

June 5, 2022
The Day of Pentecost
St. Timothy Lutheran Church – Huber Heights, OH
Pastor Joel Sutton

Genesis 11:1-9 (Acts 2:1-21; John 14:23-31)

GOD BUILDS WITH HIS WORD.

Grace, mercy, and peace to you from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen.

Our text for meditation today comes from Genesis, the 11th chapter, which you heard read earlier.

Today, fifty days following the Resurrection of our Lord and ten days following His ascension into heaven, we celebrate the Day of Pentecost, the day when God poured out His Holy Spirit, proceeding from the Father and the Son, marking the birthday of Christ's Church. The builders of the world build physical churches with brick and mortar, and lumber and fasteners – but our God builds His Holy Christian Church with His Word. In the beginning He created and built with His Word. And today He continues to create and build with His Word.

In the beginning, God spoke all things visible and invisible into existence with His Word. Reading the creation account through a Christological lens, we know that when God speaks, it is the preincarnate Christ Jesus, the Son of God Himself doing the speaking. He is the Word who would later become flesh and dwell among His people. (cf: John 1:14)

On the sixth day of creation God does something unique to crown His creation. The very dust created with the Word, God takes into His own hands and forms it into man and breathes the breath of life into his nostrils. (cf: Genesis 2:7) Then, taking bone of Adam's bone and flesh of his flesh God literally builds (cf: Genesis 2:22) the man a helper, a counterpart to do those things that the man was incapable of doing himself. Male and female He created them in His own image, (Genesis 1:27) each designed to fit and complement the other emotionally, physically, and spiritually. The man and the woman have fellowship with God and with each other. But it did not last long.

The man and woman were deceived with the false word of the evil one who had taken on the form of a serpent. The serpent said that by eating of the fruit of the forbidden tree, they would become like God in wisdom, knowing good and evil. (Genesis 3:1-7) Once the seeds of deception were planted, our ancestors thought that with this wisdom they could build on their own. They could be in charge. They could set-up their own sort of happiness apart from God and be the masters of their own creation. But they had been deceived. In their desire to gain wisdom, they “... *lost sight of the fundamental truth about wisdom: to be truly wise is to believe and trust in God and to obey His teachings.*” (The Lutheran Study Bible, 18)

When God came looking for them in the Garden, they were hiding. They knew they were naked. They were ashamed and afraid of God. In their selfish desire to be like God, they became enemies of God and destined for death. Just as sin and death came into the world through our ancestor Adam, you and me and all mankind have inherited His sinful nature, and **by that nature** enemies of God, and destined for death. (cf: Romans 5:10-12) Like Adam and Eve, you and I wish to be God and build our own lives and happiness apart from Him.

Following the sin in the Garden, generation after generation attempted to build apart from God, filling the world with corruption and violence. (cf: Genesis 6:11) So God destroyed all breathing flesh on the earth in the Great Flood, except for Noah and his family. (cf: Genesis 6:17) Only eight persons in all were brought safely through water on the ark. (1 Peter 3:20) Eight persons who had original sin clinging to their flesh and were by nature enemies of God. Similar to God's command to Adam and Eve in the Garden, Scripture records that exiting the ark:

"... God blessed Noah and his sons and said to them, 'Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth.'" (Genesis 9:1)

Again, instead of heeding God's command, generation after generation attempted to build apart from God. In our Old Testament lesson this morning, the people propose to build a tower. There is nothing wrong or sinful about wanting to make bricks or build a city or a tower. The problem is **why** they wanted to build it. From our text:

"... they said, 'Come, let us build ourselves a city and a tower with its top in the heavens, and let us make a name for ourselves, lest we be dispersed over the face of the whole earth.'" (Genesis 11:4)

They wanted to **make a name** for themselves, and they **did not want to be scattered**. In essence they wanted to be God. They did not want to call upon the name of the LORD. (cf: Genesis 4:26) They did not want to obey His command to multiply and fill the earth. (cf: Genesis 1:28, 9:1) They wanted to be famous and go down in the history books, setting up their own sort of happiness apart from God and be the masters of their own creation – much like you and me and our society today.

Consider this random thought. In our country, every federal and national holiday receives just 24 hours on the calendar to celebrate. But the social justice warriors of our country now demand that you and I spend 30 days, the entire month of June, celebrating and taking pride in other people's sexual identities and erotic obsessions. They have built their own sort of happiness apart from what God created and commanded in the Garden. They believe they are the masters of their own creation. But before you and I focus on the speck in our brother's eye, we must first take the log out of our own eye – and then – address the speck in our brother's eye. (cf: Matthew 7:3-5)

The ugly truth is, your sin and mine is just as deadly. It is just as detestable in the eyes of God. It is just as damnable. The problem is that you and I are no longer offended by our sin but take pride in it every day of the year: selfishness, slander, gossip, envy of others, and pride in your own personal proclivities, and lust of your own obsessions. Instead of loving God with all your heart, soul, and mind – and loving your neighbor as yourself – you and I are part of one more generation attempting to build apart from God. In our desire to gain wisdom, we have lost sight

of the fundamental truth about wisdom: to be truly wise is to believe and trust in God and to obey His teachings.

Just as God came to the Garden to visit Adam and Eve:

“... the LORD came down to see the city and the tower, which the children of man had built.” (Genesis 11:5)

Every time man attempts to be God, he falls far short. The tower that was supposed to reach to the heavens was still small enough that the Lord had to come down in order to see it. And not just the preincarnate Christ, but the entire Holy Trinity said:

“... Come, let us go down and there confuse their language...” (cf: Genesis 11:7)

The Lord confused their language and scattered them over the face of the world, fulfilling His command to fill the earth. But separation and confusion were neither the end nor the goal. It was an act of God’s grace lest men think they do not need Him and thus, suffer eternal damnation for their idolatrous desires.

Our Lord scattered so that He might gather, uniting all things in Him, all things in heaven and things on earth. (cf: Ephesians 1:10) In the fullness of time the Word took on human flesh and blood so that through His perfect life, perfect suffering, and perfect death, He would destroy sin, death, and the power of the devil, restoring fellowship with God and with one another. The devil had no claim on Jesus. (cf: John 14:30) He is powerless against Christ Jesus.

On the night when Jesus was betrayed, He told His disciples that He was going away. But before going He promised to send the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in His Name to teach them everything, guiding them into all truth, reminding them of everything that He had said to them. (cf: John 14:26, 16:13- 14) And His promise was fulfilled on the Day of Pentecost, when the Holy Spirit was poured out, making it possible for the Gospel to be proclaimed and heard in all languages so that the Holy Spirit can call and gather people from all nations into Christ’s one Church. For everyone who calls upon the name of the Lord shall be saved. (cf: Acts 2:21)

In the beginning God created and built with His Word. And today, by the power of the Holy Spirit, He continues to create Christians and builds His Church with His Word.

- In your Baptism, you were brought safely into the holy ark of Christ’s Church through the washing of water and the Word. At the font God breathed new life into you, not because of your good works or your good looks, but according to His own mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit. (cf: Titus 3:4–5) You may not have had a tongue of fire resting on you, but you received the sign ✠ of the cross on your forehead and over your heart to mark you as one redeemed by Christ the crucified.
- The Holy Spirit opens your mind to the truth of God’s inerrant Word, reminding you of His commands and enabling you repent and turn away from your sinfulness. It’s one thing to fall into temptation and regret your sin; however, it’s quite a deadly thing to continue willfully practicing unrepentant sin. The Spirit calls you to repentance and strengthens you to flee all your unrighteousness.

- At your repentant and contrite heart, the Spirit then creates in you a clean heart and renews a right spirit within you (cf: Psalm 51:10) in His Word of Absolution forgiving you of all your sins of wanting to be your own God and build apart from Him. He forgives you of your sins of not honoring the union of one man and one woman, selfishness, slander, gossip, envy, pride, lust of your own obsessions, and not loving God and your neighbor as you ought.
- By His proclaimed Word the Spirit creates and builds up within you faith in the One who loves you and gave His life for you on Calvary's cross.
- By His Word Christ comes to you hidden in, with, and under bread and wine in His Holy Supper bringing God's grace and the Spirit with all His gifts to strengthen and preserve you in body and soul unto life everlasting.
- Finally, the Holy Spirit strengthens you and me and all believers to share God's Word. Share the redeeming Good News of Christ crucified to save sinners in our daily stations of life so that the Holy Spirit might bring them to faith in Christ. Everyone who calls upon the name of the Lord shall be saved. But how can your friends and neighbors call on the Lord if they do not believe? And how are they to believe in the Lord if they have never heard? You need to tell them about Christ crucified. Faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the Word of Christ. (cf: Romans 10:14–17)

The Word does all the work. In the beginning God created and built with His Word. And today, by the power of the Holy Spirit, He continues to create Christians and builds His Church with His Word. Because of Christ, you are forgiven and restored into fellowship with God and with each other. You have the hope of eternal life.

Amen.

The peace of God, which passes all understand, guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus,
Amen.