

28/3/07

midweekchurch

File: Genesis11

The ABC is running a competition at the moment to see what are the best speeches ever delivered, in preparation for a new series later on in the year. So I wonder what speech you would put forward. The Gettysberg Address by Abraham Lincoln? The one small step for man address by Neil Armstrong? The messages by Gough Whitlam on his dismissal or JFK on his inauguration? Something from Shakespeare perhaps? We probably would all have a different favourite.

I think one of my favourites is a speech that Martin Luther King, the great American Civil Rights leader delivered, not long before he was shot down for his beliefs. It goes like this. *"I have a dream that one day this nation will rise up and live out the true meaning of its freedom. We all need to know to be true, what is self evident - all men are created equal. I have a dream that one day the sons of former slaves and the sons of former slave owners will sit down together at the table of the brotherhood of man. I have a dream."*

This speech was delivered some 30 years ago, but it is still a rallying cry, a call to arms for all those who want a better world. *"I have a dream."*

But I wonder what is your dream for this world? Do you dream for world peace - where man would no longer fight one another in war? Do you dream for a day when there will be no sickness, no diseases, no depression, no death? Do you dream for a world with no poverty, no suffering, no violence? Do you dream for families to get on, for people to care for one another? Do you dream for a world full of love not hate?

I know I do. But I'm not alone. I'm sure all of us have that same dream. But the question that this all raises, is how can we get there? How can we build a society like that? How can we enjoy our dreams, God's dream, my dreams? Well turn with me to Genesis 11. For there many people came together. They had a dream. A dream for a better world. A dream in which they could build a tower to

heaven.

A dream where they would enjoy the same sorts of things that we have just been talking about. But they didn't just have a dream, they had a plan. A plan on how to get there. A plan where men and women could work together. A plan where they would have a heaven on earth and it all revolved around a building - the tower of Babel. Lets look closely at this tower shall we?

For it all starts in verse 2 with **US**. "Come let *us* make bricks..."

Its a plan with mankind at the centre. Sure God might have made the world. But if we are going to reach heaven, we can't trust God to do anything for us, we have to do it ourselves. Its a plan with us at the centre.

Its a plan which involved **the physical.**

They say *"Come let us make bricks and bake them thoroughly."* So they used brick instead of stone, and tar instead of mortar. Then they said *"Come let us build ourselves a city with a tower that reaches*

the heavens."

Its based on the physical - bricks, tar, cities, towers. Its made up of what we can make, what we can see, what we can do. If we just bind together and make a great city. If we can build a bigger building, complete a more challenging job, find that cure for cancer, if we can develop a more potent nuclear bomb, then together, mankind can build a better world.

It's about becoming **famous**.

"Come let us make bricks so that we can make a name for ourselves" Its about looking good in other people's eyes. Its about getting our 15 minutes of fame. Its about others saying *"Wow, your so good. That's awesome. You are so talented to be able to achieve something like that."*

Its about standing out from the crowd and getting your name known and your reputation enhanced. Its about others congratulating you and slapping you on the back for what you have done.

And lastly its about ignoring God. **NO GOD.**

God might have made the world, but in this attempt at building a better world, there is no reference to God. There is no place for God, there is no desire to include God. So much so that God comes down to see what they are doing, because they haven't sought his opinion - they haven't included him, they have purposely ignored him.

This is mankind's first attempt to get to heaven without God. To make a world that is perfect by going it alone. But it might be mankind's first attempt, but it hasn't been its last attempt. Because that is what most people are doing today. Trying to get to heaven without God.

Today people build their towers and say if we just become good people, we'll get to heaven. Or if I can do something great, then my fame will last forever. Or if we can find a cure for cancer then we might be a step closer to living forever! If I just get enough money, find the right partner, wear the right clothes, then life will get better and better.

Or they say what our world needs is no longer to go to war, then we can create a wonderful society, but they fail to deal with the problem of why countries fight. For it is the same reason why we fight with our families, with our friends and with other people at school or work. We are selfish people, who think about me, about us, more than we think about others, about God.

Today 90% of Australians are building their own tower of Babel. They are seeking happiness, they are seeking fulfilment, they are seeking power and recognition and a place in this world, without reference to God. Without living the way God wants us to live. They are doing their own things, hoping to get to heaven.

Now when God looked down and saw this building in Babel, I'm sure he had to almost get out his magnifying glass. He probably said to himself "Is that the best they can do? That's no where near big enough to get to heaven. That will never, ever achieve what its trying to achieve."

And even though we live in a technically superior age, nothing much has changed. There is still only one man made structure that can be seen by astronauts circling our globe - do you know what it is? The great wall of China! And our great achievements in science, in technology, in negotiations, hasn't brought us a lack of pain, a lack of death, a lack of racism, a lack of fighting. No today, human methods to reach heaven have all failed. They have all failed dismally.

So what does God do? He comes down and frustrates man's plans. For God knows that man's way will never work. God knows that is not the way to heaven. So he stops them by giving them all different languages. And so they go their own separate ways. And even though we have the internet and computers and the like, our languages still keep us apart. I was reading recently where a man who had travelled to almost every country in the world, was saying that there is only one word that almost all the world knows. Any ideas of what it might be? Coca Cola!

Today we might be able to communicate to each other about a soft drink, a bit of fizzy drink, but everything else, everything of real importance, we now have great difficulty with, because our languages and our subsequent cultures are just so, so different.

So if this doesn't work, how are we going to get to heaven? How are we going to see our dreams of a better world come true? Well straight after Genesis 11, comes Genesis 12 and the story of a man called Abraham or Abram as he was then called. You see God frustrated man's attempts at getting to heaven, because he wants to introduce us to his own way of getting there.

And God's way comes from him giving us his blessings and by us listening and obeying God by faith. You see God's blessings come from those who will trust in **God**

See what God says "*I will make you a great nation. I will bless you.*" I will do the very things you want. You see the God who made the world, is the God who will lead us to the perfect world. And as we read about Abraham. We see that he **listened** to God.

He was willing to hear what God said. He took the time to comprehend God's instructions. He wasn't so caught up with his own ideas, his own plans, his own dreams, that he wasn't willing to listen to the one that had made him in the first place. We find out that Abraham was willing to not just listen but to **follow** God's instructions.

He did what God said. Even when God said "*leave behind your own home, your family, your security and go to a place where I am telling you*". Abraham didn't even know where God was saying to go, he just got up and left. Which is what **faith** is all about.

Trusting God so much that as long as he is with you, you are willing to do anything, go anywhere, be anyone that he wants you to be. And lastly these blessings will come, when Abraham is willing not just to receive what God has to offer, but he is willing to share what God has given him with those around him. With **others**.

For God says "*And all the people on the earth will be blessed through you.*" These things don't happen when you try and keep all the good things to yourself. These things don't happen when you are concentrating on just me. These things happen, when you are willing to open your eyes to the world around you, when you are willing to do something for others, rather than do something just for yourself.

Basically when we look at Genesis 11 and Genesis 12 we see two different models on which to base society on. Two different towers. One seeks to ignore God, whereas the other has God as its basis. One seeks to make a name for themselves, whereas the other is trying to instead follow God. One seeks fame, the other seeks to look after others. One is full of distrust, the other is full of faith.

I have a dream, a dream for a better world. But do you know what - its not just a dream - it can be a reality. For in God's followers, in the Church, in the people like Abraham, we can get a taste of this dream. For when we are like Abraham and put God at the centre of our lives, when we listen and follow his Word, the Bible, when we have faith, we see that we can make a difference in this world and we can make a difference in our world.

But the Church is far from perfect. A little later in Genesis 12 we will see that Abraham is far from perfect. So how do we get past our own shortcomings and actually find heaven? Well we only do that when God steps into our world. Where we see a man who does *listen to God* all the time. A man who *followed* God's word 100%. A man who had legendary *faith*. A man who came to bring others to God, others to heaven. We only experience heaven if we are willing to put our trust in this man, **Jesus**.

For Jesus says "*I am the way, the truth, and the life. No-one gets to the Father, no one gets to God's place, except through me.*" You see heaven will never be here on earth. There will always unfortunately be pain, always be disappointment, always be death. But if we are willing to climb the tower that Jesus built. If we are willing to jump on his shoulders, and let him take us to his father. Then our dreams will come true. Our wildest dreams will come true.

The two towers show us two ways. One is based on what we do and the other is based on what Jesus has done. So which way are you going to go? The way of the world or the way of the word? Which tower is your tower, the one with me at the centre or the one with God at the centre?

And that is why the Church is so important. Because those who want to go God's way, are showing everyone else there is an alternative. We are not perfect. We are not the people that God would have us be.

But together we can be men and women of faith, trust, obedience. People who follow Jesus. And when we do that together we give our society an alternative. A real alternative. So don't just decide which tower is your tower. But make your dream, God's dream. Where he binds together the men and women of faith, into His people. So that through them, he can work through his world to recapture the dream of a God's people in God's place under God's rule.

I have a dream but what is your dream?

(For a longer version of this sermon check out 18/2/01 am)