

Welcome and Prayer

Hi all, nice to be sharing with you again.

Shall we begin with a Prayer seeking God's blessing for our time together?

Father God, join us please as we gather to worship and to honour your name. Be with us, Lord, and guide us with your Holy Spirit, and the presence of your Son, our Lord Jesus, whose blessing we also crave. Prepare us for this time Lord by forgiving us our many shortcomings. Renew us Lord, and enrich our spirit, in and through the name of our Lord Jesus. Amen

CALL TO WORSHIP:

- GENESIS 11 VS 1-8

Now the whole world had one language and a common speech. As people moved eastward, they found a plain in Shinar and settled there.

They said to each other, Come let us make bricks and bake them thoroughly. They used brick instead of stone, and tar for mortar (they are located in the desert of modern day Iraq – no stone, but plenty of “tar” from the oil deposits). Then they said come let us build ourselves a city, with a tower that reaches to the heavens, so that we may make a name for ourselves; otherwise we will be scattered over the face of the whole earth.

But the Lord came down to see the city and the tower the people were building. The Lord said “If as one people speaking the same language they have begun to do this, then nothing they plan will be impossible for them. Come, let us go down, and confuse their language so they will not understand each other.”

So the Lord scattered them over the whole earth. And they stopped building the city. That is why it is called Babel (confusion, chaos, disruption) – because the Lord scattered them over the face of the whole earth.

The reading reminds us that God is sovereign and must not be mocked or imitated . What God has made and called good is not to be shaped, or modified by man's abilities, or “ wisdom”. Also note verse 7 “us” (Gen 1:26) so here we are dealing with the Godhead-- Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

Recently we were watching the morning news on ABC TV, when the lead reporter interviewed two young girls about 9 years old. She introduced the two girls as “NON Binary”. I can't recall the subject of the interview, but we were both shocked at the reference to their sexual orientation. AGED 9!

Thankfully our 9 year old grandson does not know what binary means. They don't teach that at St Paul's school.

So, the media deigns to label pre-pubescent children in such a way. I think that sexual identity confusion in our world amounts to a present day “Babel” as humans build their modern day “towers” devoid of God's influence.

IDENTITY BABEL (CONFUSION)

BIBLE READING:

- GENESIS 3 VS 1—6

Now the serpent was more crafty than any of the wild animals the Lord had made. He said to the woman, "Did God really say you must not eat from any tree in the garden?" The woman said to the serpent "We may eat fruit from the trees in the garden, but God did say you must not eat fruit from the tree that is in the middle of the garden, and you must not touch it or you will die."

"You certainly will not die" the serpent said, "for God knows that when you eat from it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil."

We see another Babel, from the deceiver, introducing confusion into the relationship between God and people. The old chicken and egg cliché? Identity confusion, which the deceiver can exploit, and people suffer.

SONG: "ADAM, ADAM, WHERE ARE YOU?" by Don Francisco

Unashamed and naked in a garden that has never seen the rain
Rulers of a kingdom full of joy — never marred by any pain,
The morning all around them seems to celebrate the life they've just begun
And in the majesty of innocence the king and queen come walking in the sun.

But the master of deception now begins with his dissection of the word.
And with all of his craft and subtly the serpent twists the simple truths they've heard,
While hanging in the balance is a world that has been placed at their command.
And all their unborn children die as both of them bow down to Satan's hand.

And just before the evening in the cool of the day,
They hear the voice of God as He is walking
And they can't abide His presence, so they try to hide away;
But still they hear the sound as He is calling:

Adam, Adam, where are you?
Adam, Adam, where are you?

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This song tells the story, in a very poignant way. God searching, searching for Adam, God trying to preserve the relationship, save the identity he created. The pinnacle of His ("our" Gen 1:26) creation.

Scripture Reading

- MARK 10: 46—52

Then they came to Jericho. As Jesus, and his disciples together with a large crowd, were leaving the city, a blind man, Bartimaeus, was sitting by the roadside begging. When he heard that it was Jesus of Nazareth, he began to shout, "Jesus son of

IDENTITY BABEL (CONFUSION)

David, have mercy on me!" Many rebuked him and told him to be quiet, but he shouted all the louder, "Son of David have mercy on me".

Jesus stopped and said, " Call him".

So they called to the blind man, "Cheer up! On your feet! He's calling you". Throwing his cloak aside, he jumped to his feet and came to Jesus.

"What do you want me to do for you?" Jesus asked him. The blind man said "Rabbi, I want to see". "Go" said Jesus, "your faith has healed you". Immediately he received his sight and he followed Jesus along the road.

The Palm Sunday reading has special relevance in my message for today. When Jesus heard the cry of Bartimaeus, what did he see?

The reality of the scene was an untidy, probably smelly man, not really welcome in prosperous Jericho, who was making a fuss at a passing parade of outsiders, including an increasingly well known itinerant preacher. NOT the time for Bartimaeus to be noticed and especially not in Jericho.

But Bartimaeus has insight – "Son of David", he called, thus identifying Jesus as the fulfillment of OT prophecy, the long awaited deliverer.

What does Jesus see? Bartimaeus in total – the whole person. Poor, desperate, blind, seeking, but courageous – willing to say what the intelligentsia of the time would NOT say.

In coming to Jesus we too need Bartimaeus' boldness. Expect Jesus to see us in TOTAL – maybe scary, but therein lies the great news: Jesus identifies us, and our need. His grace is sufficient no matter where we are coming from.

HYMN 197 "JUST AS I AM" by Charlotte Elliott 1789-1871

1. Just as I am without one plea, but that thy blood was shed for me,
and that thou bidst me come to thee, O Lamb of God I come, I come.
2. Just as I am though tossed about, with many a conflict, many a doubt,
fightings and fears within, without, O Lamb of God, I come, I come.
3. Just as I am, poor, wretched, blind; sight, riches, healing of the mind,
yea, all I need, in thee to find, O Lamb of God, I come, I come.
4. Just as I am, thou wilt receive, wilt welcome, pardon, cleanse, relieve;
because thy promise I believe, O Lamb of God, I come, I come.
5. Just as I am – thy love unknown, has broken every barrier down;
Now to be thine, yea thine alone, O Lamb of God, I come, I come.
6. Just as I am, of that free love, the breadth, length, depth and height to prove,
Here for a season, then above, O Lamb of God, I come, I come.

IDENTITY BABEL (CONFUSION)

Blessing:

For the grace of God has appeared that offers salvation to all people. It teaches us to say NO to ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self controlled, upright and godly lives in this present age, while we wait for the blessed hope – the appearing of the glory of our great God and saviour Jesus Christ, who gave himself for us to redeem us from all wickedness and to purify for himself a people who are his very own, eager to do what is good. (*Titus 2 : 11–13*)

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