

St. Luke Ev. Lutheran Church
Sermon by Pastor Anthony E. Schultz
Pentecost May 23, 2010 Genesis 11:1-9

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



People of God – rescued from the flaming lake of fire in Hell by the innocent blood of the very Lamb of God:

I love to go to book stores – huge places with hundreds of shelves and tables and thousands – literally thousands of books. Three thousand years ago wise King Solomon wrote **Of making many books there is no end, and much study wearies the body.** Ecclesiastes 12:12 Go to a big book store – and you will find all kind of books about self-improvement and success. There are books full of the stories of people who have been very successful – in the worldly idea of success. Books that say greatness isn't born--it's grown – here's how. Or the genius in all of us – why everything you have been told about genetics, talent and IQ is wrong. You can read about what they call the *Matthew Effect*. The idea that to all who have more – more will be given until they have a lot! And those who have nothing – even what they have will be taken away. When Jesus was talking about that – he wasn't talking about owning a chain of gas station mini-mart car washes. Jesus wasn't talking about owning more and more real estate or mutual funds – becoming Donald Trump or Warren Buffet! Success books talk about the 10,000-hour rule. That's how much time you must invest in study and research to become an expert in any field – they say. Don't misunderstand – there's nothing wrong with being faithful. Faithfulness is always God's benchmark. But the point in coming to Church isn't moralizing. The point in coming to Church isn't what's going to make me a better person. We don't make sermons and teach Bible Class and study the Scriptures to make heaven on earth – to make people be good. The point of Scripture is law and gospel – sin and grace – Jesus' forgiving love. How we live, then, is a reflection of our thankfulness for Jesus taking away all our sins! Fruits of faith are simply that – fruits of faith – the result of Jesus' forgiving love filling our heart to overflowing. In the shadow of the tower of Babel God's Word has us consider:

How Are You Building Your Life?

1. Are you building a monument to here and now?
2. Are you building for eternity in heaven?

The part of God's Word we are concentrating on – is from the book of Genesis – chapter 11. A lot has already happened in God's Word. **In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.** The serpent slithered into the wondrous Garden of Eden and plunged the world into sin and all the horrible consequences. The LORD threw Adam and Eve out of Paradise. But not before he promised, **"I will put enmity between you and the woman and between your offspring and hers. He will crush your head and you will strike his heel."** There was indescribable pain in childbirth – and in a fit of better envious rage Cain murdered his brother Abel. There were thorns and thistles everywhere. By Genesis chapter six God's Word says, **"When**

men began to increase in number on the earth and daughters were born to them, the sons of God saw the daughters of men were beautiful and they married any of them they chose." Young men chose their wives – not because of a common faith in the gospel promises of God – a common love for their Heavenly Father. Young men chose women who were pretty on the outside – and married whoever they chose – not necessarily the one their parents and brothers and sisters thought were best. Already thousands of years before the Savior was born – marriage and the family were under attack. Already back then the devil knew – if he could do hurt and harm to marriage and the family – the very foundation of people would be shaken! **Then the LORD said, "My Spirit will not contend with man forever, for he is mortal; his days will be a hundred and twenty years" ...The LORD saw how great man's wickedness on the earth had become, and that every inclination of the thoughts of his heart were only evil all the time. The LORD was grieved that he had made man on the earth and his heart was filled with pain. For the LORD said, "I will wipe mankind, whom I have created, from the face of the earth – men and animals and creatures that move along the ground, and birds of the air – for I am grieved that I have made them."** How sad is that? How sad that the way people thought and acted caused the heart of the LORD to be filled with pain!

The flood came and there was death and destruction the likes of which this world had not seen before – nor will it see again – until Judgment Day comes! Now Chapter 11 – another sad chapter in the life of people. **Now the whole world had one language and a common speech. As men moved eastward, they found a plain in Shinar and settled there. They said to each other, "Come, let's make bricks and bake them thoroughly." They used brick instead of stone and tar for mortar. 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."** Make a name for ourselves! There is that little germ of pride still in the human heart – to make a name for our self! You can read about that attitude in the Guinness Book of World Records. Take for example the world's record for mashed potatoes. "A single serving of mashed potatoes weighing 18,260 pounds was prepared from instant mashed potato flakes and water in a ready-mix concrete truck and poured into a platform 16 ft. by 16 ft. in Grand Forks, North Dakota before a Potato Bowl football game on September 4, 1982. And then comes the disclaimer – "No further claims in this category will be considered!" What does that mean? If I made a platform that was 32 ft. by 32 ft. and filled two cement trucks with real potatoes peeled and boiled and mashed – and dumped them on this plywood platform in one massive heap – and used a fire truck to spray gravy into a huge dent I mashed on the top – it wouldn't count? They wouldn't even take a look at it? Really? How can they do that? It doesn't say no further claims in this category will be considered – like the 4 mile long banana split – or the 860 pound bowl of strawberries or the largest single dish – a roasted camel stuffed with a roasted sheep – stuffed with cooked chickens – stuffed with fish – stuffed with eggs! That's certainly a lot larger than a *turduckin* – isn't it? What does it matter? What does it count? It only feeds sinful pride that says look at me. When where we always need to look is the cross of Christ and his empty tomb. Where we need to look is the Scriptures – the very Word of God – the Word of Life – the way to Heaven. Here is wisdom that will last for eternity!

But the LORD came down to see the city and the tower that the men were building. 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." People have built some pretty remarkable things – if the truth be told. An easy example is the Pyramid of the Pharaoh Khafre. Have you ever heard of Pharaoh Khafre? Probably not – although his pyramid is by the Sphinx of Giza. Pharaoh Khafre pyramid is huge! It's over 70 stories high. Each stone weighs more than 2 tons – **each stone – 2 tons!** It rises on a 53° angle! The pyramid – is pretty much empty. You can literally go down a very narrow shaft – one person at a time – on a little chicken ladder – to small rooms deep inside. So what's the point? This huge monument to a Pharaoh you have never heard of – behind the Sphinx – that literally faces a two story fast food restaurant – Pizza Hut and Kentucky Fried Chicken. That's what the Sphinx is staring at! There's the Great Wall of China. There are in fact many very great walls in China. The one built during the Ming Dynasty is about 5,500.3 miles long – counting the actual wall plus the trenches and ditches – plus the natural barriers like rivers and hills. It's all very elaborate – designed to keep people in Mongolia from coming into Northern China. There was a time when they built walls – like the Great Wall in China – like the Maginot Line in Europe – to keep invading armies out. Then –

with the advent of planes and parachutes and then tanks and artillery – that could very quickly blow holes in walls – the building of literal walls sort of slowed down. Then you have this whole business of illegals – undocumented aliens coming into the United States – and we are back to building a wall once again! Funny – isn't it – how people in this sin infected – sin spoiled world – keep going in circles – around and around and around! What's the point? What's the use? We build walls and people go under them and around them and over them and through them. I have in my office a little piece of the Berlin Wall. Who except Jesus knew that that would come crashing down, too! The things that people build are only temporary. They will not last. One moment after Judgment Day – none of these things and stuff will matter at all!

Come, let us go down and confuse their language, so they will not understand each other.” So the LORD scattered them from there over all the earth, and they stopped building the city. 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. The devil continues to use the language barrier as a tool to try and prevent people from telling other people about Jesus. Take for example Ruben van Assouw – the 9 year old – sole survivor of the plane crash in Libya. How terrible would it be – to have your dad and your mom and your 11 year old brother all perish in the crash – and you survive. Wouldn't you feel all alone? They say rescue workers found Ruben still strapped in his seat near the front of the plane, unconscious – but still breathing! They flew him back to the Netherlands in an ambulance jet – along with two doctors and his aunt and uncle! What could you say to Ruben? Would you know how to say, “Jesus loves you!”? Do you know anyone who speaks Dutch? I do! Uncle Marty – Auntie Kathleen's husband Uncle Marty is from Holland! Uncle Marty – the one I always watch football with on Thanksgiving! **Uncle Marty! Jesus loves Uncle Marty.** And Uncle Marty knows how to say – *Jesus loves you!* That's what Ruben needs to know and remember. Jesus loves him. When you are the sole survivor – rather than being plagued with survivor guilt – wondering why out of a hundred people you are *the only one* to still be alive – you would have to wonder – why am I here? Why am I still alive? There must still be something very important that Ruben is supposed to do. Otherwise Jesus would have taken him home to Heaven, too! Jesus loves you! That's the most important thing of all. That Jesus died on the cross to wash away all your sins so you can live by him forever! Amen!



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