**Sermon for Pentecost-C**

**Bethlehem Lutheran Church, Aiken, South Carolina**

06-08-25

Genesis 11:1–9

From our Old Testament text, we read; Now the whole earth had one language and the same words. That sounds redundant; until one considers the English language, as spoken by us Americans, and the English language, as spoken by the English.

Teffie and I watch some British television shows, and for me, it is common to not understand about half of the dialogue. I know it’s English; but, what did they say? It’s the same language, but not the same words.

Language separates people, and that separation is but one of the many effects of sin, and mankind’s fallen state. In our text, we have a glimpse of a time when mankind was united by one language with the same words; and what did they set out to do?

Fallen man sets about building a rallying point, a great tower, and a large city, so that they would never be separated and scattered over the earth. In that place, they would make a name for themselves, and be great.

Notice that, nowhere in their plans is God even mentioned. It’s all about their greatness, their desires, and making a name for themselves. In this we have that old self-centeredness that is the very mark of sin.

Note also that God’s command to Adam and Eve, and after the great flood, to Noah and his family, was to be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth; not huddle together in one place, as the people were doing there, on the plain of Shinar.

The Lord put an end to their sinful, rebellious plans by confounding their language. The project stopped, and the peoples separated according to language, and spread out over all the earth; as God had intended to begin with.

Sin separates us from God, and from God’s will. As a result, sin separates us from each other, bringing conflict and division upon the earth; from individuals to entire nations.

It cannot be denied that mankind remains divided by many things, language being but one of them. Different ethnicities, races and cultures, different ambitions, different perspectives, and so on.

None of those differences are bad, nor should they divide us. But, from out of our sinful hearts come suspicion and prejudice, and oh, how Satan loves to aggravate such things, until we bite and devour each other.

Every manmade effort at unity ultimately flounders and fails, because the effort is founded either on a unity mandated by law, or on the premise that mankind is, by nature, fundamentally good.

Attempting to force people through mandates to play nice with each other only throws gasoline on the fire, and because of the fact of original sin, any effort at unity, based on the philosophy of mankind’s fundamental goodness, has already failed before it’s even attempted. We are not, of ourselves, fundamentally good, but rather, we are sinful, self-centered, fallen creatures.

The sin-sick heart does not love, cannot love, as God loves us. Its motivations are totally self-preserving and self-gratifying. Godly love is selfless, looking not inward, but outward.

True unity, therefore, cannot come from man’s self-made efforts. Yet, God desires the unity of mankind. In fact, we are made to be united as one people, in peace and unity with each other, the world over.

In this fallen world that is passing away, perfect unity will never exist. There will always be prejudices, suspicions, conflicts, and all out wars, until our Lord’s return.

As that day draws closer, such things will become more frequent, and more intense. I wish that wasn’t so, but the Scripture is clear; so, no surprises.

Yet, even now, there is a worldwide unity of people, with one language, and the same words; it is the one holy Christian and apostolic church, confessing one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all.

True unity of mankind is found only in Jesus Christ, who has made us all righteous before His Father by His own life, suffering and death, which has freed us from our sin, and freed us to love each other with the love of the one true and living God.

The common language of the Gospel unites as one all who believe. Though mankind is dispersed over all the earth, speaking innumerable different languages, wherever God’s holy word is translated into the local language, that word continues to convert people as God the Holy Spirit, through the word, works faith in the heart.

You have brothers and sisters all over the world, whom you’ve never met, with whom you cannot converse, unless at least one of you learns the other’s language, and yet, you already speak the same language; the language of God, which confesses “Jesus Christ is Lord”. “Jesus Christ crucified has saved us.” “He is risen! He is risen indeed!”

Because of sin, the church on earth is divided. Because mankind, even within the church, continues to build towers in order to make a name for themselves, the simple truth of the Gospel has become garbled, and the Christian must seek where the word is properly proclaimed, and the sacraments are properly administered.

The Christian must be conversant with the language of God by searching the Scriptures, and holding up what is proclaimed and taught and practiced, both in the church and in the world, to what God’s inspired, inerrant word says.

Today we celebrate Pentecost, the birthday of the Christian church, when Jesus Christ, the very Son of God, sent from the Father to His disciples the Holy Spirit, the third Person of the Holy Trinity.

Under the Holy Spirit’s inspiration, they then proclaimed the one Gospel in many languages, that the church, and through her, the proclamation of salvation unto all mankind, would be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth.

You are here today because of that day. Continue to grow in the knowledge of the grace of God in Jesus Christ, through His word.

Continue to let the love of Christ within you seek godly unity with others, praying always that those who do not yet believe would be converted unto eternal life.

May we, along with the church throughout the world, continue to proclaim repentance, and the remission of sins through Christ, and Christ alone, until that day when we shall see Him face to face, in the perfect, eternal unity with all who have waited for Him. Amen.