**This Is Us**

**The Word**

Read together Genesis 11:1-9

**The Big Idea**

The story of Babel is the story of human pride and God’s placing limits on pride. As we encounter God’s Word and our own human ideas, we need to ask ourselves, will I submit to God, or do I think I have a better idea?

**Questions for Discussion**

1. On Sunday we talked about the fundamental depravity of humanity. How would you explain and defend the depravity of humanity to a person who doesn’t hold to a biblical worldview?

2. In Genesis 1-11, we see a God who consistently sets limitations and even brings judgment and chaos upon sinful humanity. How do we make sense of this kind of God in light passages that say God is love and God is a God of grace and forgiveness?

3. In Genesis 1-11, we see the repeated pattern of God laying out his good designs and human beings thinking they have a better idea. Where have you seen this posture of “I have a better idea” playing out in your own life historically?

4. Sunday described the Holy Spirit like a police officer shining a bright flashlight on the dark places of our hearts. Practically speaking, how do we experience those moments in ways that actually lead to greater freedom and healing?

**Digging Deeper: Sermon Outline**

I. Are people basically good?

A. Spoiler alert: we’re not, and we need to be aware of what we are.

B. The problem of sin: you can’t understand what makes the Good News so good if you don’t understand what makes the bad news so bad.

 C. Looking into the Word is like a mirror

II. The Tower of Babel

A. ambitious, talented, inventive, cooperative, and apparently well capitalized group of entrepreneurs who faced a perceived threat, which was to “be scattered over all the earth.”

B. solution was to build a monument that would perpetually attract attention to themselves and remind people through time how great they were

C. Good gifts gone bad and the imposition of limitations

1. created in the image of God, share in His attributes, such as creativity and ingenuity.

2. the fall potentially impacts all these good gifts, especially when we put them to use in pursuit of our own glory, rather than God’s (Luther)

3. God imposes limitations: in chapter 3:24 “cherubim and a flaming sword flashing back and forth to guard the way to the tree of life.”

3. builders ended up experiencing exactly the phenomenon they were trying to avoid by building the tower in the first place when God “scattered them from there over all the earth.”

4. The nature of the offense: *“The hatred of anonymity drives men to heroic feats of valor or long hours of drudgery; or it urges them to spectacular acts of shame or of unscrupulous self-preferment. In the worse forms it attempts to give the honor and the glory to themselves which properly belong to the name of God.” Alan Richardson, Genesis 1-11, Introduction And Commentary*

III. The sequence of offenses in Genesis 1-11

A. The original fall of Eve and Adam

- one simple rule for blissful, eternal existence; “naked and unashamed”

*-* they had a better idea: wanted access to something more than what she had (greater wisdom)

B. Cain and Abel

- God had given instruction about what and how to sacrifice. Abel got it right; Cain didn’t

*- Cain had a better idea.* He callously and brazenly killed his brother, committing the first murder, and shattering family life.

C. Lamech (4:19):

- God created humans, pairing them, one man and one woman (2:24)

*- Lamech had a better idea:* married two women--polygamy, contrary to God’s intention

D. The “Sons of God” (6:1):

- Sons of God--righteous descendants of the patriarchs in the line of Seth, who “walked with God” expected to marry within the nation.

*- But the Sons of God had a better idea.* They saw the “daughters of men,”and “married any of them they chose,” that is, they married outside the community, diluting the lineage of the faithful

E. The Flood

- heartbreaking; ultimate statement of the condition of man: *“every inclination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil all the time.”*

IV. Babel and Humanism

A. Francis Shaeffer calls it “the first public declaration of humanism,” (11:4) “Let’s make a name for ourselves, so that we can maintain a human unity and we can achieve social stability.”

B. Man goes astray; God imposes limitations and curses. The farther man moves away from God, the more God gives him over to his own evil desires. (Romans 1)

C.  *“Sometimes we rely on things like government or technology to solve our problems or to bring us success and comfort. Most of all, we rely on ourselves: our hard work, our ingenuity, our network.” John H Walton, NIV Application Commentary*

D. Do we see ourselves? Are we accepting and absorbing what the Word has to say, even when it’s painful to hear? Or do we *have a better idea?*

E. Dave last week: “Where do you still experience the venom of sin coursing through your life?” I’ll add, “When you see it, what do you do about it?”

*- “Do I want to be identified with His death, to be killed right out to all interest in sin, in worldliness, in self—to be so identified with Jesus that I am spoiled for everything else but him?” Oswald Chambers, My Utmost For His Highest, December 23rd entry.*

 - Or maybe you have a better idea. Perhaps it’s time to abandon that today.