
Genesis 11:1-9. Now the whole world had one language and a common speech. ²As men moved eastward, they found a plain in Shinar and settled there. ³They said to each other, "Come, let's make bricks and bake them thoroughly." They used brick instead of stone, and tar for mortar. ⁴Then 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." ⁵But the LORD came down to see the city and the tower that the men were building. ⁶The 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. ⁷Come, let us go down and confuse their language so they will not understand each other." ⁸So the LORD scattered them from there over all the earth, and they stopped building the city. ⁹That 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 wisdom and love.

He sends out his Spirit of Truth

Have you ever wondered why people speak so many languages? We might think about it while watching world news or when we go out and hear people speaking different languages in the store, or we come across an unfamiliar station on television. And we might think about it for a while until we roll back in our minds to this Bible history lesson from the book of Genesis. For those who do not have knowledge of this account from Bible history it is a bit of a strange wonder. Some even note it as a lasting monument to the cleverness and the ingenuity of the human mind. And while it is quite amazing the amount of languages, the intricacy and detail of those languages, these words of God recorded for us in Genesis chapter 11 shows a very different reason and origin for the differing languages of mankind. As a few Bible commentators have mentioned: *The many languages of this world are not so much a monument to the creative nature of the human mind but serve as a lasting monument to the rebelliousness of the human heart.* Today, we are confronted with the pride that lies in our human hearts and how it may be stirred up in stubborn and defiant ways. And yet, thankfully, that is not the only powerful lesson that we are given today. For in our lesson today we not only learn why there are so many languages, or learn about the rebellious nature of human hearts, but we have an excellent case study in how God displays his patient concern and faithful love even towards those who often defy his will. So fellow forgiven sinners, let us hear the Word of God given to us today and... **Believe that the LORD is in control. For he carefully watches over all. He acts in wisdom and love. He sends out his Spirit of Truth.**

For those people gathered on the fertile plains of Shinar, 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. No longer did the world hold a common speech and therefore there was dissent and distrust among the people, and it was difficult to handle.

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 generational perspective and holding different worldviews 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, frustrating, and a little bit scary.

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 violence that are so prevalent especially where confusion and lack of understanding and lack of compassion abound. And the world knows and senses that this is not right and so often our culture our society stumbles about looking for answers, looking to regain common ground. And so, in spiritual blindness it often happens that sinful human beings insist on trying to build where they should not build. The common ground of sinfulness should not be a place that we ought to stand and celebrate. And yet, that is what the sinful heart inside of each of us yearns for. We want the go-ahead, the approval from anyone, to do what I want to do, to indulge in the sin that I deem as ok for me; and as sinners, and as a sinful society, we often build where we should not build.

One example of this is that this month has been set aside as Pride month, a month designated to celebrate a lifestyle that is clearly in defiance to God's holy will. And we are being taught to support and encourage and stand by one another on this unstable, unsuitable, unholy ground. The world in its sinful flesh insists, even crying out in bitterness and anger toward those that won't join their faulty cause.

This is the kind of world that is being constructed by human beings whose hearts are corrupted by sin and inclined toward evil. This is the world that we live in and it is filled with obstacles and challenges and confusion. And so what is the Christian to do? The high school graduate, the young men and women who have recently been called into the public ministry, will face the challenges of sharing God's Word in a world that is so filled with confusion and ambiguity, what are they to do? Christians 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 wisdom and love. The LORD sends out his Spirit of Truth.**

As the people had stopped and determined to build for themselves a city and a tower to their own glory, it is revealed that God was carefully watching. Moses paints a picture for us with his words. He tells us that ***God came down to see the city and the tower that the men were building.*** It was not that God had trouble seeing what was going on that he came closer, but this is an expression of his great concern. And so concerned for the crown of his creation, God 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 serve this master. 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. 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 like it here! We are***

not going to let God tell us what to do. We don't need him. And so we will make the rules that the people will live by. And this is what we have determined to be good."

But it was not good. For 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. 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, for the people were driving a wedge between themselves and their God. They were ignoring and rejecting the only true God who alone could truly bless them and give them eternal life. The LORD looked down in concern for those that he cared for knowing that if this continued these people would end up hurting themselves severely. And so God stepped in. He had to act.

Pastor Luetke once 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. And in doing God assures us that he is in control. And in his love 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 cares, he is watching, and he wants to keep us from harm, especially eternal harm.

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. In keeping with his promise, he does not sweep us all away in a flood because of our wickedness and rebellion. He does not sweep us away along with 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, it leaves one searching for more, and so God in his great love sends out his Spirit of truth.

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 the Word of God shines like 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 came down, this time in the flesh and he paid for the rebellion, the defiance of his people. He paid for 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 it is 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 may have his Spirit of Truth. Equipped with the word of truth and his Spirit of Truth, God sends us out to share this message of truth with people who are daily surrounded by so much confusion and frustration.

The account of the tower of Babel reveals why there is so many different languages in this world. But these words of God reveal so much more. The Spirit of God works through these words to reveal this truth: 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.