

Making a Name for Ourselves

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[0 : 00] Good morning, church. The scripture lesson is taken from Genesis chapter 11, verses 1 through 9. Can you please follow with me as I read.

! Come, let us make bricks and burn them thoroughly.

And they had brick for stone and bitumen for mortar. Then they said, Come, let us build ourselves a city and a tower with its top in the heavens.

And let us make a name for ourselves, lest we be dispersed over the face of the whole earth. And the Lord came down to see the city and the tower which the children of man had built.

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.

[1 : 15] And nothing 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. Thank you very much, Michelle.

Well, those of you who were here last week will remember that we focus on Genesis chapter 10, which gives the genealogies of Noah's three sons, Shem, Ham, and Japheth, and the parts of the earth which they and their descendants settled in and lived in.

But Genesis 11, to which we have come this morning, explains how that actually came to be, how they came to be scattered to live in the places where they ended up living.

[2 : 35] And at the heart of this account in Genesis 11 is that before the world was populated and settled in the way we saw in Genesis 10, before all that, before the people groups were all the places where they were, at the heart of this text this morning is a group of people who decided that they were going to do something to make a name for themselves.

And the truth is, it did not end well for them. And really, it never ends well for us when we decide to make a name for ourselves.

And yet, making a name for ourselves is one of the chief aims of mankind broadly. We want to make our mark.

We want to, as some people say, make sure when you leave here that people knew that you were here. And the truth is, this morning, if those aspirations are foreign to your heart, it's only because of the grace of God.

It's only because of the grace of God that you don't have this compelling desire in your heart to make your name great, to make a name for yourself.

[4 : 09] Because that would be our approach to life as well. And so this morning, I want us to consider, from this passage, this issue of making a name for ourselves.

But first, let me pray for us. Father, we bow our hearts this morning and we open your word. And Lord, we have been taught that your word is a mirror.

Your word is a mirror that we look into, that we might see ourselves, not as we think we are, but as we truly are. And I pray this morning that as we look into this section of the mirror of your word, that you would truly enable us to see ourselves as we should.

And Lord, by your grace, I pray you'd help us to make the adjustments and the changes that we need to make. Would you give us all grace to hear and grace to obey all that you're saying to us. Lord, once again, I pray that you would anoint me and you would use me to speak your word and care for these whom you love.

[5 : 34] And we pray that you would be glorified through the preaching of your word this morning. We pray these things in Christ's name. Amen. This passage before us has two main activities going on.

And in our remaining time, I want us to consider these two main activities. The first one being the rebellion of man. Notice that Genesis 11 and verse 1 begins by telling us that there was a time that the whole earth had one language and the same words.

And as people were migrating across the earth from the east, they came to this open area of land, this place that later became known as Shinar. And they decided that they would settle there.

And so the clear indication is that they were not always settling. They were moving in a certain direction. And when you read the accounts of how long people lived and the size of this group, this would be several hundred years after the flood.

We don't have the exact time, but sometime it elapsed. And they were moving, but eventually they came to this place and they said, we're going to settle here in this land of Shinar.

[6 : 59] They decided that they would make a name for themselves by building a city and a tower that reached to the heavens. And this tower that they had in mind was taller than the tallest skyscraper today.

And the unified effort they were able to bring to that because they had one language is something that we aren't able to comprehend because we're divided in our languages.

even when you consider some of the largest countries today, like India and China, even in those countries, there's a division of languages.

And they don't even have this united effort of one language, of one people. And why did they do this? Why were they setting about to settle down and build this city and this tower?

It tells us at the end of verse 4. They didn't want to be dispersed over the earth. Now, while this might seem like a noble thing that they wanted to be together, security perhaps, upon closer scrutiny, we see that their plan was a self-centered, rebellious plan.

[8 : 30] They wanted to build a city and a tower for themselves and against God's plans for them, which was not to settle in one central place.

That was not God's will. That was not God's plan for them. And what comes into view at this particular point is that when God created Adam and Eve, he blessed them and he gave them an important command that really is at issue here in this passage.

Genesis 128. We read, concerning the Lord's blessing of Adam and Eve, and God blessed them and said to them, be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over every living thing that moves on the earth.

They were to be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth. They would have children and their children would have children. They were to spread over God's earth. God wanted his earth to be filled with his image bearers, filled with those created in his image and his likeness, living under his rule as his vice regents.

And then after the flood, the Lord does the same thing. After the flood, only eight persons were alive on the earth and God gives the same command to Noah and his three sons and by extension to their wives.

[10 : 06] Genesis 9.1. And God blessed Noah and his sons and said to them, Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth. And then again in verse 7 of Genesis 9, he says to them, And you, be fruitful and multiply, tame on the earth and multiply in it.

And so, this was God's command to them. It was the command to Adam and Eve, it was the command to Noah and his sons.

God wanted his image bearers across his earth filling it and living for his glory. But in the case of Adam and Eve, they fell to the temptation of wanting to be like God.

They were not content to live under God's lordship, obeying his commands, allowing him to determine what is good and evil. They wanted to determine that for themselves. And so, Adam and Eve yielded to the temptation of disobeying God, believing that through disobedience they could become like God.

And instead of being exalted, they were debased. They were humiliated. They became slaves to sin. And they were separated from God and they were banished from the Garden of Eden.

[11 : 39] And really, what we have here in Genesis 11 is we have the corporate repetition of what happened in the Garden of Eden. This is the Garden of Eden repeated in a corporate way.

They had the same command. The sons of Noah had the same command to go and fill the earth and they decided, you know what? We don't want to spread out. We don't want to fill the earth. So what we're going to do is we're going to build a city, we're going to build a tower, and we want it to ascend to heaven. Why heaven? Why weren't they content to spread across the earth? Why didn't they want to go horizontally but they want to go vertically? They want to go vertically because they want to challenge God. They want to be like God.

They want to be able to determine things for themselves very much like Adam and Eve. their decision was rooted in the desire to be like God rather than being submitted to God.

[12 : 52] And their interest was to make a name for themselves for their glory, not God's glory, and not for God's name. Their motivation was, let's make a name for ourselves.

And isn't it interesting that there seems to be unanimity on this? they were all in agreement on this? As large as the group may have been and no doubt was, no hint of protest in this great idea of rather than spreading across the earth in obedience to the command that was given and was handed down to them, they decide that they want to go up.

They want to ascend into the heavens. and they would have had a far better understanding and revelation that God is the God of the heavens than people would today because they were closer to the start of things and the way knowledge and information would have been passed down over generations.

and so they want to go up. And one of the things about this passage that we are considering this morning, it's easy to read this as a detached account from ourselves.

But brothers and sisters, we need to be reminded that the same motivation that was in all of these people's hearts, that same motivation is shared broadly among human beings.

[14 : 35] It's not just unique to this group of people who lived at that particular time. This condition of the heart wanting to ascend to God's place, wanting to be like God is a broad condition of fallen men and women.

And it amounts to ignoring God in God's world world. And again, it is a natural disposition of all people.

The reality is today, Tower of Babels continue to be built. Tower of Babels continue to be built.

Rebellious cities, man-made ideas, and designs continue to be built to this day.

Not looking like that one, but all of the endeavors and the enterprises that we concoct and we seek to build away from God, all of our vain imaginations, all of our selfish ambitions, all of our endeavors that have no desire to serve God or to please God, and they are only to please ourselves and to make our own names great.

God. They are just other iterations of the Tower of Babel and the rebellious city that these people were building because they did not want to follow God's way and God's rule.

[16 : 11] When we think of humanity at its basic level in the area of sexuality, we're seeing it today, where there are modern builders of the Tower of Babel and cities of rebellion around the area of human sexuality, saying that males can marry males and females can marry females, and that a man can be a woman and a woman can be a man, and all kinds of confusion and ideas.

These brothers and sisters are simply modern cities and towers of Babel, where men and women do not want to exist in the boundaries that God has given to them and to obey the things that he has said to them, and they do their own thing.

Towers of Babel and cities of rebellion continue to be built today as they press against and resist God's revealed will for mankind.

And brothers and sisters, I'd encourage us this morning on a personal level to consider what this means for us. people who came together to build this rebellious city and this tower of pride.

But you know that we are also capable of building our own cities of rebellion and our own towers of Babel in our lives.

[18 : 00] wherever we seek to disobey God in our lives, in essence what we're doing is we're doing the exact same thing that Adam and Eve did, we're doing the exact same thing that these people in Genesis 11 did.

We are flaunting and pushing back against God's revealed will for us.

And I encourage us this morning to really reflect upon this, reflect upon our lives and consider whether there are areas of our lives that we in pride and in arrogance have vain imaginations that we are living separate and apart from what God's revealed will is for us.

Those of us who are married this morning should certainly reflect upon this and consider how we as a husband or as a wife are relating in our marriages.

Are we building our rebellious cities and our towers of Babel where we're doing our own thing contrary to what God says in his word? Where our name and what pleases us is more important than God's name and what pleases the Lord.

[19 : 32] If you're single this morning, consider whether you are seeking to follow what God has revealed in his word for you as a single person or whether you are building your own tower of Babel, your own rules and your own ideas about how you want to live.

For some single people that may look like pursuing a relationship, if you're a believer, pursuing a relationship with an unbeliever. That is contrary to what God has revealed in his word.

If you're a single person and you're engaging in sexual relations outside of marriage, that is building your own tower of Babel and your own city of rebellion against what God has revealed in his word.

A big part of all of our lives is money and possessions. How are we handling those in light of what God has revealed in his word? Are we living in obedience to what he's revealed in his word?

Or are we building our own tower of Babel and obeying our own rules? And our own ideas about handling resources that God entrusts to us?

[20 : 59] Are we seeking to please God or are we seeking to please ourselves? And this can go on, but brothers and sisters, whatever aspect of our lives, we need to consider whether we are living for God and his glory or for ourselves.

and our own glory. And we need to be honest with it. And we need to ask the Lord to help us and we need to really ask the Lord to convict us where we may not have conviction.

If we're not sure about something, ask the Lord, Lord, would you shine light on this? Would you help me to see this as I need to see it? Otherwise, we're going to have a similar outcome to what we see here in Genesis 11.

Doing our own thing and seeking to please ourselves and seeking to make a name for ourselves will never be overlooked by God.

God will never overlook it. He can't overlook it. He will judge it and the only question is when.

[22 : 26] And one of the things about us human beings is we regularly are deceived by the patience of the Lord. We take the Lord's patience, the Bible says, as slackness when the Lord gives us his patience as kindness.

God will judge rebellion. God will judge those who go against his revealed will. And that's what we see as the second activity that's taking place in this passage.

And it brings me to my second and the final point, which is the judgment of God. We see the judgment of God in verses 5-9. Look again at verse 5.

And the Lord came down to see the city and the tower which the children of man had built. This is a very interesting way of stating it because it kind of gives the impression like, you know, God couldn't see it from heaven or God didn't know what was going on and like somebody just tipped him off and he came down to check out to see if it really was true.

We know that God is the all-seeing God. He's the all-knowing God. So he was not unaware about what was going on. But this is a condescension to our own understanding.

[23 : 56] This is humanly speaking for us to understand God. But it also seems though that the way it is written is to communicate that this city and the tower that they were building was so insignificant.

God had to really come down to see it. It was so distant. It was so far away from achieving what they had in mind that God had to really come down and to look at it.

It's kind of like, have you ever seen a child draw like a stick man picture? and they're so proud of it, they're showing it to everyone.

They want the whole world to see it because to them, this is a masterpiece and everyone should really see it. What they were building, though in their estimation was a grand thing to make a name for themselves, it was like a stick man picture in the sight of God.

In verse six, we see the Lord's assessment of the situation. we read, behold, this is what God says, behold, they are one people and they have all one language and this is only the beginning of what

they will do and nothing they propose to do will now be impossible for them.

[25 : 22] The Lord acknowledges their unified power and this amazing ability that they had to accomplish things as they worked together speaking the same language.

But I don't think any of us should read this to really believe that these are literal words that nothing was impossible for them once they decided to do it together because they had one language.

I mean, they couldn't decide that they're going to be God and overthrow God and run the universe. They couldn't decide to do that. And so this is really, it's an exaggerated statement just to make the point, though, that they were able to accomplish a lot being unified and having the same language once they worked together.

But God's concern was not so much their ability to be united to do good. His concern was their ability to be united to do evil.

That was the concern. The concern was not that God did not want them to unite for good purposes. He was concerned that they were uniting with their common language and their common purpose to rebel and to do evil.

[26 : 58] And so the Lord who gave them the shared language in the first place, we're told he confused or he mixed up their communication so that they could no longer work together and build this city and this tower that they were seeking to build.

God confused their language because they were using it for their own purpose and not for God's purpose. And it's a reminder to us that God will thwart the plans of the wicked.

He'll thwart the plans of the nations. He will fulfill his purposes. I think if we want to consider why the world is the way the world is today, you know why the world really is the way it is today?

considering it in the context of Genesis 11, the world is the way it is today because people are determined to build cities of rebellion and towers of pride and they refuse to acknowledge God and God's world.

That's why the world is the way it is today. We get the fruit of building these cities, these enterprises that are contrary to what God has in mind.

[28 : 26] And our motivation is pride. Our motivation is ourselves. We want to put ourselves out there. And so really, this in a nutshell summarizes the problems of the world.

But I can also say to you this morning that it also summarizes some of our own problems as well. Some of the problems that we face in our lives, they are as a result of us building our cities of rebellion, building these towers of pride to promote ourselves, to make it all about ourselves, to seek to please ourselves instead of pleasing God.

It is doing what God forbids. And I'm not minimizing that some of the things that have happened to us, some of it is just because we live in a broken and a fallen world.

Some of it is like the suffering of Job, not because he sinned, it's just part of the human condition and reality that we suffer. But brothers and sisters, some of our suffering is because we have been rebellious against God and his revealed will in his word.

And I encourage us to reflect upon that this morning. Where in your life, where in my life, can some of the hardships that we are facing be attributed to the fact that we have just done our own thing, flaunting what God has revealed in his word for us.

[30 : 23] God brought judgment and he brought judgment not just to upset what they were doing.

God was not just like we say, throwing a monkey wrench in their plans. He was doing so much more than that. We read in verse 11, sorry, in verse 8, God dispersed them from there over the face of all the earth and they left off building the tower.

They left off building the city, sorry. God's ultimate plan in confusing their language was to cause them to be dispersed across the earth, which was his plan from the outset.

which is what they were rebelling against. So God is the one who gave them the different languages within the different groups, and it was not a matter of chance or randomness.

God did this by his divine design. And all of these languages, though they couldn't understand what another, God understands every single one of them because he gave them those languages.

[31 : 51] And his ultimate aim really was to show grace to rebellious people. This was an act of grace, and we saw this last week as we looked at Acts 17 verses 26 to 27.

This is what it says, And he, meaning God, made from one man every nation of mankind to live on all the face of the earth, having determined allotted periods and the boundaries of their dwelling place, that they should seek God in the hope that they might feel their way toward him and find him,

yet he is actually not far from each one of them.

God's scattering of the people was an act of grace, because he could have judged them, he could have brought judgment against them for their rebellious plans. And he did bring judgment, but not ultimate and obliterating judgment, he gave them grace in the midst of his judgment.

He wanted the nations to seek him, and left to themselves, they would not ever seek him.

Next Sunday, the Lord willing, we will look at the call of Abraham as we continue through. We'll see how God called Abraham, whom he chose, interestingly, right from this same region of Babylonia, and told them that he was going to bless all the families of the earth through him with salvation, and ultimately God fulfilled this through Adam's descendant, the Lord Jesus Christ.

[33 : 47] And in Christ, all the scattered people are brought back into unity.

Not all without exception, but all of them without distinction. And there's this beautiful passage in the book of Revelation, in Revelation 7, verses 9 to 10, where God gives John a vision of the reuniting of the scattered people of the world.

And this is what John records in Revelation 7, 9 through 10. After this, I looked, and behold, a great multitude that no one could number from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes and palm branches in their hands, crying out with a loud voice, salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne and to the Lamb.

No people group is unrepresented within this group. This group of people that John foresaw that one day will be around the throne of God, he says, from every nation, from all tribes, peoples, and languages, standing before the throne, and in one voice, a loud voice, they're saying, salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne and to the Lamb.

This is a very interesting passage when we consider it that with certainty there will be redeemed people from every nation and every tribe and every people and every language.

[35 : 49] How is that possible? The reason it's possible is that salvation is not random. Salvation is not by whim and fancy.

Salvation is by a sovereign God who has his elect people throughout the nations of the world. And he has determined that he will have a people from all of these peoples and he brings them to saving faith.

and if he had left us all to ourselves there would be none who would be saved.

Now it's easy to think that all these people were in heaven and each one was singing or speaking their own dialect as they said salvation belongs to our God and Jehemu sits on the throne.

If that were the case that would be like the Tower of Babel in heaven. That would be a lot of noise of people speaking these thousands of different languages and dialects in heaven.

[37 : 04] And John would have been able to interpret all of them to be able to synchronize and say you know what in all of their different languages they are singing this one line they're saying the same thing to God.

no it's one voice. The description every nation tribe peoples and languages that's just to say where they have come from but somehow the same God who divided the languages and scattered the people is now unifying the language and assembling his people in one body to give praise to him to seek his glory instead of seeking their own glory.

God is the one who will unify the language of his redeemed people and we will use our unified voices to praise and to glorify him.

what an amazing act of grace to do that. People who were part of rebellious people in the past their ancestors who were rebellious God now assembles them all and they have come out of all these separations and they're now united and they're united in their union with the Lord Jesus Christ.

In verse 11 we're told the final outcome of the city that they were seeking to build. We read therefore its name became Babel therefore the name its name was called Babel because there the Lord confused the language of the whole earth and from there the Lord dispersed them over the face of all the earth.

[39 : 14] And so in this account what we see is the opposite result happens in the end from what they were planning in the beginning.

They were refusing to be dispersed And they determined to build a city and build the tower to make a name for themselves. And in the end what we see is they are dispersed they are scattered and instead of making a name of pride for themselves they make a name of folly for themselves.

The name is Babel which in Hebrew sounds like the word confused and today even when we use that word we say a person is a babbler or the baby is babbling it means it's just foolishness it's just nonsense it doesn't make sense and brothers and sisters this is the this is the chronology of all those who go the way of seeking to build their own rebellious cities and their own towers of pride. It will always end as an unfinished endeavor. It will end as something that you will never attain you will never achieve and the reason is there's a sovereign God who will ensure that it doesn't happen. He will set boundaries he will set limits on us the way he did it for these ones was he set limits on their language and their ability to communicate and collaborate and so they were not able to act in unison as they decided to and friends the same is true for us we'll have many cities and towers in our lives that we leave off because we can't finish them because the sovereign God in his mercy and grace will prevent us from finishing them.

[41 : 18] Let me just say this to those of us who are believers this morning it is far better for God to intervene and let us stop wasting time and effort and resources building things that are contrary to his will for us than for us to continue to go down that path and finish the whole thing and it still ends up being an exercise in futility.

And so brothers and sisters may we all be reminded this morning as we consider this account of the Tower of Babel and this rebellious city that the people built contrary to God's will.

May we all consider this morning our need to be living lives in obedience to the Lord. Not going our own way, not doing our own thing.

And the reality is that we who profess Christ's Christ sometimes do that. We're capable of that still. But may God help us this morning to see the futility of that.

To see that we will get the opposite of what we are going after if we're not pursuing building what God is building. The Bible tells us unless the Lord builds the house we're laboring in vain.

[42 : 55] And again perhaps this morning you may be troubled and wondering why plans are not working out. Why these grand ideas, this thing that you want to bring about is not happening.

could it be that you are building a city of rebellion, a tower of pride contrary to God's will for you and God in his mercy is stopping and preventing you in that?

And maybe it's not as clear as this. Maybe it requires reflection and prayer and godly counsel. But I encourage us to ponder these things.

In John 4, 34, Jesus said, my food is to do the will of my Father and to finish his work. He said, that's what sustains me.

My food is to do my Father's will and to finish his work. May this be true for all of us.

[44 : 07] may it be increasingly true for all of us that we want to do God's will. Whatever the endeavor, before we even make decisions about it, there's one thing we should settle in our hearts.

God, I want to do your will. I want to do your will, Lord. I don't want my way. I'm not wise enough to choose my own way.

I want your will. May doing our Father's will more and more be our food.

And may we live our lives seeking to make his name great. May we live our lives for his glory and not our own. May we take to heart the words of 1 Corinthians 10, 31.

Whether we eat or drink, whatever we do, let's do it all for the glory of God. Let's make a name for him. Let's make his name great.

[45 : 10] Because his name is truly great. Let's pray. Father, we bow our hearts this morning and we thank you that you are God and beside you there is no other.

Would you help us, Lord, to be content to be your creatures, those you have created and redeemed. And may we willingly live lives in obedience to your revealed will for us.

Forgive us, O Lord, when we have gone our own way, when we have been like the builders of the Tower of Babel and the city of rebellion. O Lord, would you help us to grow in wisdom, to recognize that only that which you build will last.

And may we give ourselves to those endeavors. We ask these things in Christ's name. Amen. Let's sign for our closing song.

Take the world, but give me Jesus. Take the world, but give me Jesus.

[46 : 42] All his joys are but a name, but his love abides forever. Through eternal years the same.

verse 2, take the world. Take the world, but give me Jesus.

Sweetest comfort of my soul, with my Savior watching on me, I can see the billows roll.

O the height, depth of mercy, O the length and breadth of love, O the fullness of redemption, filled with endless life above.

Take this world, my God's love. Verse 3, take the world, but give me Jesus.

[47 : 53] In his cross, in his cross, my trust shall be, till with clearer, brighter vision, face to face, my Lord, I see.

O the height and depth of mercy, O the length and breadth of love, O the fullness of redemption, pledge of endless life above.

Take this world, my God's love. O the height, O the height and depth of mercy, O the length and breadth of love, O the fullness of redemption, build with endless life above.

Take this world, my God's love. Let's sing the bridge, take the world. Take the world, but give me Jesus, say, in his cross, my trust shall be.

Take this world, but give me Jesus, till that day. My Lord, sing that again. Take this world, but give me Jesus, in his cross, my trust shall be.

[49 : 29] Take the world, but give me Jesus, till that day. Let the ladies join us. Take this world, but give me Jesus, in his cross, my trust shall be.

Take this world, but give me Jesus, till that day. My Lord, oh the height, oh the height and depth of mercy, oh the length and breadth of love, oh the fullness of redemption, pledge of endless life above.

Take this world, my God, take this world, take this world, my God's love. Amen.

Father, we pray that you would enable all of us to see this world for what it is, and God, when we do, we will say take it.

We won't run after it. We won't seek to establish our values around it.

[50 : 57] We will say take this world, my God's enough. But Lord, we also know that being able to say that requires that we see that you are indeed enough.

So would you open our eyes to the fullness of our salvation, to the beauty of our Savior. And Lord, may we have a compelling vision of the one who has loved us and given himself for us, that we would willingly live for him.

God, all over this room, I pray that you would work in our hearts, that this would truly be the anthem of our soul as we traverse this fallen and broken world.

And we would say, take it, my God, is enough. But I pray this morning for those who stand outside of Jesus Christ for the present or viewing the live stream.

I pray, oh Lord, that you would have mercy in this moment. God, help them to see the emptiness of this world. Help them to see its false and fleeting promises.

[52 : 19] God, help them to see that it is filled with unfinished projects, promising grandeur and splendor and only ending in frustration and disappointment.

God, have mercy this morning and save the lost and would you grant faith and repentance.

And will you bring the strangers home, we pray. And now as we leave this morning, may the Lord bless you and keep you.

May the Lord make his face to shine upon you and be gracious to you. And may the Lord lift up his countenance upon you and give you peace.

A peace that the world cannot give and a peace that the world cannot take away. In Jesus' name, amen. Amen.

[53 : 27] God bless you. You're dismissed.