A PENTECOST MESSAGE FROM AN ABANDONED SKYSCRAPER!

1. A message about the seriousness of sin
2. A message about the greatness of God’s grace

America likes building monuments to honor its famous citizens and to remember great things in its history. We have the Statue of Liberty in New York that stands as gigantic monument to American freedom. In our nation’s capitol, a monument reaches high in the sky that honors the father of our country, George Washington. On the banks of the Mississippi River in St Louis stands the Gateway Arch glorifying America’s westward expansion. Our cities also have their monuments to progress and civilization, like the Sears Tower in Chicago. Yes, monuments and skyscrapers can be found all across our land.

On this special day, the Holy Spirit takes us back in time to watch the building of the first skyscraper, called the Tower of Babel. Not only was it the world’s first skyscraper, was also the world’s first monument. Yet it was not a monument to freedom or westward expansion or to some famous person. Rather it is a monument to sin! Today let’s ponder: A PENTECOST MESSAGE FROM AN ABANDONED SKYSCRAPER! It is a message about the seriousness of sin and a message about the greatness of God’s grace.

In our text, the Holy Spirit guided Moses to write down what happened after the Lord sent a world-wide flood to destroy all but eight members of the human race. After Noah’s family left the ark, the Lord blessed his three sons and their wives with many children. They too were blessed with many children of their own. That is how the Lord repopulated the earth.

Our text is about 200 years after the Flood. The world’s entire population decided to settle in the very fertile area between the Tigres and Euphrates Rivers called the plain of Shinar. God had given mankind another blessing: **Now the whole world had one language and a common speech.** About 6,500 different languages are spoken today. After the flood there was only one and everybody in the world spoke it.

But what did these people do with this special blessing? **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 and not be scattered over the face of the earth.** The Lord intended his blessing of one language to unite people in faith and to enable them to instruct, encourage and strengthen one another in his ways. They abused his blessing to unite themselves against him. With one voice they defied and rebelled against the Lord’s will for their lives. The Lord had told Noah and his sons: **Fill the earth.** He told them that so his Name would be glorified in every corner on earth. But these people want to dethrone God and take his place.

They spared no expense or effort to glory themselves and their achievements. They would be the masters of their lives using their brawn and brain-power to provide themselves happiness. No need for an Almighty Preserver or a merciful Savior from sin! **Glory to man in the highest!** That is what the Tower of Babel symbolizes!

If they thought their sin would go unnoticed by the Lord or that he did not have any power to do anything about it, they were sadly mistaken. We get to listen in on a council meeting of the Holy Trinity. The Triune God says: **If as one people speaking the same language they have begun to do this, then nothing they plan to do will be impossible for them. Come, let us go down and confuse their language so that they will not understand each other.** We know what happened next. One day everyone was
communicating and working together; the next day it was total chaos. The bricklayer said something to the carpenter and the carpenter did not have the slightest idea what the bricklayer was talking about. The foreman barked out orders to the workers and they shrugged their shoulders in bewilderment. The ladies got together for coffee and no one had a clue about what the other was saying.

So they put down their tools, packed their bags, and headed out in different directions. They were now forced to carry out the Lord's wishes: So the Lord scattered them from there all over the earth, and they stopped building the city. That is why it was called Babel because there the Lord confused the language of the whole world. From there the Lord scattered them over the face of the whole world. When it comes to any sin the Bible says: Do not be deceived, God is not mocked. This story puts an exclamation point behind that Scriptural truth!

Did you know that the descendants of Babel are still with us? Remember I said there are about 6,500 different languages today. Sociologist today would say this shows human progress and wisdom. Babel says otherwise. The Tower of Babel and confusion of tongues is no monument to human progress or human wisdom. It is a monument to human sin. What happened there laid the foundation for even greater world troubles. Brotherliness disappeared and was replaced with the kind of selfishness, suspicion and rivalry that exists to this very day.

Why is nation pitted against nation, society against society, and individual against individual? We have the answer at this abandoned skyscraper. Why this proud and God-defiant attitude in our nation that demands the right to free sexual expression, the right to abortion, the right to divorce, the right to rebel against authority, the right to live perverted lifestyles, and the right to express these corrupt values openly and unhindered? We have the answer at this abandoned skyscraper. Whenever the Lord is left out of any part of life, the song will always be: Glory to man in the highest!

And now the Holy Spirit lays that abandoned skyscraper on our hearts. Are there any monuments to sin we have been building? Are there some things that we have allowed into our lives that are dishonoring and defying the Lord? A sinful relationship outside of marriage we do not want to give up, a chip on our shoulder that will not let us honor and obey our parents, hurt feelings that just will not permit us to forgive someone we think has snubbed us, deep-seated bitterness or jealousy we cannot put away toward that person who is more successful than we are?

Do we ever try to make a name for ourselves? Is there a song in our lives that says: Glory to me the highest! - pride in our abilities and accomplishments or maybe even a pride that pats ourselves on the back for our active church-life as we compare selves to others in this congregation? Are we building any towers where the Lord is not included in the blueprints?

Whatever the skyscraper might be that we put up in life, the Lord is absolutely unwilling to let anyone wipe their feet on his commandments or on his wishes! The Bible says: Do not be deceived, God is not mocked. The Bible also says: Pride goes before destruction, a haughty spirit before a fall. Let's never that lesson from the abandoned skyscraper of Babel!

But there is another Pentecost message we learn from this abandoned skyscraper, but it is not the warning about the seriousness of sin. It is the reminder of the greatness of God's amazing grace.

After this historical event, what would the Lord's relationship be to this rebellious
human race? Would his patience be exhausted? Would he finally say: **If you want to go to hell so badly, have it your way! See if I care**! No! The Lord did not destroy these sinners who defy him and try to make a name for themselves. The Lord scattering them was an act of love. He confused their speech to bring them to repentance. The Lord's actions here are just another chapter in his merciful plan to save sinners from the fires of hell.

In the very next chapter he gave the promise of a Savior for mankind to Abraham. He repeated that promise again and again to generation after generation until on Pentecost Sunday the Holy Spirit rumbled into Jerusalem with sound of a violent wind and tongues of fire to forever reverse this damning judgment of Babel.

Twelve uneducated men from Galilee were filled with the Spirit’s power and courage, and they proclaim in many languages - languages each foreign visitor to Jerusalem could clearly understand - they proclaimed the greatness of God’s grace - how this promised Savior had come! How God's only Son Jesus Christ was crucified on a cross for the sins of the whole world, that he rose from death 3 days later forgiving sin and conquering the grave. How Jesus ascended in glory to heaven where he lives and reigns for all eternity. The Holy Spirit changed the sin-hardened hearts of 3,000 people who did not speak the same language so that now they all had the same miracle of saving faith, the same baptism for the forgiveness of their sins, the same hope of living forever in the same heaven with this Jesus Christ!

My fellow sinners, above all those monuments of sin we have built in our lives, there is a tower that reaches up to and into heaven for us. This skyscraper is indestructible! That is because it was built and finished by Jesus, upon the rock-solid foundation of his life, death and resurrection. We sing in hymn: **In the cross of Christ I glory, towering o'er the wrecks of time.** Life is at its best only when that life centers itself around Jesus’ cross.

It is so much easier to trust in only what our eyes can see, but our Lord Jesus invites us to trust only in him. He offers us the Pentecost miracle of the Holy Spirit from this book in language we can all understand: **Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding...Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and you will be saved**

My friends, life is not: **Glory to you or me in the highest.** Life is **Glory be to Jesus.** Great is his grace and mercy – greater than all of your sins. That is something to carry us through another week out there.

We glory in the cross of Jesus Christ. That is where his everlasting love is that will never let us down. That is where his almighty strength is to overcome our weaknesses. That is where his flawless guidance is which will carry us through all our days. Not in the world’s towers of Babel, but towering over the wrecks of time in the cross of Christ, you and I can and will glory.

Keep trusting in Jesus and his cross until that day when we will be in heaven - where with one voice and in one language you and I will join men, women, and children of all races and nations to sing for endless ages: **To him who sits on the throne and to the Lamb be praise and honor and glory forever and ever!** Amen.

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