

Sermon 2010 Pentecost
Text: Gen. 11:1-9
Theme: "Trust – The Final Frontier"

So the people of God get off the ark and in great thanksgiving to God, they immediately disobey him. I bet God gets tired of that. When are we ever going to trust him? When are we ever going to do what he says because we trust that great blessings will come from what he says and we trust that great harm will be avoided and we trust that he who has all things in his hands knows best how to bless us?" When will we ever learn?

Noah and his family disembarked from the ark and God told the three sons the following:

"Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth." And instead of doing that, they decided to begin building monument that would hold them all together. Now you and I can all understand what they were thinking. They heard God's call to fill the earth and that would eventually happen in good time but they were the last people left on earth for heaven's sake. God surely could not expect them to leave father and mother and just strike out on one's own. So they would build a tower, ostensibly a tower to glorify God, but in reality a tower that would unify them as one people and help them to feel safe and secure in this brand new world. Many times the things we say we do to glorify God are really to serve ourselves somehow. That's why Jesus tells us that when we pray, do it quietly in our closet. When we give, do it so that the right hand doesn't know what the left hand is doing. Do what you do for God quietly so that it remains something you do only for God. They may have said that the tower was for God but the reality was that the tower was something they were doing to manipulate God because they were scared to go out on their own and they did not trust that God would be there for them.

When kids are thinking of colleges, I always tell them to get a compass, open it to about 300 miles on the map and draw a circle around

their home. Now go somewhere outside that circle. I don't think the most important thing that happens during the college years is learning math, science and composition but learning how to be independent human beings and handle life's little disasters on your own. 300 miles is close enough so that Mom or Dad can get there in a few hours if necessary but far enough away that they will be a little more encouraged to cut the apron strings and it will encourage kids to grow and learn who they are as individual human beings. God loves it when we strike out and trust in him and in his gifts. Whether we are 3,000 miles or 3 miles away from home, God still encourages us as we become adults to venture forth on our own and begin taking responsibility for our lives...and to begin exploring the gifts he has given us.

Apparently Noah and Mrs. Noah were pretty good parents, because their kids didn't want to leave. Hey, let's just build a big tower and we can all stay nice, safe and secure right here. It'll be great! Mom can cook and do our laundry and Dad can make all the hard decisions and life will be sweet! Noah and Mrs. Noah needed to learn the first rule of parenting – sometimes what looks like love for the children is really the parents' own fear of not being needed anymore. At some point we have to encourage our children and trust in God. And parents have to trust that God will care for their children without them.

Well, all of that is to say that the people who exited the ark did not trust god – what a shock right? They were afraid to go do what he said and instead did what seemed good and proper in THEIR eyes. Now look at the Gospel for today. Jesus says:

“But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he will teach you all things and bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you. Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. Not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your hearts be troubled, neither let

them be afraid.” Jesus knows that we are afraid to let go and trust God to do what he promises to do. He knows that we are often afraid to step out in faith and do what God calls us to do regardless of the lack of knowledge or lack of resources. So he sent to us on this day, the Day of Pentecost, the Holy Spirit. It is the Holy Spirit who enters us at Baptism, and through the water of Baptism and through the body and blood of Christ and through the Word of God he grows our faith. Eventually, as it grows, our faith will produce fruit and trust will happen. It is often the final frontier but it is where we know we will be as the Holy Spirit continually leads us in and out of situations where faith is grown and matured and one day, we will trust.

Before the Holy Spirit ever begins his work, however, Jesus gives us peace. This is not a kind wish. When the Lord of Hosts says I Give You Peace – that’s like Bill Gates saying I give you financial security. The Lord of Peace gives us peace because he knows we will need it as the Holy Spirit teaches us to trust. It is hard to trust – no doubt. After all, God might not do things the way we want them done! The path he sets us on might be difficult! There might be sickness! There might be financial distress! There might not be enough puppies and sunshine! But then puppies and sunshine is definitely not what he promised. He promised peace and he promised growth. And peace we have. And grow we will. AMEN.