

# God's Plan for the Nations

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[ 0 : 00 ] Let's pray. Lord, may that be our prayer. May we cling to you.

As we look into your word this morning, may we be drawn to you ever more closely, and may we reflect you ever more fully. In Jesus' name, amen. Turn with me in your Bible to Genesis chapter 10.

Again, we are nearing the end of our series in the opening chapters of Genesis. And this morning we are looking at the fourth major section of sort of the first half of Genesis, which begins at chapter 10, verse 1, and goes to chapter 11, verse 9.

As we've noticed, the sections of Genesis begin with this phrase, these are the generations of. And so today we are at the fourth time that that phrase appears.

These are the generations of the sons of Noah. So let's read. I'm going to read all of chapter 10 and chapter 11 up to verse 9. These are the generations of the sons of Noah, Shem, Ham, and Japheth.

[ 1 : 13 ] Sons were born to them after the flood. The sons of Japheth, Gomer, Magog, Madai, Javan, Tubal, Meshach, and Tiras. The sons of Gomer, Ashkenaz, Riphoth, and Togarmah.

The sons of Javan, Elisha, Tarshish, Kitim, and Dodanim. From these, the coastland peoples spread in their lands, each with his own language by their clans in their nations.

The sons of Ham. Cush, Egypt, Put, and Canaan. The sons of Cush. Seba, Havilah, Sabta, Rama, and Sabteika. The sons of Rama, Sheba, and Dedan.

Cush fathered Nimrod. He was the first on earth to be a mighty man. He was a mighty hunter before the Lord. Therefore, it is said like Nimrod, a mighty hunter before the Lord.

The beginning of his kingdom was Babel, Erech, Akkad, and Kalne in the land of Shinar. From that land, he went into Assyria and built Nineveh, Rehoboth-er, Kala, and Rezen between Nineveh and Kala, that is the great city.

[ 2 : 17 ] Egypt fathered Ludim, Anamim, Lehabim, Naphtuhim, Pathrusim, Kazluhim, from whom the Philistines came, and Kaphtorim.

Canaan fathered Sidon, his firstborn, and Heth, and the Jebusites, Amorites, and Girgashites, the Hivites, Arkites, the Sinites, the Arvidites, the Zemurites, and the Hamathites, afterward the clans of the Canaanites dispersed.

And the territory of the Canaanites extended from Sidon in the direction of Gerar as far as Gaza, and in the direction of Sodom, Gomorrah, Adma, and Zeboiim as far as Lasha. These are the sons of Ham by their clans, their languages, their lands, and their nations.

To Shem also the father of all the children of Eber. The elder brother of Japheth's children were born. The sons of Shem. Elam, Asher, Arpaxad, Lud, and Aram.

The sons of Aram, Uz, Hul, Gether, and Mosh. Arpaxad fathered Shelah, and Shelah fathered Eber. To Eber were born two sons. The name of the one was Peleg, for in his days the earth was divided.

[ 3 : 24 ] And his brother's name was Joktan. Joktan fathered Almadad, Shalef, Hazmar, Mabeth, Jera, Hadoram, Uzal, Diklah, Obal, Abimeel, Sheba, Ophir, Havilah, and Jobab.

All these were the sons of Joktan. The territory in which they lived extended from Misha in the direction of Sephar to the hill country in the east. These are the sons of Shem by their clans, their languages, their lands, and their nations.

These are the clans of the sons of Noah according to their genealogies in their nations. And from these the nations spread abroad on the earth after the flood. Now, the whole earth had one language and the same words.

And as people migrated from the east, they found a plain in the land of Shinar and settled there. And they said to one another, 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.

[ 4 : 29 ] 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. And nothing that they propose to do will now be impossible for them. Come, let us go down. And there confuse their language 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.

One of the most challenging issues facing our world and facing the church today is the issue of relationships between different racial, ethnic, and national groups.

[ 5 : 39 ] Now, in the United States, there's wide disagreement about how much of a problem this is. Some people say, what's the big deal? I've never actually met anyone who is really racist.

The issue is overblown by the media and by irresponsible activists. But others say, how can you say it is only one of the problems that we are facing?

It is the problem that America has never really faced up to ever since Africans were kidnapped and enslaved and forcibly separated from their families for hundreds of years.

But when people don't even agree on what exactly the problem is or if there is a problem, well, that's a problem. And it's not only an American problem.

In Ethiopia, everyone's skin color is the same. But strife has recently broken out between the prime minister's ruling party and frustrated members of his own ethnic group who feel that he does not represent them sufficiently.

[ 6 : 40 ] One news headline this week said, Ethiopia will explode if it doesn't move beyond ethnic-based politics. The same could be said of many other countries as well.

Eastern Europe still bears the scars of the war in the 1990s that tore apart the former Yugoslavia, where, again, everyone's skin color was the same, but people had different ethnic loyalties.

In Asia, the governments of Myanmar and China actively repress millions of ethnic minorities. We could point to examples of ethnically-based strife and tension in every continent of the world.

And it's not only a problem within nations, it's also a problem between nations. Should we aim to build an increasingly globalized world through expansive trade agreements and alliances, more open borders with the goal of spreading liberal democratic values to the ends of the earth?

Or is that short-sighted, counterproductive, and even oppressive? Is nationalism a better option? These are complicated and challenging questions that face our modern world.

[ 7 : 50 ] And what about the church in the midst of all this? What is the Christian church to be and do in a world that is increasingly diverse and often divided?

Does the Bible have any wisdom that can help us here in our multi-ethnic world? Now, one of the things I love about the Bible is that it was written thousands of years ago, but it has wisdom for all the most pressing issues that we face today.

Now, it may not answer all of our modern questions directly, but it gives us a framework for understanding the world and ourselves and for living wisely within it as creatures of God.

And this morning's text speaks to this very issue of ethnic and national identity and diversity. So, this morning we're going to see three things. First, in chapter 10, we're going to see that ethnic and national diversity is created by God.

Second, in chapter 11, the part we read, we'll see that ethnic and national discord is caused by sin. And then we'll look to the New Testament where we'll see that our ethnicity and nationality can be redeemed through Christ.

[ 9 : 14 ] So, first, ethnic and national diversity is created by God. That's chapter 10. Now, I read all of chapter 10, which is a little risky to read a chapter like that. Right?

Because it's a long list of names, and you risk losing people in the midst of it. And most people, if you read Genesis, you get to chapter 10, and your eyes glaze over a little bit, and you're like, okay, whatever, I don't recognize most of these names.

Even if you read the commentaries, the scholars of the ancient Near East can't identify with confidence several of these names. But we can notice a few things if we look at chapter 10 more

closely.

The first thing we might notice about chapter 10 is that it's not a straightforward genealogy. Right? It's not just so-and-so was the son of so-and-so was the son of so-and-so was the son of so-and-so. Right? Right? Verse 13, for example, says, Egypt fathered Ludim and Amim and five other tribes. Now, that doesn't mean that Egypt was a man who had sons by these names.

[10:11] It's saying that somehow these tribes emerged from Egypt or were connected to Egypt. You might, if you're really, if you look really closely, you'll notice that in verse 7, the names Havilah and Sheba occur as sons of Cush.

And again, they appear in verse 29 as sons of Joktan. And you can't have two fathers, literally, biologically. Right? So, something else is going on here. We're not primarily talking about biological descendants, but converging influences of some kind or another.

Verse 5, 20, and 31, at the end of each of the sections of the sons of Japheth and Ham and Shem, all refer to lands, languages, clans, and nations.

So, in other words, we see geographic distinctions, linguistic distinctions, ethnic distinctions, and political or national connections and distinctions throughout this chapter.

Now, reading this chapter, if you're familiar with some of the names, it's a bit like listening to someone describe the splendor of a starry night. Now, they might mention some of the stars and constellations by name, but they're not drawing a precise scientific map with distances.

[11:25] They're not primarily concerned with precision and exactness. They're trying to convey a sense of wonder at the vast array and the interconnectedness of the whole. And that's what we see in this chapter.

There's all these interconnected nations and peoples and clans and language groups. So, that's the first thing. It's not a straightforward genealogy. It shows a whole bunch of connections.

Second, there is a careful structure and order to this chapter. So, first, there's a broad geographic pattern. The sons of Japheth in verses 2 to 5 are located primarily to the north and west of Israel in southeastern Europe and modern-day Turkey around the coastlands and islands of the Mediterranean.

The sons of Ham in verses 6 through 20 include Israel's closest neighbors, the Canaanites, and fiercest enemies, as well as several North African countries, Cush, Egypt, and Put, which is Libya. Finally, we get to Shem in verse 21, who is introduced as the father of all the children of Eber. Now, Eber is probably where we get the word Hebrew. Hebrew. So, Abram, the Hebrew, right?

[12:38] The Hebrew people. So, we go from the faraway nations up in the north and west to Israel's closest neighbors to the south and east, and finally to the ancestor of Israel itself.

So, it's a picture of the world that's sort of starting on the far edges, coming closer, and ending with the ancestor of Israel itself. There are also numerical patterns.

In particular, there's lots of groups of seven and a couple groups of twelve. So, seven sons of Japheth, seven grandsons of Japheth, seven sons of Egypt.

The phrase son of appears seven times before Nimrod and seven times after Nimrod. There are twelve sons of Ham. Nimrod is number twelve. Only eleven sons of Canaan, interestingly.

And most importantly, the most important number is that the whole, if you add up all the names in the chapter, you get seventy. Roughly. There's seventy-one, and then in the Greek translation of the Old Testament, they add one more, so it's seventy-two, and maybe that one dropped out and was really there in the beginning.

[13:44] So, maybe it's seventy-two, but maybe one of them is not really meant to be there. But the whole point is, they weren't so concerned about exact numbers back then, right? Seventy, seventy-one, seventy-two, it's all seventy, right?

Seriously, in the ancient world, okay? Seventy is a large and complete number in the Bible and for the Israelites. And you can notice that I'm not just making that up, or it's not just a random detail, because later in the book of Genesis, the people of Israel go down to Egypt, and how many do they number?

They number seventy. And how many elders are there in Exodus? Seventy elders. So, seventy represents the whole of the nation of Israel, the whole of the family of Jacob, and here, the whole of the nations of the world.

Now, not every nation is mentioned. Moab is not mentioned. Ammon is not mentioned. India is not mentioned. China is not mentioned. Of course, America is not mentioned. But the whole point is,

chapter ten is about all of...it's representing all of the nations of the world, the totality. And so, that brings us to our third point. It's not straightforward genealogy. It is carefully ordered, and it indicates God's concern for all the nations of the world. Now, we've mentioned many times that other people groups in the ancient Near East had their own stories of creation and the flood. [15:13] And so, some of those stories were familiar, but none of them had a chapter like chapter ten. Because what is this chapter about? It's not about Israel. Did you notice? Israel is not mentioned in this chapter.

It's about all the other nations of the world. Now, if you read the Babylonian epics, they're all about the founding of Babylon, the greatness of Babylon, the heroes of Babylon.

The ancient Egyptians did not even refer to other nations as humans. When they used the word human beings or men, they referred only to fellow Egyptians.

Everyone else was considered a descendant of the enemies of the gods. You see, human beings are naturally ethnocentric.

In other words, we naturally focus on preserving ourselves and our own kind. And sometimes go even as far as not seeing other ethnic groups as fully human.

[16:19] Now, it's not entirely wrong to start by loving our most immediate neighbors. So, there's an appropriate kind of patriotism, a love of home, a proper concern for our closest relatives and our fellow citizens.

But from the very beginning, here in chapter ten, the Bible shows us God's concern for all the nations of the world. And God's people should share God's concern.

In chapter twelve, we'll see God say to Abraham, In you, all the families of the earth will be blessed. That's what chapter ten is about. All the families of the earth which Israel is called to be a blessing to.

The Jewish scholar Nahum Sarna put it this way in his commentary, God's sovereignty extends to every nation. His providence governs them all. The nations of the world are all of one blood, and they all exist under the sovereign rule of God.

The apostle Paul said the same thing in Acts 17. He said, God made from one man every nation of mankind to live on all the face of the earth.

[17:32] Ethnic and national diversity is part of God's creational intent. It's part of God's beautiful design. Now, this also explains why chapter ten comes before chapter eleven.

Because even though it might seem chronologically out of order, right? Chapter ten shows us the nations dispersing over all the earth, and then chapter eleven seems to go back to a time when the whole earth had one language, and the people only scatter at the end of the story.

But if chapter eleven came before chapter ten, then we might conclude that the diversity of nations and cultures is only a result of human pride and wickedness, which we'll see in chapter eleven.

But that's not the message God wanted to communicate. God wanted His people, and God wants us to see that ethnic and national diversity is a fulfillment of God's creative intent, His good purpose. So, in chapter ten, we see the nations of the world multiplying under God's blessing. Ethnic and national diversity is created by God.

[18:43] That is the first point. But that's not all that Genesis shows us about ethnicity and nationality. In the first nine verses of chapter eleven, we also see that ethnic and national discord is caused by sin.

And that's the main point of the story, which we call the Tower of Babel. Human sin, especially pride and fear, ends in discord and dispersal.

So, if chapter ten shows us the nations of the world multiplying under God's blessing, chapter eleven shows us the nations of the world scattering under God's wrath. Now, before we jump into chapter eleven, I want you to notice briefly two parts of chapter ten that sort of preview chapter eleven, or point forward to chapter eleven.

You might have noticed as we were reading that the sequence of names occasionally gets interrupted. And it really gets interrupted in two main places. First, chapter ten, verses eight to twelve, there's an extended note about Nimrod.

Now, the description of Nimrod indicates his power. He was a mighty man, a mighty hunter, a founder of cities and kingdoms. But it also indicates his wickedness.

[20:03] His name, Nimrod, means we shall rebel. And the word mighty man was previously used in chapter six, verse four, to describe the Nephilim, the giants, who ruled in the time before the flood

when the wickedness of humanity was great in the earth.

And furthermore, you might have noticed that Nimrod's kingdom is specifically associated with Babel. Chapter ten, verse ten. That is Babylon.

Babel, same thing as Babylon, where the tower in chapter eleven is built. So, we see sort of the wickedness of Nimrod, the founder of Babel.

The second note is much shorter in verse twenty-five. Verse twenty-five says, One of Eber's sons was Peleg, for in his days the earth was divided. Now, the verse doesn't explain what that was or how it happened, but most likely it points forward to the division and dispersal that we see in chapter eleven.

In fact, the Jewish tradition refers to chapter eleven, one to nine, not as the Tower of Babel, but as the generation of division. In other words, the beginning of division and discord.

[ 21 : 26 ] Now, what's going on in the first nine verses of chapter eleven? Open up your bulletin to the center page.

So, I have included a diagram of what the Tower of Babel probably looked like. Now, the tower has since been destroyed, but archaeologists have found, have excavated its ruins.

And the descriptions we've found, the written descriptions we've found, correspond actually quite precisely to the ruins that archaeologists can identify. So, we have a pretty good idea of what it was intended to look like.

And it would have been a very impressive structure. Three hundred feet tall. Imagine that. Thirty stories in today's world.

Right? That's about what 360 State is, I think. Right? Seven levels towering over the rest of the city and the countryside. It was literally built to be a stairway to heaven.

[ 22 : 29 ] A temple tower to the Babylonian god Marduk. And in fact, the Babylonians boasted that their tower had been built by the gods with special materials, and they called their temple the house of the foundation of heaven and earth.

And they called their city Babylon gate of the gods or gateway of heaven. But God and the author of Genesis were not impressed.

Look at the story, verse 3. Verse 3 says, The tower in Babylon was not built by the gods. It was built by mere mortals. And it wasn't even built with specially prepared materials.

It was built with second-rate materials. Brick instead of stone. And bitumen for mortar. And it was certainly not the meeting place of heaven and earth.

In fact, verse 5, which is the crucial hinge point of the story. I've included a diagram of how the story works. Verse 5 is the crucial turning point of the story.

[ 23 : 34 ] And what does it say? The Lord came down. It's almost making fun of the Babylonian myths. The foundation of heaven and earth.

God, it's so small that God has to come down to see it. I mean, God's talking smack here a little bit. The Lord had to come down to see the city and the tower which the children of Adam had built.

And finally, verse 9, The city of Babylon is not the gateway of the gods. It is the birthplace of confusion. So there's a play on words in Hebrew. Babo, Babylon, sounds like balel, which is confusion.

Babylon is the birthplace of confusion. Or as we say in English, babbling. Now, you might ask, what was the problem?

What was the problem with this great technological feat? This impressive human project? Why was God so mad and displeased? Well, look at verse 4.

[ 24 : 37 ] Underneath the grand plans and the great excitement, we see pride and fear. Let us make a name for ourselves.

Pride. Lest we be dispersed over the face of the whole earth. Fear. Now, at one level, pride and fear are very natural human feelings, right? All human beings want to take pride in something.

And all of us live in fear of losing whatever we take pride in. Now, the problem is the people of Babel want their city and their tower and their empire that they have built to be the source of their pride and the solution to their fears.

Instead of receiving their identity, their pride from the one true God and His blessing, instead of receiving their security and the solution to their fears from a relationship, recognizing the true God, they are now worshiping themselves.

Worshipping their achievements and worshipping their global empire. You see, just like Adam and Eve in the garden, they want to become gods.

[ 25 : 55 ] They want to live without any boundaries. Now, the point of the story is not that architecture, technology, cities, centralized planning, a common language, or an organized government is inherently bad.

The point is that all those things can accomplish great harm when human beings attempt to use them to further their godlike ambitions.

You see, in verse 6, God sees what the people can't. God sees that great trouble and harm will follow if the people continue to pursue their godlike ambitions in a united way.

One writer said, God intervenes not to protect His own power, but to protect us from the tenacious power of our own corruption.

So, if chapter 10 warns us against the danger of ungodly tribalism, that is, focusing only on the well-being of our own kind, or being hostile or indifferent toward other nations or other ethnic groups, chapter 11 warns us against the danger of ungodly globalism.

[ 27 : 19 ] The ambition to unite all tribes, all nations, and all cultures into one world empire without any boundaries. You see, the ambition of the ancient Babylonians, and of every world superpower throughout history, was to become a universal world empire, a universal world culture with a universally known language.

And we might say, but isn't that more efficient? Couldn't humanity accomplish more that way? But verse 6 suggests that if all the boundaries that limit our human ambitions were removed, we would accomplish more harm than good.

One commentator said, There is no guarantee that global cooperation and a world-unifying culture will seek what is actually good.

And that's a caution I think we need to hear. Globalism is not the solution to everything. Often, boundaries and creaturely limitations, frustrating though they may be to our human ambitions, are good and wise provisions of God.

Proverbs 19, 21 says, Many are the plans in the mind of a man, but it is the purpose of the Lord that will stand. That's what we see in this story.

[ 28 : 52 ] We see human plans, but we see ultimately God's purpose prevailing. You see, this is the second time in Genesis that human wickedness has increased to the point of provoking the active judgment of God.

The people want to live without any boundaries. They want to be their own gods. And that also means they're not going to stop at anything in how they treat one another. They don't see any boundaries between them and God, and therefore, they will trample on anyone else to make their empire succeed.

Now, in His mercy, God does not destroy the whole earth with a flood once again, but in His judgment, He confuses and disperses the people. And of course, the rest of human history is lived in the aftermath of Babel.

Right? We live in a world where there's confusion and misunderstanding and miscommunication, not only between people of different languages, but even people who speak the same language, even people who live in the same house, who are married to each other.

There's frustration and failure in international affairs and in joint human projects. There's discord and disharmony between different ethnic groups.

[ 30 : 21 ] That stubbornly persists. Pride and boasting and fear and insecurity continue to dominate and destabilize human relationships.

We continue to design taller skyscrapers, build cathedrals of knowledge, and harness our technical prowess in a quest for fame and significance and security and even immortality.

Yes, we see God's mercy in not wiping everyone out again like He did in the flood, but the world after Babel is no better than before. Ethnic and national diversity is created by God.

But ethnic and national discord is rampant because of sin. So we might ask, is there any hope? Is there any hope for a renewed and healed and purified and reconciled humanity?

Can the ethnic and national diversity that God created be preserved? And can the ethnic and national discord produced by sin be healed? Well, thankfully, the story of the Bible doesn't end here.

[ 31 : 44 ] Next week, we'll see God's promise to Abraham that somehow, someday, through one of his descendants, the whole, all the families of the earth will be blessed. And later on in the Old Testament, the prophet Zephaniah looks forward to a day when God would change the speech of the peoples to a pure speech that all of them may call upon the name of the Lord and serve Him with one accord.

Zephaniah 3, verses 9 and 10. You see, the Old Testament held out this hope that somehow, someday, the division and discord of the nations produced by our pride and fear and idolatry could one day be healed.

And that pride and fear could be transformed into humility and worship of the true God. That somehow, through the seed of Abraham, all the families of the earth would one day come together in the family of God.

When we come to the New Testament, we see that's precisely what Jesus Christ came to do. Our third point this morning is that our ethnicity and nationality can be redeemed through Christ. Listen to the words of the Apostle Paul from Ephesians chapter 2. He said Christ...and he's talking to the Jews and the Gentiles, who were sort of the two...the groups that...sort of God's...the descendants of Abraham and all the other nations.

[ 33 : 20 ] And he says Christ Jesus Himself is our peace. He has made us both one. He has broken down in His flesh the dividing wall of hostility, that He might create in Himself one new humanity in place of the two, so making peace, and might reconcile us both to God in one body through the cross.

You see, because of Jesus Christ's reconciling and atoning work on the cross, the dividing walls of hostility between Jews and Gentiles, between people of every race and ethnicity and nation, have been broken down.

And now His Spirit has been poured out upon all who turn to Him as Savior and Lord. We read earlier from the book of Acts what happened on the day of Pentecost.

Fifty days after Jesus' resurrection from the dead, and did you notice? It was a reversal of what happened at Babel. Babel began with pride and fear and ended in confusion and dispersion. On the day of Pentecost, it says, people from every nation under heaven were gathered in Jerusalem, and they heard and understood the mighty works of God being declared in their own languages.

[ 34 : 52 ] They were amazed and astonished because what God had promised was now coming to pass. You see, Jesus Christ did not come to destroy our ethnicities and nationalities and languages, but rather to heal and purify them and gather them into His very own body.

The African church father, Augustine, put it this way, for just as after the flood, the proud ungodliness of men built a tower to the heavens against God, when humanity deserved to become divided through diverse languages, so on the day of Pentecost, the humble godliness of the faithful gathered the diversity of their languages into the unity of the church, so that what discord had dispersed, love would gather.

The dispersed limbs of each race would be brought back together and rejoined to the one head Christ and would be refined by the fire of love into the unity of His holy body.

That's what Jesus Christ has come to do, to gather people from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages into His very own body, into fellowship with Him, into His church.

Now, what does that look like practically for us here in New Haven at the end of 2019? Let me try to end with some practical applications of this vision.

[ 36 : 36 ] Well, the renewing work of Christ begins in our hearts. And in particular, the renewing work of Christ and the Holy Spirit counteracts two very common and very dangerous human tendencies.

So the first human tendency is pride and self-justification. We take pride in our own culture, in our own race, in our own nation.

We see its beauty and celebrate its strengths. And maybe we can see some of our own culture's weaknesses, but we also see the reasons for those weaknesses. And so we can understand and sympathize with our own nation's weaknesses.

But when we look at other cultures or other races or other nations, we immediately see their strangeness and their flaws and their idolatries and their corruptions.

And so we can be very patient with people of our own kind when they mess up, but we're immediately indignant toward people of other cultures when they mess up.

[ 37 : 36 ] We can easily point out the flaws common to other cultural groups, but we feel immediately defensive if someone says anything critical of the group that we belong to. And Jesus challenges that very natural human tendency toward pride and self-justification and the tribalism and ethnocentrism that is measuring every other nation in relation to our own that flow out of that.

But you know, Jesus also protects us against a second, very common, but opposite human tendency. That is a tendency toward shame and self-hatred. Maybe you've been dishonored because of your status as an ethnic minority or an immigrant.

Maybe you've internalized a sense of being second class and less than. Maybe you repress parts of your cultural heritage. You even feel ashamed in some way to associate with your ethnicity or with your nationality because you're afraid that if you do, you will only experience more rejection and humiliation.

Or maybe you're not a minority. Maybe you are a white person who is progressive and anti-racist. And you feel shame and self-hatred because of the white privilege that you've inherited and the white guilt that goes along with it. And so you can celebrate the virtues of non-white cultures but only lament the failures of white cultures.

[ 39 : 13 ] either way, shame and self-hatred do not ultimately lead to healing and hope. And ironically, these two opposite errors, pride and self-justification and shame and self-hatred, end up reinforcing one another.

And we sometimes flip from one end to the other. And we are left in a vicious cycle. But the gospel of Jesus Christ sets us free.

It frees us from pride and self-justification because when we stand before the cross of Jesus Christ, we are on level ground with people of every ethnicity and culture who also stand there.

And we see that we are not only fellow human beings made of one blood, but through Christ we have been redeemed through one blood, the blood of God's Son.

And so the gospel gives us humility and confidence instead of pride and self-justification. And the gospel also frees us from shame and self-hatred because in Christ we are loved and forgiven and honored.

[ 40 : 34 ] And we can receive our ethnicity and our nationality as the gift that it is from God and through the Spirit of God our ethnic and national identities can be purified and healed and transformed.

And we can work in accordance with the purposes of God towards healing and reconciliation in the world, whatever our background. that's how the gospel of Christ begins renewing our hearts and our attitudes.

But it doesn't stop there. The gospel begins to transform our relationships. Through Christ we're filled with a divine and supernatural love. A love that perseveres and a love that can overcome all kinds of worldly differences.

When we have Christ living in us we have the courage to go outside of our comfort zone. We have patience and confidence to engage with people who we might otherwise fear or avoid.

And we have the humility to listen and learn from people who've had very different experiences and backgrounds than ourselves. And some of you have experienced this.

[ 41 : 41 ] And you can look at other people in this very room today. Close friends. Brothers and sisters in Christ and the family of the church. And you can look at them and say, you know, I don't think we ever would have found common ground otherwise.

I don't think we ever would have been such close friends or had such, been part of each other's lives apart from the work of Christ bringing us together in the context of His church.

Jesus said that the world will know that we are His disciples by our love for one another. We live in a world that is increasingly fractured and polarized and isolated and desperate.

But if by the power of Christ working in us, if we love one another and if we love our neighbors and if we love even those who oppose us and disagree with us, some in the world will see and give glory to our Father who is in heaven.

Let us pray that it may be so. Father God, we thank You. We thank You for making us in Your image.

[ 42 : 56 ] We thank You for how Your Scripture speaks, Lord, to every challenge and every difficult issue that we face in our world today. We thank You for the gift of ethnic and national diversity that You, in Your command to humanity to be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth that You intended for that ethnic diversity is part of Your creative and beautiful intent and design.

And we thank You for sending Jesus Christ into this broken world. We thank You for the healing that He brings. We thank You for the power and love that He pours into our hearts through the Holy Spirit.

Lord, fill us today with Your Holy Spirit that we, like those disciples on the day of Pentecost, may declare the wonders of God, that others may hear and join in praising You, Lord, from every tribe and people and language and nation.

Pray all these things in Jesus' name. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.