

“A God of Confusion?”—Genesis 11:6-9

The text for this sermon, the theme of which is, “A God of Confusion?”, is Genesis 11:6-9 → *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. Come, let Us go down and there confuse their language, so that they may not understand one another’s speech.” So the LORD dispersed them from there over the face of all the earth, and they left off building the city. Therefore its name was called Babel, because there the LORD confused the language of all the earth. And from there the LORD dispersed them over the face of all the earth.* This is the text.

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ Jesus:

“Identity of language is a very strong bond in human association and harmony among men.” (Luther’s Works, Vol. 2, p. 214) We experience the truth of this statement by Martin Luther in our own culture, especially in light of the immigration movements in our country. During the 19th & 20th centuries European immigrations into our country resulted in the creation of many rural communities based upon speaking the language of their “fatherland.” Sub-

communities were formed in the major cities based upon common language. Clinging to one's native language was so important for church and worship life that many felt giving up the language would constitute giving up the faith. Even the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod's first constitution insisted that its official business, worship and teaching be done in the German language. In fact, it was listed as an unalterable article in 1847. Needless to say, by 1852 it was no longer unalterable. The German language was such a prominent part of our own synod that to this day we have a non-geographical district called the English District, to which English speaking churches of our synod could belong.

It is not unusual for people in our own community to experience confusion as a result of language barriers. Giving up one's native language is difficult not only because of the work it takes to learn a different language but also because one does not want to lose his identity so closely associated with his native language. However, such confusion and barriers can appear to produce hatred, impatience, division, slanderous comments and even contempt. Yet these very language differences bring us face to face with our God as our text reveals. Is Yahweh a God of confusion?

Genesis 11:1-2 speaks about the people on earth gathered in one place having *one language and the same words*. Is this not a good thing? Could not

speaking the same language be an asset to international business, commerce and technology? Wouldn't it be helpful in the proclamation of the Gospel of Jesus Christ throughout the world? The LORD recognize the powerful importance of common language in verse 6 of our text when He 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.* So . . . why is this a concern?

Genesis 11:4 states their purpose for building such a *city and a tower with its top in the heavens: **to make a name for themselves***, lest they *be dispersed over the face of the whole earth*. This action was evidence of a disregard for and disobedience to Yahweh with idolatry in all its satanic delusion. Not only did they disobey Yahweh's command to *be fruitful and multiply and **fill the earth*** (cf. Genesis 9:1), they decided to be gods. They were confused about the nature of their relationship with Yahweh and, true to the nature of the devil with his first deception in the Garden of Eden, they believed the lie that they were in control. They were spiritually confused in their sin.

When people become confused in their sin the created order gets turned upside down. People define their relationship with Yahweh based upon their own works much like the building of the tower of Babel. Making a name for oneself so that God and others recognize your great dedication, commitment

and accomplishments constitutes idolatry. Spiritual confusion is displayed when you strive to get to God by your own efforts and on your own terms. Rather, in the created order God comes you, gives and sustains your life and blesses you daily **by His grace!** Thus, you trust in Him for daily security and sustenance, not in your own efforts. Later, after delivering His people from their slavery in Egypt, Yahweh warned them about becoming spiritually confused again, turning things upside down. He said in Deuteronomy 8:17-18

→ *Beware lest you say in your heart, “My power and the might of my hand have gotten me this wealth.” You shall remember the LORD your God, for it is He Who gives you power to get wealth, that He may confirm His covenant that He swore to your fathers, as it is this day.* The covenant begins with Him and comes to us by grace!

Whenever we get confused in sin and satanic delusion in this way the LORD will act to bring us to our knees so that we repent and trust in Him as Lord again. Thus, because the people on *the whole earth* were spiritually confused and refused to recognize it, God responded to this confusion with judgment on their sin. Verses 7-8 says: *So the LORD dispersed them from there over the face of all the earth, and they left off building the city. Therefore its name was called Babel, because there the LORD confused the language of all the earth.* His purpose was actually to bring them to a unified response

of faith in Himself again!

On the day of Pentecost, fifty days after Christ's resurrection from the dead, God reversed this confusion and broke down the language barrier. Why? According to Acts 2, the Holy Spirit gave the disciples of Jesus the ability to speak in the *native language* of the Jews who had traveled to Jerusalem to worship Yahweh in connect with the Feast of Pentecost. Acts 2:11 says they heard *them telling in their own tongues the mighty works of God* Who had come to them in the Person & Work of Jesus to save them from their sins! Once again, it was something done totally by the Creator's power as the Holy Spirit gifted them with the ability to speak their language as well as gift the hearers with faith to receive their message, repent of their sins and believe in Jesus!

The confusion is now "cleared up" because of what Jesus Christ has done for you. The language barrier is a constant reminder of the punishment upon your sin and idolatry. Jesus sacrificed Himself as the **final** punishment upon your sin and idolatry so you can be forgiven and freed to trust in the LORD! The confusion is now "cleared up" for all people on *the whole earth* as 1 Peter 3:18 says: *Christ also suffered once for sins, the righteous for the unrighteous, that He might bring us to God.* The confusion is "cleared up" only in the forgiveness of sins accomplished for you in Jesus.

Thus, our *God is not a God of confusion but of peace* (cf. 1 Corinthians 14:33) with Him through faith in Jesus Christ as our Lord and Savior! His desire is to unify *the whole earth* again under His grace! The Holy Spirit takes the focus off of our own sinful pride and places it on Jesus so that everything we do will be directed by His Will, His purpose, His mission and His eternal plans for all people. Our desire is for all people's spiritual confusion to be turned into a clear focus on Jesus in every are of life. Colossians 3:16-17 puts it this way: *Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom, singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, with thankfulness in your hearts to God. And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him.*

God is not a God of confusion. Thus, when those temptations come to build your own personal "tower of Babel" in sinful pride, the Father, Son and Holy Spirit (i.e. *Us*) will work through the Word to bring both your sin and Christ into clear focus. Forgiven by His power we the church will experience our identity in the language of the Gospel and then bring this Good News of forgiveness, new life and salvation to the ends of *the whole earth!* Amen.

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

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