

## Genesis 11:1-9

Back in the 1980's I served as a Chaplain at the Bay County House of Correction in Pittsfield, Massachusetts. I regularly conducted 2 Sunday afternoon worship services after leading worship at Faith Lutheran Church in the morning. When the worship services at the jail were completed, I was given the opportunity to wander the cellblocks. I even managed to have dinner with the inmates. On one of these Sundays, a certain inmate approached the me and told him that he had an experience the night before, where he knew with certainty that Jesus was his Savior. He said that he felt the Holy Spirit come upon him. It was a warm fuzzy sensation. At that point he knew he was God's child. He proceeded to ask me, when my experience of receiving the Holy Spirit was. I told him I did not have any experience like that. Well, that was enough, for this guy, He firmly believed that I did not have the Holy Spirit, since I did not have a specific night time experience.

Seems to be confusion out there in regard to the work of the Holy Spirit. Again, 10 years later, I was conducting a funeral service at a local cemetery chapel.. After the service, a very nice Baptist Lady came up to him and said, "You are the first Lutheran pastor I have met, who has the Holy Spirit." I considered her remark a compliment, and said thank you. But then I thought to myself, does that mean my other Lutheran colleagues don't have the Holy Spirit? Just can't be, because they do!

Again confusion about the work of the Holy Spirit. One inmate was telling me it was a nighttime experience, a lady at a funeral chapel, was telling him it was a lively and energetic sermon, where the pastor wears his heart on his sleeve. Today is Pentecost Sunday in the church year. I guess its high time, we review exactly what this Holy Spirit does for a living. It time to "Clear Up the Confusion!"

By nature, you and I are very confused people. We very much resemble the people in our text. God had told his people after the time of the flood, to fill the earth and live for His glory. But they stopped in modern day Iraq at a place called Shinar, and said, "Here is a well-watered plain, let's settle down here!" It doesn't get any better than this. Who needs to listen to God?

Let's build a huge skyscraper too, so that everyone in the world will think we are the greatest!" Our theme song is, "Glory to Man in the highest!" And you know it is the same way today. Billions of people in the world, know there is a God, but basically want to live their lives the way they want too. The goal in life seems to be to make a name for yourselves. Get that great job, build that big house, have that boat, RV, or fancy car. Let everyone in the world recognize that I am important. In addition, there is this inborn quality in all of us, that if there is a life beyond the grave, I will get there, with the things I DO in my life. No way will I give God the total credit for rescuing me.

This pride-filled attitude gets God very upset. He sees us as a self-serving bunch of people who regularly break his commandments. And it's true. We say things we shouldn't say, we do things we shouldn't do. So what does the Holy Spirit do. He convicts us of us. He tells us, by nature we are like a body in a casket, Spiritually dead!

Dead in sin. Our hearts may be ticking, but spiritually we are dead. We can't so much as lift a finger to bring ourselves back to life.

Further, the Holy Spirit reminds us that by nature we are hostile to God. We don't like to follow what God has outlined in Scripture. We basically rewrite what God says in the Bible to fit our thinking.

Finally, The Holy Spirit reminds us that by nature we are spiritually blind. To put the stories of the Bible together and make sense out of them, we just can't do. What a condition! Dead in Sin, Hostile, and Blind.

After carefully evaluating the situation, The Holy Spirit comes forth with a judgment.

In the case of that early civilization mentioned in our O.T. lesson, God brought about the judgment that these people would not be able to communicate with each other. They would speak different languages. As a result, they could no longer work together or trust each other. Unfortunately, this confusion, suspicion and hatred has been passed down to every generation since then. And the ultimate punishment God placed on them and us is death, eternal death in hell.

But our God is not just a just God, but a loving God. He displayed his love by bringing about a solution to our confused state.

He sent his Son Jesus into the world. Jesus was always obedient to the law of God and died on a cross to pay the price for our selfish pride. He did this because He was our substitute. He did this so we could have a restored relationship with God. And it is the Holy Spirit, who leads us to believe this truth.

The Holy Spirit is the faith maker. As the Bible says, "No man can say Jesus is Lord but by the Holy Spirit." What gets me at times about Lutherans is if a Southern Baptist comes up to them and says, "Are you born again?" The Lutheran looks like a bump on the log, and gives an expressionless look. My friends, if you believe Jesus is your only Savior, you have been born again. So tell them you are the next time you are asked, and I'd venture to say, they'll give you a big bear hug in celebration. The Confusion is cleared up. There is only one way back to God. It is through Jesus. We are alive now, really alive in Christ. We are born again!

You know when someone is speaking a different language than you are, one of the biggest frustrations is not be able to understand what they are saying. If I am near such a person, I just keep wondering, "Are they saying something bad about me?" Are they saying something they don't want me to hear?" Well, the Bible for many is like a foreign language. They hear the words, but they just can't put it together as to what the Scriptures are actually teaching us. And so the Holy Spirit comes to our rescue.

The Holy Spirit enlightens us, so that we understand what God is actually saying in His Word. Now we can clearly see God's gifts to us, like forgiveness, peace, hope, joy and comfort. The Bible starts to make sense when we read it, just like if someone is speaking our native language, we understand what they are saying.

Furthermore, the Holy Spirit puts this desire in us through the message about Christ to hate sin, and want to live a god-pleasing life. No longer do we want to live selfish and pride-filled like the people in ancient Babel. Now we want to live for the Savior who lived for us and died for us. We are motivated to do good works. Good works are anything a Christian does out of love for God or the benefit of their neighbor. It can be something as simple as brushing your teeth. Realize too, you can be aware of the fact that you are doing a good work. However, many times when you are aware of it, you might take pride in it, and thus it goes out the porthole of being a good work. In addition, good works flow out of us like water from a spring or like fruit on a fruit tree. We do them out of love for Jesus, not to help get us to heaven. Only a Christian can do good works. The Bible says, "Without faith it is impossible to please God." Clear Up the Confusion! Christians are not the dummies people in the world may think. They understand the foreign language of the Bible. Christians are an enlightened bunch. They are also a gifted bunch.

When a person today tells you that they speak 4 different languages, if you are like me, you are impressed. Like wow, that person must be highly intelligent. That person is gifted. But on this Pentecost Sunday, I want to inform all of you here, whether you speak just one language or 10, you Christians are gifted.

The Holy Spirit has given you all first of something we call the fruit of the Spirit. In Galatians 5:22 it says, “The Fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. Like a nine pedal rose, we Christians have been given by the Holy Spirit some wonderful Christian virtues. Clear up the Confusion. Every Christian is gifted. Gifted with wonderful Christian virtues.

Gifted also with Spiritual Gifts. The Bible lists some 18 different spiritual gifts. Every Christian has at least one, some of us have more than one. God has given you these gifts so that you might use them here at church to build up others. Do You know what your spiritual gift or gifts are? Are you using them in some capacity in the church? We have a survey to help you identify them here at church. Don't let anyone not say you are gifted, because you are. Thanks, Holy Spirit.

The Holy Spirit works with you and me every day, even every hour, to keep us focused on Jesus. Jesus said, “When the Counselor comes, whom I will send from the Father, the Spirit of truth who goes out from the Father, he will testify about me.” Jesus calls the Holy Spirit our Counselor or Comforter. He is also called the “Paraclete” not parakeet but Paraclete. The Holy Spirit is the one who walks alongside of you, counsels you and comforts you by directing your attention to Jesus and the Word. When you are feeling alone as you start a new day, the Holy Spirit points you to Jesus who says, “Lo, I will be with you always, even to the end of the world. When you are weeping at the casket of a Christian loved one, the Holy Spirit comes along side of us and points us to Jesus, who says, “In my Father’s House are many rooms. If it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you, and if I go and prepare a place for you, I will bring you to myself, that where I am, you may be also.”

Have you ever enjoyed taking walks with someone and just enjoying their company as they talk with you and be there for you? Some of the best moments in our marriage have come when we take long walks together. Yet there is someone I enjoy walking with me more than my wife- sorry about that Jeanne. It is the Holy Spirit who spends every day with me and every day with you testifying to us about who Jesus is and how much he loves us.

Do you want to be more confident? Do you want to be more at peace with God and yourself? Do you want to be less confused about the Bible? Do you want to understand it better? Do you want to be able to share your faith more naturally, more confidently? Do you want to be able to live the way God tells you to live in the Bible? Do you want to change your soul for the better? This is what the Holy Spirit does. He did that in a miraculous, unusual way on that first Pentecost. Today, he does it as you spend time hearing the Word, in baptism, as you take the Lord’s Supper – that’s how the Holy Spirit changes people, changes you, turning you more and more into the Christian that God has made you to be.

On this Pentecost Sunday, we join the hymn writer in saying, Praise God from whom all blessings flow, praise Him all creatures here below, praise Him above you heavenly Host, praise Father, Son, and let’s not forget the Holy Ghost. The smoke has cleared. The Confusion has been Cleared up! Amen.