

**MINISTRY BY MAIL**  
**Lutheran Conference of Confessional Fellowship**  
[www.lutheranlccf.org](http://www.lutheranlccf.org)  
**Nineteenth Sunday after Trinity, October 27, 2019**

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(Hymns found in The Lutheran Hymnal, CPH, 1941)

Hymns: 265, 75:1-2, 231, 347:4-6, 393:4-5.

Lessons: Deuteronomy 8:10-20, Philippians 2:1-11, Matthew 11:20-20.

Sermon Text: Genesis 11:1-9

Sermon by Pastor Robert Mehlretter

In the name of Jesus Christ, Dear Fellow Redeemed,

After God in the book of Genesis tells us about and names the descendants of Noah, we read *“These are the clans of Noah's sons, according to their lines of descent, within their nations. From these the nations spread out over the earth after the flood.”* Genesis 10:32 (NIV) Our text then talks about people at some time after the great flood. One might have expected that people would have remembered how God had punished wickedness. But they strayed from God and he chastised them severely for their wickedness, so harshly that we still experience the results of that confusion of language.

Isn't there a temptation to think that we can do whatever we want? Haven't you heard the excuse for someone doing something inappropriate is 'Because I can!?' Yes, people are able to 'do anything' but we see from Holy Scripture that wicked behavior has consequences. Don't all people think that 'nothing bad will happen to me'? Doesn't even our sinful flesh think that 'God won't let anything bad happen to me?' or 'he won't really be upset with me if I don't always live and think and talk like a child of God?'

And aren't there times in our lives that we are certain that we will never stray from God? Don't we think 'I will remain faithful to God and not let any false ideas take root in my life?' But we must remember Paul's warning *“So, if you think you are standing firm, be careful that you don't fall!”* 1 Corinthians 10:12 (NIV)

This idea is especially obvious and apparent in our lives when we make our confirmation vows. We promise to “intend to continue firm and strong in the confession of this Church, and suffer everything, even death, rather than fall away from it”. We also promise that we “intend faithfully to live all [our] life according to the rule of the divine Word of God [and] to be diligent in the use of the means of grace, and to live in such a way as to honor the Gospel of Christ, and in faith, word and deed to remain true to the Triune God, even unto death.” Those are powerful intentions. You are here today listening to the Word of God. But, like Jesus after he healed ten lepers, we wonder “but where are the rest?”

And to apply this to your life, let's ask 'when is the last time you personally admonished someone for rejecting preaching and the Word of God?' I know you memorized the third commandment as demanding that we do not “despise preaching and his word.” But when does neglect and indifference become despising?

Today we find an admonition and lesson from

**BABEL**

- 1. Man's sinful arrogance was displayed at Babel;**
- 2. But God destroyed their plans and confounded the language of mankind.**

Noah's ark most likely came to rest in the mountains of what is now Turkey. As the population grew, they would have needed more land. So, why not seek more fruitful, hospitable country, more fertile land? They went to a plain in Shinar. This was the area called Mesopotamia, the area between the Tigris and Euphrates Rivers, also called Babel or Babylon. This land was part of the 'Fertile Crescent' which you probably learned about in grade school. This extended through what is now Iraq, Syria, Israel and into Egypt. Today, much of this land is considered barren, especially to those of us living in an area with some of the most fertile,

productive land in the world. The land they settled in was no doubt much more fertile and better land for farming than it is now.

The people wanted to build a city and a tower. ***“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.”*** The purpose was to build a city and a tower to make themselves famous and to prevent dispersion. Do you see man’s arrogance and pride in what happened here? In the book of Proverbs we read ***“Pride goes before destruction, a haughty spirit before a fall.”*** Proverbs 16:18 (NIV)

Mankind had a common language, and if you have ever tried to communicate with someone who didn’t speak your language, you know how important it is to be able to communicate well. One worldwide language and common speech is a major goal among men today. One example is the fact that English has been set as the common language among Air Traffic Controllers – those who guide airplanes flying all over the world.

Maybe you thought, as I did as a child, that the purpose of this tower was to climb up to heaven. That is symbolically a good picture. They wanted to show themselves to be great, greater than the people around them, and perhaps try to show God – or whatever “supreme being” they had created for themselves – that they knew better than he did. They set themselves above God, thinking they had all the answers.

But today we and all mankind are no better, and probably even worse sinners in thinking that we know better than God, and that we can set ourselves above God. Mankind can do all sorts of things, thinking he is all-powerful.

For example, mankind can conceive babies outside a woman’s body with “in vitro fertilization”. In this process mankind can fertilize human eggs in a test tube with sperm and select one of what is called “an embryo” to implant in the womb. Remaining “embryos” – which are really living human beings – are often destroyed. This is abortion, murder of an unborn human being. Scripture plainly speaks of human life beginning at conception, as we read in Psalm 51: ***“Surely I was sinful at birth, sinful from the time my mother conceived me.”*** Psalm 51:5 (NIV)

To use another example, mankind creates assumptions and theories trying to “prove” that we can learn and know how all things – the universe and mankind – came into being – in this way ignoring God’s creating of all things. Mankind’s theories like this are called evolution.

Mankind has been deceived into believing that we can take God or leave God and find him when we want him and ignore him and his Word at other times in our lives.

We are tempted to ignore, disobey, and set aside the things in his Word that we don’t like. Hasn’t Satan planted thoughts in the minds of all of us that it won’t matter if we ignore parts of what God tells us?

At Babel, mankind’s purpose was to make a name for themselves and prevent being scattered over all the earth. We can even see among these people what has been called nationalistic pride. They wanted to make themselves and their nation great. This wasn’t especially about money and wealth. This was about fame, prestige, and power. So they sought to make a name for themselves.

But is this so different from human nature today? We want to make ourselves important and more powerful and more important and more prestigious than other individuals and nations. We want to make ourselves seem better than others.

As sinful humans, we want to think that we – individually or even as a nation – are better, smarter, more important than others. Isn’t this a goal of much of what is called “nationalism? To make our nation greater than other people? World leaders want to make things better for their nations and for themselves. These kinds of things have led to expensive space explorations, such as the race to get to the moon before another nation does. These kinds of things have led to wars among nations.

We see the popularity of others and want that too. We see the popularity of others in many places, including social media, like Facebook and may wish we had more friends.

Isn’t it easy to see such arrogant, prideful people in the world? But are we immune? Don’t we want to be popular? Maybe we don’t want the grandiose, world-wide recognition and fame that some want, but the temptation is always there to want to be recognized and praised for who and what we are and to want to be more important or more listened to than others. Aren’t we sometimes jealous of the prestige and recognition of others?

We see much pride and arrogance and seeking for greatness, especially in our age of instant worldwide communication and the ability to shout our own opinions to the entire world through social media – Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, blogs – and all sorts of media.

In Babylon we read that ***“They used brick instead of stone, and tar for mortar.”*** Scholars point out several possible explanations for this. In the land known as Babel or Babylon, good clay for bricks and tar or asphalt to glue the bricks together were commonly found. In addition, bricks would be smaller, lighter building blocks, so they could build taller buildings more easily than moving large blocks of stone. This would allow for bigger, higher buildings. Solid stones for building walls are very heavy to lift up and put into place. In addition, building stone such as we see in Canaan was also less common in Mesopotamia.

But God frustrated, destroyed, and broke their plans. We read that ***“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.”***

God in his omnipotence destroyed their plans and did this by confounding, confusing their language. We are reminded of Psalm 2, ***“Why do the nations conspire and the peoples plot in vain? The kings of the earth take their stand and the rulers gather together against the LORD and against his Anointed One.”*** Psalm 2:1-2 (NIV) These people were certainly conspiring to make themselves greater than God.

And how did God do this? He confused their language. Imagine if suddenly in your workplace, you couldn't understand the worker next to you. Suppose you asked for a hammer and your co-worker handed you a different tool, or ignored you completely. And at Babel, imagine if you asked for another brick and a coworker didn't understand what you were saying. Imagine families trying to talk to their neighbors and not being able to communicate? See how important a common language is? And so they stopped building the city and the tower and were scattered and moved away.

And thus the name of the place became Babel or Babylon. In Hebrew, the name Babylon sounds like the word “confuse”. We even use the word “babble” today in English for incoherent speech.

In this history from the Bible, we find lessons for us. Let us submit to the Lord in humility. We have the perfect example and pattern in our Savior, Jesus Christ, who humbled himself even unto death, a horrible death on the cross, so that he might redeem us from all our sins.

We must humbly bow before God and ask him to remove and destroy our arrogance and pride.

Let us daily repent of all our sins – those we recognize and those we don't. Let us search the scriptures to find a cure for our arrogance and pride – and all our other sins, too! Let us humbly bow our heads and hearts to receive the forgiveness of sins. Let us turn to others and apologize for our arrogance, and pride, and speaking ill of others. Let us humbly receive God's forgiveness lest he destroy our plans! Jesus came and obeyed all God's laws perfectly and then was punished in our place. He did this so that we might live forever with him in heaven, the greatest honor possible! Amen.