

4th Sunday after Pentecost
June 12, 2016
Genesis 11:1-9

In Christ Jesus, through whom the nations of the world are made one, Dear Fellow Redeemed,

Beresheet bara Elohim et hashamayim v'et ha'aretz.
Arxn tou euangeliou Jesu Christou, huiou tou Theou.
Am Anfang schuf Gott den Himmel und die Erde.
En el principio creó Dios los cielos y la tierra.

Did you understand any of that? Those were two Bible passages in 4 different languages. Why do we have different languages? Where did they come from? What benefit or hindrance do they serve?

These and other questions are answered for us in our text this morning. Our sermon text is the familiar lesson of the Tower of Babel. It is an amazing history lesson in many ways. Amazing because it follows so closely on the heels of the flood. Amazing because of what transpired and how it affected every person on earth. Amazing because it displays for us the extreme foolishness and selfishness of people and the tremendous power and grace of God.

This event took place only about 115 years after the world-wide flood. The descendants of Noah and his sons should have clearly remembered God's holy wrath over against the wickedness, rebellion, and unbelief of the world and they should have remembered the loving kindness of God in sparing Noah and his family.

But now, only a little more than 100 years later, the descendants of this "Preacher of Righteousness"—as Noah was called—had so forgotten the lesson of the flood that another world-wide punishment was needed to be imposed upon rebellious mankind.

Why? Was it because God was so picky and mean? No, it was because of humanity's sin and rebellion. Specifically because of mankind's PRIDE!

Our theme for this morning is entitled:

THE PRIDE OF MAN vs. THE WILL OF GOD!

We heard in our first Scripture reading God's glorious promise to Noah and his family that He would never again destroy the world by means of a flood. He promised that as long as the earth remained seedtime and harvest, cold and heat, summer and winter, day and night would not cease! He showed that promise by putting the rainbow in the sky. Then He gave to Noah and his family the same command that He had given to Adam and Eve---to repopulate the world, to spread over all the earth and subdue this wonderful world that He had made for mankind. They were to take care of it to God's glory and for their own welfare.

But the problem was sinful people had other ideas. As the years passed, Noah's descendants moved down from Mt. Ararat and settled in the Shinar valley. This was a very fertile place, good for crops. As so often happens, the first generations after the flood began to live their life with the attitude "What's in it for me?" Not with the thought, "What's in it for God?"

In other words, they began to use God's world that He had given them for their own selfish purposes and not for God's glory. Instead of spreading throughout the world as God commanded them, they decided to stick together as one and become one mighty and powerful nation on earth. One world government! And this decision stemmed from their pride. We see that in their own words.

- 1) **"COME, LET US BUILD OURSELVES A CITY, AND A TOWER WHOSE TOP /S IN THE HEAVENS;"**
- 2) **"LET US MAKE A NAME FOR OURSELVES, LEST WE BE SCATTERED ABROAD OVER THE FACE OF THE WHOLE EARTH."**

This was bold defiance and disobedience toward God, proud boasting and glorifying themselves. The same sin of greed and pride that infected Eve, infected these people after the flood. There is nothing new under the sun. By no means had sin been destroyed in the waters of the flood.

Pride was still very prevalent. Pride is the sin that pulls God down from His throne on high and replaces Him with ourselves. Eve wanted to be like God so she did what God told her not to do—she ate of the forbidden fruit. The people after the flood wanted to live the way they wanted to, not the

way God wanted them to. And today we see the same, the very same sinful pride in all of mankind, in every person. "No one can tell me how to live and what to do or not to do." So we have disobedience to man's laws as well as disobedience and rebellion against God's moral commands.

Scripture has quite a bit to say about pride, and none of it is good. Prov. 16:18: **PRIDE GOES BEFORE DESTRUCTION, AND A HAUGHTY SPIRIT BEFORE A FALL.** Psalm 10:3-4: **FOR THE WICKED BOASTS OF HIS HEART'S DESIRE; HE BLESSES THE GREEDY AND RENOUNCES THE LORD. THE WICKED IN HIS PROUD COUNTENANCE DOES NOT SEEK GOD; GOD IS IN NONE OF HIS THOUGHTS.** Pro. 11:2: **WHEN PRIDE COMES, THEN COMES SHAME; BUT WITH THE HUMBLE IS WISDOM.** And finally in Proverbs 16:5 where Solomon may have been thinking of this event when he wrote: **EVERYONE PROUD IN HEART IS AN ABOMINATION TO THE LORD; THOUGH THEY JOIN FORCES, NONE WILL GO UNPUNISHED.**

Mankind joined forces. They were all united. They even took great pains to strengthen their bricks. We are told that they used burnt bricks, much harder and stronger than the usual kind. They said: **"COME, LET US MAKE BRICKS AND BAKE THEM THOROUGHLY." THEY HAD BRICK FOR STONE, AND THEY HAD ASPHALT FOR MORTAR.**

Nothing was going to stand in the way of their desires! Nothing that is, except God. When the Pride of man—whether it be one or two people, like Adam and Eve, or a whole world of people, like before the flood; or even a united world of people like this episode; when the Pride of man stands up and fights against the will of God, man never wins. Satan tried it also, and lost!

The Lord God knew what was happening, and without lifting a finger, so to speak, He confounded pride-filled mankind with an amazing miracle. **"COME, LET US GO DOWN AND THERE CONFUSE THEIR LANGUAGE, THAT THEY MAY NOT UNDERSTAND ONE ANOTHER'S SPEECH."** The Holy Trinity—Father, Son and Holy Spirit, to whom alone belongs all glory, honor and majesty speaks within Itself and in unison of purpose acts.

Imagine the utter confusion and frustration. Suddenly your whole vocabulary was changed. Every word you spoke was a different language than you were used to. Every word you heard was a different language. But immediately you knew the language you were speaking, but not the languages you heard. What a miracle!

This was not a blessing to mankind, but a curse. No longer could someone understand what someone else needed for the building, like more bricks, or more mortar. What a mess! You tell someone to give you more bricks and they speak back in Russian, or German or some other language. How frustrating it must have been. How angry the people must have gotten until finally the building process just stopped. But the curse of the confusion of tongues did not end there. It still is present today with the different languages and cultures of the many tribes and nations of this world.

We are told in vs. 8: **SO THE LORD SCATTERED THEM ABROAD FROM THERE OVER THE FACE OF ALL THE EARTH, AND THEY CEASED BUILDING THE CITY.**

Still today one nation, one people do not understand another because of the barrier of language, different customs, different ways of living. We cannot help but be suspecting and fearful of those whose speech is unintelligible to us. That is one of the chief roots for all racial and nationalistic prejudices causing strife, hostility and war. The wars and conflicts of nation upon nation are God's punishment upon mankind for their sins and proud rebellion and unbelief, yet at the same time serves the good purpose of keeping the world from growing so completely wicked and corrupt as it was before the flood and so united in pride and disobedience as at the time of the Tower of Babel. The confusion of languages is a continual punishment down through history that still burdens mankind today and stands as a check on the ambitions and sinful pride of humanity.

Jesus tells us that there will be wars and rumors of wars till the end of time. Yet many people still try to imitate the builders of the Tower of Babel and presume to bring peace on earth and a one-world government with man ultimately in charge of everything. And some have succeeded in building great empires conquering many nations, but instead of bringing peace and harmony on earth there was only more war, misery and bloodshed.

During the 20th Century there were many Holy Alliances, the League of Nations and the United Nations formed and yet the world during the 20th Century was cursed by more wars than any other in recorded history and the 21st Century is not any better with terrorism so prevalent all around the world. The fact is that the various nations and tribes of the world “do not speak the same language,” and they never will get together in world peace. They will never really understand one another.

The Bible shows us the only escape from the confusion of tongues; the only cure for the disunity and hatred among nations in this world---in not in building towers reaching to the heavens; not in leagues and empires built by human beings; not in glorying in the pride of mankind; but in the working of the Holy Spirit through the Gospel of Peace. The Good News that Jesus came to bring about real peace, peace with God through His sacrifice on the cross. God has forgiven all of our sins of disobedience, rebellion and pride because of the shed blood of His Son. Jesus took our punishment for us and we are now at one with our God.

On Pentecost, the Holy Spirit was poured out upon the disciples, enabling them to speak in such a way that “everyone heard them speaking in his own language.” The curse of Babel was removed on behalf of the Christian Church, so that it might bring the saving Gospel to all the world. And ever since that day, the Christian Church has been the One power in the world which has been truly international, crossing boundaries, able to be understood in all languages and able to make its message of salvation through Jesus known to all races and peoples on earth.

Today the Word of God is printed in over a thousand different languages/dialects and is circulated in millions of copies in every corner of this world. Bibles are found even in the countries who are the bitterest enemies against Christ and His Church. The Bible’s message has spread through this fragmented, divided world and has made all believers, of every nationality, One in Christ!

The Christian Church is still the only force and power in the world which promotes true peace and understanding among the nations. It is the only organization that can bind people of different nations and tongues together and make them actually feel that they are brothers and sisters, children of the same God and Savior. Another amazing miracle!

Jesus shall reign where’er the sun does his successive journeys run, His kingdom stretch from shore to shore till moons shall wax and wane no more.

People and realms of ev’ry tongue dwell on His love with sweetest song; And infant voices shall proclaim their early blessings on His name.

Where He displays His healing power, death and the curse are known no more; In Him the tribes of Adam boast more blessings than their father lost. Amen.