

Sermon – The Tower of Babel
October 10, 2021
The Rev. Randall R. Shirley

This morning we're back on our Bible Journey through the Book of Genesis. Our teaching and preaching series that began last month with Genesis, Chapter 1, verse 1, "In the beginning..." Our Sunday School and Preaching aligned as we **intentionally** move through each Chapter of the Bible, and today we've come to the account of a Tower built in the Sands of Shinar. The Tower of Babel is actually about the first city – in which was built – a tower. A tower built under the direction of Nimrod, the great-grandson of Noah.

It's a story so often overlooked, or simply seen as just another rebellious act of humanity against God. A teaching most often focused on the tower being a symbol of our God-defying disobedience and pride. A teaching on how the people then, and now, build lives in utter opposition to the kingdom of God. The account drawing attention to having the wrong motivation for building, having the wrong attitude toward God. As if it's the people then, and the people today, who echo those words from the Garden of Eden and say, "Did God Really Say that?" Lifting ourselves above God's authority; attempting to create within our own lives, for our own purposes, abandoning His Ways, His Word, His Call on our lives. Like those who built the Tower of Babel, we too, are prone to make a name for ourselves.

God's intervention of confusing their language and dispersing the people is a teaching, an accounting, for the origin of different languages, and from them, the various nations emerging. The reversal of the scattering and confusion being giving at Pentecost, in Acts, Chapter 2. The Holy Spirit sent in to bring us together, ending confusion and making us one in Christ with power to commune with other believers. Around the world, we now hear in our own hearts and minds about the great things that God has done! All these teachings, each one, contains truth. Each one a sermon. However, there's more going on here that's often overlooked. More going on that's applicable to our lives and times today. But first, let's put our Genesis, Chapter 11, reading, into Context.

Through these first few chapters of Genesis, God is showing us that with every passing generation the growing power of sin leads to increasing levels of Rebellion and Consequences. Sin, simply put, is, rebellion against God. In the beginning Chapters of Genesis, we find that Adam and Eve's sin leads to the loss of the garden of Eden. Sin leads Cain to murder his brother and by Genesis, Chapter 6, In verse 5, we read this: "The Lord saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every intention of the thoughts of man's heart was constant and growing evil." God has had enough, and in Chapter 7, God sends the flood to cut back this growing power of sin. God cuts back the whole of humanity to just one family. God, finding only Noah righteous. God saves Noah and his wife and their three sons and their wives in the ark. God cuts back all the wickedness in the earth by the flood. Saving one family and two of every living thing, both male and female.

Humanity beginning over with this one family, and you would think that this time everything is going to be great. But it's not. Noah and his family, like all of us, carry the sin of Adam and Eve. That original sin from the Garden of Eden is carried by Noah and his family into this new

start. In a few generations the growing power of sin leads the people to turn away from God. They turn away from God's purpose and command given to Adam and Eve. God's purpose and command then repeated and given to Noah and his sons. The purpose and command to be "fruitful and multiply and subdue the earth." It's God's call for humanity to be responsible for the world. It's a call for all of us, created in His image, to be good stewards of all God's creation.

Here in Chapter 11, in just a few generations from the Flood, the people have completely turned from God. Their desire is self-promotion. Their desire is to glorify themselves. They have abandoned God's purpose and command, distracted by their own advanced technology. Discovering how to make bricks for stone and use bitumen, a slimy black tar, for mortar. They say, "Come, let us build." They say, "Let us make a name for ourselves." And again, God Has Had Enough. It's here we come to our lesson this morning. A hard teaching for many, that God cuts back the growing power of sin. God cuts back the growing power of sin in our lives. He cuts back the Kudzu!

It's an expression my grandmother would say, and in my experience, I too have found the growing power of Sin to be like Kudzu. As many know, kudzu is this vine that blankets and smothers everything in its path - flowers, trees, buildings. Kudzu is an invasive weed, an aggressively growing killer - of all - that it takes hold. Every summer, I'd watch my grandmother in her garden fight that Kudzu. She'd cut it back. She'd cut it back for her garden to grow and thrive in the sunlight. She'd cut it back for her garden's beauty to be seen. She'd cut it back, because she loved her garden and the joy it brought her.

When we live outside of God's will, when we choose to turn away from His love, we open ourselves to the desires of our flesh, the culture around us and to Satan's temptations. We allow sin to grow like Kudzu. We know from James, Chapter 1, that each of us "is tempted when we are drawn away and enticed by our own desires." As Paul says in Romans, 7, "it's the sin that dwells within me." Sin that keeps on going. This sin, like Kudzu, is a growing power that blankets and smothers everything in its path. It's this growing power of sin we see from the Garden of Eden to the Flood, and then from the Flood to the Tower of Babel. God is making it clear to us that Sin is a growing power, and in God's Sovereignty, His corrective hand cuts it back.

Here in Chapter 11, we find that the growing power of sin has reached a point of overshadowing God's light. Turn with us in your Bible to read Chapter 11, verse 6: "And the Lord said, "Behold, they are one people, and they have all one language, and this is only the beginning of what they will do. And nothing, that they propose to do, will now be impossible for them." God is saying that there is no boundary they won't cross. There is no Word of God that will constrain the people. God is patient, but when Sin gets to a certain point - God acts. He intervenes. He corrects. He cuts it back.

Throughout our Bible Journey we'll see this growing power of sin getting to a certain point. We'll see God's cutting back with Sodom and Gomorrah. With the Fall of the Northern and then the Southern Kingdoms. His active intervention in the lives of Nebuchadnezzar, the king of Babylon, and Cyrus, the King of Persia. We'll continue to see God's pruning, His discipline,

and involvement with individuals and the nations. My friends, our God has not changed. He continues to cut back for his purposes, and our Bible gives us the reason why God cuts back. The Reason why God corrects and disciplines. But you Already Know why God Does that. Don't you?

Why does God discipline us?

It's because He loves us. In Hebrews, Chapter 12, we're told, "to not take the Lord's discipline lightly, or lose heart when corrected by Him, for the Lord disciplines the ones he loves." It's an echo of Proverbs 3. Discipline, the cutting back by God's hand "is an expression of love." Can you imagine asking God to not discipline you? It would be like asking God to not love you as much as he does. God always cuts back for our good, that we may share his holiness. The purpose always towards our transformation. Billy Graham said: "God does not discipline us to subdue us, but to condition us for a life of usefulness and blessedness."

Let's make this more personal for us. All of us have experienced sin in our lives. If you think you haven't, I'd like to talk with you after this service. But seriously, many of us have experienced sin getting to a certain point, and then repenting in true confession and turning back to God, participating in the cutting back. Others are caught. Finding pain and suffering, and when that happens, we must ask these two questions: What is God's purpose for me in my situation? How can I give God the glory in this? The Good News is that when God intervenes and cuts back the Kudzu in our lives, it is always to make room for His Grace. For the only, and one remedy for Sin is Jesus.

Today, there are some, without even realizing it, are being blanketed and smothered within this growing power of sin. Many suffering from a broken relationship with a loved one. A broken relationship with a co-worker, employee, or supervisor. The swelling of pride, that growing power of sin, causing us to dig in and refuse to reconcile. Refusing to love our neighbor. Sin allowing us to justify our actions: "Did God really say, to love our neighbor as ourselves?" And sadly, for so many, there are others who never seek God's will, or purpose for their lives. Not listening to his call, not participating in His Work as good stewards of all He has given them. Allowing that Kudzu to overshadow their very foundations. To overshadow the light of Jesus in their lives. At some point God will cut back. In this life, or at that coming Final Day of Judgement.

What can we do, to keep that Kudzu at bay? How do we move from Building on the Sands of Shinar in Rebellion to build on solid ground, aligned with God's purpose for our lives? How do we apply this Tower of Babel account and its deeper message to our lives to keep that Kudzu cut back? There are three things for us to do that our Gospel passage points to: Learn, Listen and Live. Learn. Learn God's Ways. Study the Written Word. Read your Bible to know the teachings of Jesus. Read to hear His words, and to know the love of the Father who created you. Secondly: Listen. Listen to the Living Word, and hear your call, your life's purpose. Jesus said His sheep hear His voice. He didn't say they can hear or should hear. He said, they hear. The question then becomes: Are you listening? And Thirdly: Live. Live into your calling and purpose. It's a choice we all must make. To live for Jesus, or to live for the World. When you learn and listen you can truly live in Love for His Ways as His witness, and Love for one

another, serving others with our gifts. This is our Stewardship, and it's how we participate in cutting back the Kudzu in our lives and how we participate in His Kingdom Work.

This morning I ask each of us to examine ourselves. To search for any growing power of sin that is keeping you from turning to Jesus as Lord of your life; keeping you from loving others as yourself; and, keeping you from giving to, and serving in God's work. What Tower are you building on the sands of Shinar?