themselves for a

more diverse and worldly environment, what are they to do? Young men and women who have been recently called into the public ministry will face the challenges of this changing world and sharing God's Word in a world that is so filled with confusion and ambiguity. People of any age who are looking out at this changing world may wonder what are we to do?

As we hear God's Word for today, the Spirit speaks to us through his Word. May we be encouraged by these words to know and to **Believe that the LORD is in control. The LORD carefully watches over all. The LORD acts in love and wisdom.**

Suddenly everything changed. On that plain in Shinar, at a place we know as Babel, barriers of understanding and language sprung up and were difficult to handle. Confusion and frustration were the common lot of the people and it showed.

They stopped building the tower, they stopped building the city, they and they reluctantly went out in different directions to fill the earth like God had commanded. Frustration and confusion was around them, the challenges of a world that seemed to change so suddenly confronted them, and yet God was there. As the languages changed and as frustration built and bubbled and boiled over, God was carefully watching. He was in control. He did not simply toy with his people and confuse and frustrate his those on earth for the sake of his own twisted amusement, nor did he crush or abandon his people in their disobedience. But our lesson shows us clearly that he acted in concern.

Moses paints a picture for us with his words. He tells us that *God came down*, (more literally knelt down) *to see the city and the tower that the men were building*. In his great concern for the crown of his creation God stoops down on one knee and he takes a close look at what his people were doing. And it was not good. It was displeasing to God. Only a few generations after the Flood the people had reverted to their wicked ways. They were deliberate in their disobedience to God. They did not listen to God's will, but put their own desire, their own glory and fame, and recognition and reputation on display in the city square and had all bow down to it. They had made themselves their own gods, and this was seen in the building of their city and the construction of their tower and in the very structuring of their thinking. They had put themselves first. They were using the intelligence, the talents, the gifts, and the treasures that God had given them and on a human level it was a rather impressive thing that they were doing, but they were doing this all to their own glory, and so on a spiritual level it was a deadly game that they were playing. God and his will had been neglected, forgotten, and defied. God had told them to go out be fruitful, fill the earth and subdue it, and how did the people respond. *Come now let us make a name for ourselves*. They defied God's will and basically said, "We are not going anywhere! We are staying put. We are not going to let God tell us what to do. We don't need him. We are able by ourselves to distinguish good from evil and right from wrong. And so we will make the rules people to live by. We will determine morality and immorality." And this what we have determined to be God and it was not good.

The LORD knelt down and looked closely at all that was going on and then the triune God came to this conclusion. *"If as one people speaking the same language they have begun to do this, then nothing they plan to do will be impossible for them. ⁷ Come, let us go down and confuse their language so they will not understand each other."* It was not as if God was worried that the creation was going to overtake the Creator, or that he needed to stymie the growth and achievement of man so that they would not overtake and overshadow what

God has done. This is not God acting on his own selfish behalf, but this is God acting in love and concern. This is God watching over his people and knowing that if he didn't intervene things would get even worse. They were driving a wedge between themselves and a need for the only true God who alone could truly bless them and give them eternal life. God looked down in concern for those that he cared for would knowing that if this continued these people would end up hurting themselves severely. And so God stepped in. He had to act.

Pastor Luetke recently shared the following illustration concerning God's action at the tower of Babel. *Think of it this way: The children of a certain family are playing with end tables and sofas in the living room to build themselves a fort. They place the quilts and the blankets over the chairs and they get into their fort and have good old time with their imagination playing together. Dad loves to see them using their ingenuity. Mom snaps a picture. They post it on Facebook. They share the moment with their friends.*

But, if the same parents saw the same children doing such a thing – in the machine shed or in the garage – let's say – and they start building their fort in such a way that they are able to climb up on things and reach the gas can on the bench and the barbeque lighter on the shelf – well, that's when parenting picks up, the cameras are put away, and Mom and Dad put a stop to "play time". Why would they intervene? Well those parents have all sorts of good plans for their children. They don't want to see their children inflict harm upon themselves, and they also hope to meet their grand-children someday – although that thought is probably far away from their minds right now – and so they act. They act to preserve the family not to mention the garage and the house....

Ever since sin came into this world, the LORD God has taken up the task of guarding and protecting people from themselves. God has also graciously made known his good and gracious will to redeem, rescue and give eternal life to this world of mortal beings meant for heaven.

God is well aware of the issues that we are facing in our world today. He stoops down from his throne on high and he looks with special care upon his people; and with mercy and grace he governs the affairs of the world. He does not sweep us all away because of our wickedness and rebellion, our defiance and our love of self that so often surpasses our love of God. Instead in kindness, patience, and wisdom he allows the tower to be built, but never completed – so to speak. He may allow mankind to achieve many things even as they live in defiance to him, but every so often he will hand over mankind to frustration as men and women stumble in our own confusion and sin. In this frustration that God allows, that God sends, one of the things that becomes so apparent is how God's truth stands out. The nonsense of this world, the bickering, the confusion and frustration leaves one searching for more.

As we pray for the confusion and the frustration of this world to subside - and we certainly can and will pray such prayers - know that God has everything under his careful observation; and believe that the LORD is in control. With that said, let us also understand that while such confusion and frustration is difficult to watch or witness, and while it may weigh on us, God may use such confusion for his ultimate purposes. When the world entices the recent graduate to think like the ways of this world, Christian young men and women might not be led astray by the thoughts and theories of this world, because for one thing the world is in such a mess of confusion. And another reason that God's people of every age will remain protected and

sheltered in Christ is that God's Word stands out as a beacon of hope and light in such a lost and confused and darkened world.

The world suddenly changed for those on this plain of Shinar. Confused and uncertain about their future, there was nothing left for them to do but to follow the will of God. They scattered, they went out into the world and reluctantly did as God commanded; they spread out and filled the earth once more. But God did not forget about them. He watched carefully as they scattered knowing that he would act in a way that would undo this confusion. His plan of salvation would not stand uncompleted, but it would reach to its end. It would reach to the heavens. For God would preserve his people. He would call Abraham, he would watch over Jacob and his sons. He would lead his people Israel to the promised land. He would preserve them in captivity and bring them back again. The line of the Savior would be preserved and the Savior promised to Adam and Eve, to Abraham and Sarah, to David and his descendants, would come. Jesus Christ our God and the Savior would come and the Son of God who build a way that reached to heaven. And thus God stooped down, this time in the flesh and he paid for the rebellion, the defiance of his people, the transgressions of all people, and our sin as he obeyed the Father's will perfectly in our place. He lived. He died. He rose again. And then on the 50th day after his resurrection as men and women from all over the world gathered in Jerusalem, bearing the sign of Babel, speaking the different languages, God acted in love. He sent his Spirit upon the apostles. Those fisherman and everyday people from Galilee were now blessed by the Holy Spirit with the ability to speak in different languages so that they would go out from that place and the whole world might know the message of salvation through Christ Jesus. He sent his Holy Spirit so that the God's saving Word and his holy will might be shared with the world and bring wisdom and light to those lost in the confusion and darkness of this world.

As we live in this world of such frustration and confusion we can rest assured knowing that God looks down and carefully watches over all things. He will not abandon his people, but he will act when necessary and wise. He might even use the problems and the frustrations of this world to bring about his saving work and his holy will. As he watches over his Church, as he governs his creation he promises and gives his Spirit to us through Word and Sacrament. He gives us his Spirit so that young and old alike, who look out into this world of confusion and frustration may have his Spirit of Truth. As we look out into this world of confusion and frustration, may we step out into this world, even into new challenges and uncertainties, confident that the Lord is in control. Equipped with the word of truth and his Spirit of Truth God may use you and me to share this message of salvation and the word of truth with the people of this world who are daily surrounded by so much confusion and frustration.

Our God carefully watches over all. He acts in love by frustrating the plans of the wicked and by sending his Son and His Spirit to save and to guide us. As we look out and step out into an ever-changing world know and believe that this truth will always remain the same. The LORD is in control. Amen.