

## **Sermon Draft**

**Text: Genesis 11:1–9**

**Sermon: Pentecost 2022 (Babel On)**

From the standpoint of the church year, Pentecost is like a doorway that takes us to a new place! Having celebrated the life, death, and resurrection of the Lord Jesus, we now are led by the Spirit of God into a practicum, an opportunity to put the Good News of God into the crucible of our days. Psalm 143 sings, *“Teach me to do your will, for you are my God; may your good Spirit lead me on level ground.”* Today we begin this Pentecost journey, and we stand in wonder at the tremendous event of the pouring down of the Holy Spirit upon the people of God!

Our Old Testament lesson provides a theme: “Babel On” it is a common malady from which humanity suffers! Our “babbling on” not only confuses issues, but also the fondness for doing it comes from a confused spirit! And that’s what we consider today: the malady of confusion and the means of healing, that is, the Spirit of God, who always brings order out of chaos! What a day it will be!

Peter has finished his Pentecost sermon in the Second Lesson, and before a proper “Amen” is spoken, the hearers, having been “*cut to the heart,*” respond, “*Brothers, what shall we do?*” Peter’s immediate answer points the people to repentance and Baptism. The way to get back to God is always via the way God has given repentance and Baptism, Word and Sacrament.

When the Counselor comes! In the Gospel the title “Counselor” is also translated “Advocate” or “Helper.” According to the note on John 14:16 in the Concordia Self-Study Bible it “is a legal term, but with a broader meaning than ‘counsel for the defense.’ . . . It referred to any person who helped someone in trouble with the law” (p. 1635). That Jesus knows we need a Counselor tells us that he knows how much trouble we will have with the Law.

Our Lord speaks to the sadness the disciples will feel when he is physically gone. “*It is for your good that I am going away. Unless I go away, the Counselor will not come to you, but if I go, I will send him to you*” (v 7).

In this poignant statement, one senses the deep love Jesus has for us!  
It also reminds us that our Lord knows better than we what we need!  
More than his physical presence, we need the Spirit of God, for it is by  
that Spirit's power and persuasion that Jesus will be with us always to  
the close of the age.

Today we rejoice over the Spirit's power at work in our hearts and  
minds. We who have been scattered by sin away from God have been  
brought back by the power of the Spirit, who has called us through the  
Gospel. By nature, we will strive against God and throw ourselves into  
spiritual chaos and despair. But by God's Spirit we are healed. The Holy  
Spirit speaks tenderly to us and reconciles us to God again and thus to  
one another. The ancient story of Babel helps us grasp this clearly!

The ancient story of the Tower of Babel is also a contemporary story.  
The ancients moved away from God and so do we. We are eons  
removed from the people of Shinar and their activity, but we are only  
one thought away from thinking as they did.

It wasn't the building of the tower per se, but the motivation beneath the surface that convinced them that "we are gods." The primal sin? Idolatry. They want to make a name for themselves so they will be great in the eyes of history.

Often smart and talented people ignore God. That's the temptation of human intelligence! Paul speaks strongly about this to the Corinthians, who thought they were wisdom incarnate (1 Corinthians 1:18–22). Their wisdom was taking them away from the true fount and source of wisdom, Jesus Christ!

The story of Shinar shakes us to the roots, for it puts up for examination by God our superior intellect and indeed everything we do. The Lord's response to Shinar's people is his response also to us.

God responds decisively. He "*goes down*" to look at this project, which is more an attempt to become godlike than merely to build a great tower. They are doing something that might be termed good, industrious, and laudatory if it were not for the motive behind it. God sees through it all and stamps it out. There is nothing sweet about the way God punishes sin!

If we are thinking clearly, God's action against the evil at Shinar will make us tremble, for instinctively we sense that this is a story about us and God's response at Shinar could be his response to us.

The Lord God confuses the languages, and now people can only babble at each other. By our sinful nature we can lose the ability to communicate with one another and especially with God!

But remember the Gospel! For the Gospel is this God sends the people away so that they do not spiral deeper into sin. This is similar to the casting of Adam and Eve from the Garden so that they could not eat of the tree of life as sinful rebellious people and be that way forever that is, enemies of God! God threw them out and posted fiery angel guards to keep them away. God confuses the language. And while we suffer from such confusion in our inability to communicate in peace and love to one another, God has a plan by which he will open up communication again and forever! God's new plan is revealed to us and to the people of all ages at Pentecost.

At just the right time God sends the clear Word into the world.

The writer of Hebrews says, *“In the past God spoke to our forefathers through the prophets at many times and in various ways, but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son”* (Hebrews 1:1–2).

God has never stopped talking to his people. However, as we read the Old Testament promises we know that they point to their fulfillment. We know, and the writer of the Book of Hebrews reminds us, that Jesus Christ is the Word, the clear Word and ultimate communication from God to a world in communication chaos. God will now bring it back to himself! He does this by speaking decisively and clearly in Jesus, the Word in the flesh.

There are many voices that clamor for our ears and much babbling in our world today. The voices of sirens beckon to us, promising fulfillment and a new age of untold happiness. These are echoes from Babel of Shinar, and we need to turn to the voice of God as he speaks to us in Jesus. Jesus, the Word of God, has come into the world and makes himself understood.

We have passed through the first part of the church year. We have witnessed the events by which God sent his Word into the world. We have heard the words Jesus spoke to the disciples and to us. He tells us that he is the way to the Father, that he has the words of eternal life. We have heard him say that for our sakes, he, the Son of Man, will be handed over to the cross, where he will die, but then will be raised again. We have the additional witness of Peter and Paul and the others who have spelled out so wonderfully what his life, death, and resurrection mean. It means everything to us. It means our rising from the dead. It means our life!

And in the giving of the Holy Spirit, these truths become ours forever! For this Counselor, the Helper, the Advocate comes to lead us to the Truth (Jesus) in a new and complete way.

The walls of communication are broken down. Shinar's curse is reversed. Now in Jesus we are family again. Through the Spirit's presence we are enabled to "talk" Gospel to one another even to the farthest reaches of the universe and that voice of God will be understood and believed. Jesus has done all that is necessary to make this possible.

By his death on the cross he has broken down the barriers between  
Shinar and heaven, between God and man. The Spirit's presence and  
power make this bond unbreakable.

There is no need for failures such as Babel's tower among us because  
by God's Spirit we are talking to one another again and to God. That  
conversation is not "babel" at all. It is praise and prayer, worship and  
adoration and it will continue forever.

Amen