

Fallen... And Scattered (Genesis 11:1-9)

Doing the right thing for the wrong reason is still wrong. Whether it's building cities and towers, like at Babel, or getting a degree, closing a sale, or saving for retirement, all of these good things become idols when we look to them for our significance and security. Praise God, we do not need to earn significance or build security, for they are an absolutely free gift for all who turn to Christ in faith.

The Story of Babel

- Nothing inherently wrong with building cities and towers
- But doing the right thing for the wrong reason is still wrong
- Mankind is united - humanity at its best, humanly speaking
 - Innovation (baking bricks and using tar)
 - They build a grand tower
- The problem isn't in the act; it's in the motive

Why did they build the tower?

- 1) To find significance independent of God
 - Read v4a – to “make for ourselves a name”
 - The desire for significance isn't bad; God created us with it
 - But they already had a name: “God's image bearers”
 - They were not content with that name - wanted make themselves famous, not God
 - Genesis 3 and Genesis 11 are about the same sin: pride
 - Pride = an inflated view of self
 - You are not content to see yourself accurately as a creature made in the image of God for His glory. Pride says you are better than that.
 - Sometimes pride looks like building a tower to heaven, but usually pride is much more subtle
 - Pride can infect everything we do – especially the things we're good at
 - It's always there tempting us to find significance in the achievement rather than the image
- 2) To find security independent of God
 - Nothing wrong with building a city
 - In Genesis 9:1, God commands: “spread out and fill the earth”
 - That's risky! Settling down to build a city is a much safer bet!
 - They chose to put their safety above obedience to God
 - We're tempted to do the same. Not with city walls, but with bank accounts, insurance, education, a stable job
 - When safety and security become more important than God, **they become idols**
 - These idols often become excuses for disobedience

God's response to the Tower of Babel

1) God Humbles

- Verse 5 is sarcastic
 - In the eyes of the builders, their tower ascended to the heavens
 - In the eyes of the One who lives in heaven, it was so tiny he couldn't even see it!
- Isaiah 40:22 – He created the universe and it is small compared to Him
- Having revealed their foolishness, God brought their endeavor to an embarrassing end
- 1 Peter 5:5b – if you try to make a life for yourself independent of God, you are putting yourself in opposition to Him and He will eventually humble you

2) God Restrains

- Read Genesis 11:6
 - Not afraid for Himself, afraid for them
- He saved humanity from itself – Genesis 11:7
 - In an instant, He broke our common language
- Humanity is confused, broken, and divided – sounds harsh!
 - This led to all races, nations, and languages, and therefore all racism, ethnic strife, and warfare
- It sounds bad, but it's actually really good!
 - It's grace because when humanity unites, it always results in evil
 - World peace without the prince of peace always leads to sin
- God's actions at Babel were gracious

3) God Rebuilds

- God Himself is rebuilding the unity of the human race around Jesus Christ
- It's already begun right here in the church
 - Pentecost in Acts 2 – for just a day God turned back Babel
- Revelation 7:9-10
- Rev 21: He will build the perfect city we've always wanted

The tragedy of Babel: they turned away from the one and only source of the significance and security they craved.

- Significance & security are not things to earn or build - they are gifts to receive in Christ!

Believing that truth won't make you immune to pride

So here are two practical steps that have helped me fight pride in my own life:

- 1) A short prayer: "God, let this be not to my pride nor my despair but to your glory and the good of your people."
- 2) A helpful verse: Memorize Psalm 45:17

Genesis

Sermon Reflection Questions

Sermon 12. Fallen...and Scattered

Genesis 11

These questions are designed to help individuals, families, and small groups dig deeper into our Genesis Sermon Series. Leaders: don't limit yourself to these questions or feel that you need to answer all of them. Pick and choose and create your own based on the needs of your group.

Observe & interpret the passages:

Read Genesis 11:1-4. What motivated humanity to build a city and a tower (at least 2 answers)?

Why were these motives sinful?

Read Genesis 11:5-9. How did God respond to humanity's tower-building project?

What was His motivation?

Is ambition wrong? If yes, why? If not, under what circumstances is it righteous?

Apply it to your life:

Where do you find significance in life? Don't just state the "right" answer; honestly evaluate where you personally find significance. You may have multiple sources.

Where do you turn for security in life? Again, don't just state the "right" answer.

Building a business, saving for retirement, buying insurance, getting an advanced degree... none of these pursuits are inherently wrong. However, they can become sinful idols, personal "Towers of Babel," when we seek our significance and security in them rather than in God. Practically speaking, how can you keep these pursuits from becoming idols in your life?

Memorize: Psalm 45:17

I will cause your name to be remembered in all generations; therefore nations will praise you forever and ever.

Additional Questions:

In what ways have we seen a pattern of mercy and grace in the midst of God's judgments in Genesis 1-11?

How have you observed God's mercy and grace toward you in the midst of His discipline in your life?