

**THE  
BON AIR  
PULPIT**

May 28, 2000

Scripture: *Genesis 11:1-9*

Sermon: *Building a House of Cards*

We are so very grateful to have the Allens with us, as you can see in your bulletin they are from Florida. Shawn grew up in this church and had the wonderful blessing of God to marry Sarah and they are in school together and home for the holidays so we are grateful that they can come and sing for us. People from around the world go to Egypt every year to view the pyramids as you know they are the only surviving one of which is called the seven wonders of the ancient world. There are about 35 of them. They are all tombs of pharaohs and the first one was built about 2,650 years BC. The greatest of those is called the great pyramid. I want you to listen to a couple of facts about it. It has over two million blocks in it, each of the blocks weighs two and one half tons, 481 feet high, its base covers ten football fields and the historians of that day said that it took 4,000 men over twenty years to build it and yet there is another greater pyramid that was begun in what now is the country of Iran. Arabs have been able to uncover many of the stones and the foundations of the most gigantic of all human enterprises and yet it was a pyramid that was never built. All that is there today is just broken rocks and few bricks.

Interestingly enough that while we know so much about it from secular history, we also know a great deal from it in the Bible. I wanted to read to you the story of that great enterprise that is found in Genesis Chapter 11 and let us see what it had to say to us even today. Now the whole world had one language and a common speech. As men traveled eastward they found a plain in Chinaugh and they settled there. They said to each other, "Let us make brick, let us bake them, let us use brick instead of stone and tar for mortar." Then they said, "Come let us build a city with a tower that reaches all the way to heaven so that we can make a name for ourselves and not be scattered over the face of the whole earth." But the Lord came down to see the city and the tower that the people were building. The Lord said, "*If one people speak in the same language 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*". So the Lord scattered them all over the face of the earth and they stopped building the city. This is what the Lord called Babble or Babbble means the place of confusion because then the Lord confused the language of the whole earth. From then the Lord scattered them over the face of the whole world. Now the question people have always asked is why would these people, as they got ready to build the city, would God look and say this is a cause of judgment? Why would God say this cannot be built and why would God make it a place of confusion?

Well, listen to what they wanted to do. They wanted first of all to build a tower that would go all the way to heaven. They were simply saying that God if you send another flood you are going to get wet too. The second thing the Bible says is they wanted to build a city for pride. They wanted everybody to come to that place and to remark of how wonderful they were and how brilliant they were, and so that they would always be remembered in history. But the third and fatal thing that they wanted to do, was, they wanted to build a tower to heaven and even the director of the Louve, the great museum in Paris, said, "The reason they wanted to build it was that they wanted to be as high as God". They wanted to bring God down to then build them up and God would sit at the pentacle of the universe and control all of human destiny. Now God looked down and said, "*Because you are trying to build a tower where you would have absolute security to build a name for yourself and to make you equal to me then I will bring judgment upon you.*"

There are two words that we have put together in our culture that describes the attitude of these people. The first word is secular. Secular means living your life without any regard to God and the second word we put with that is humanism. Humanism says that man has created all of his problems and that man can solve all of his problems without any regard to God. So this is the first time that we see the philosophy that says we don't need God, we can run our own life and with ourselves we have the opportunity that we can control our own destiny. Now you must understand that with secular humanist you don't have to deny God. All you have to do is ignore Him. You can admit that He is there, but simply what you say is He is not necessary for me to be able to live my life. I was aware of that several months ago. A man called, he

said, "You know I go by your church everyday to work. If you ask me if there is a church there I would say yes," but he said, "I have never had any need for your church". He said, "I have thought of your church about the same way I think of Chippenham hospital, if I ever have a need I will let you know." And if I ever have a need of your church then I would let you know, but I pretty well can run my own life and I can control my own destiny". And he said, "I have never needed the church". He shared with me that he was 52 and he said, "I have never needed it until now."

Now many people try to live their life in exactly the same way. They have never thought about God enough to deny Him. They never thought enough about Him to try to discern how He wants them to live. They just simply say I am sufficient, I am able to take care of myself, I am able to do what I need to accomplish. Now for some individuals what that simply means is they have what we call the God in the gaps. And that is they can run their life pretty well until they come to certain things and then they want God around.

Now some people, for example, want to come to church when they are christened, some people want to come to church when they get married, and some people want to come to church when they get buried. So we call that hatched, matched and dispatched. What that simply means is when I am young put a little water in my face, when I get a little older throw a little rice in my hair and when I go to the end of my life throw a little dirt over my body. So God is in the gaps, if I need you God you know I know where 911 is. I will call and let you know but I am able to do what I need to do.

I am reminded almost of that sort of attitude about once a month. About once a month they buzz into my office and they say there is someone here that would like to get married. And so I begin to talk with them, and I say are you a member of our congregation, and of course I know all the members and so I know that they are not. They then say, "No". And I say, "But which church do you go to?" "Well, we don't go to any church." "Well, let me ask you, why would you like to use our church to get married? We believe that marriage is a Christian institution and we are committed to building strong Christian families. Why would you like to use our church to get married?" Well we came by here and your church is pretty. And we came in and you have a center isle." Now brides would never like to walk in from the side. So we have a center isle. So what has church become? Church has become rent a pew, rent a center isle. I don't need you God except for certain experiences in our life and if I need you, then I would have the opportunity to let you know.

Now that is the reason that several years ago in high school they did a survey. The survey was that they ask the students in high school, about twenty students, do you think God understands computers. Eighteen out of twenty said, "No". Why, because God is out of touch, God is the old man, God is way off there in heaven, God is hiding himself in a book. God has absolutely no understanding of what I am doing though and how I am going to be able to carry on with my life. Someone has described this philosophy by reworking the 21<sup>st</sup> psalm. Science is my shepherd, I shall not want, he leads me down my four lane expressways, he restores my faded colors, he makes me lie down on Swedish foam mattresses, yea though I walk through the valley of the shadow of war, I will fear no evil, for your missiles and your planes, they will protect me. Social Security and medicine shall follow me all the days of my life and I will dwell in the retirement home forever. Simply meant, I don't need God at all. I can make it without Him. I want to build a life where I am in charge, there are no mysteries of life, there are no problems of life I cannot take care of myself and God if I ever need you I will let you know.

Now notice what God did with that first civilization and I want to suggest to you this morning He is doing the same to ours. I love the passage of scripture that says, *And God came down and looked*. You know here they were trying to get to heaven and God came down and looked. And He said, "Man in his very nature seems to draw fuel from other people. They can think up enough evil for themselves, but they just keep drawing fuel from others and if I leave them like this they will keep on drawing evil from each other and keep on thinking more and more things that are unholy, so I am going to give a judgment. So the judgment is I am not going to send another flood. I am not going to send another fire. I am going to give what is called the judgment of confusion. And that is what they build with their hands, they will not enjoy. They will never have the opportunity to feel satisfied with what they have done.

One day I was leading in a Bible study and someone said, "Does God begin to think that if we gather together too much that we can think up more and more wrong things to do?" I said, "Well, think about it just for a moment." I said, "I happen to know that you are a student of history. Have you ever remembered what it was that the framers of the constitution put the kind of government that we put together is. Why for example did the framers of the constitution say that there is not one branch of government,

there are three. And all of them are equal, so that the judicial and the legislative and the executive, none can over rule the other. Do you remember why they did it that way? Because they said, "man's heart is evil and if you do not have checks and balances then we will draw upon the wrongs of each other and we will create an unjust society" and the reason our very framers of the constitution gave us the very frames of government that we have today is exactly what God said in Genesis Chapter 11, that we need checks and balances, because when we are together if you are not careful we will feed the evil in each other. God said, "I will tell you what I will do, I will make the judgment of confusion.

I wanted to suggest to you today, that in this, the greatest society the world has ever built, that we have built it and tried to ignore God and we are reaping the judgment of confusion. For example, in this the most materialistic of all societies that has ever been built, we have more major crime in the United States than any other major country in the world. We have the second largest prison system in the world. There are only more people in prison in the Soviet Union. In the United States we have fifteen million adults, not population adults, fifteen million adults who are confirmed alcoholics, which simply means they cannot get through a day without some help. The fastest growing addiction in the United States is not drugs, it is gambling, legalized gambling has only been re-legalized in the United States in the last fifteen years and yet in the past fifteen years we already have three million adults who are confirmed addicts of gambling. We should have learned our lesson from history. Every state in the United States had gambling a hundred years ago and we tried that as a social experiment and we recognized what it did to humans and we stopped it. I know that very well because the last state that ever stopped it was my home state of Louisiana. Every state stopped it. They said this destroys families and destroys lives and yet we have brought it back now in almost every state and we have already brought a whole group of people who again are addicted.

In our youth culture, the second largest reason for youth, teenagers dying in America, is that they take their own life. Their mother and daddy work night and day to provide them everything that they want and they say it is not worth living in. One out of every four teenagers by the time they get out of high school has already experimented with drugs and the reason they say they do it is because it makes them feel good. I thought that is what we were trying to do with our life. We were trying to build a society where people would have all kinds of opportunities. Someone has said, "When you use to go to the doctor he would say you are run down." Now when you go to the doctor, he says you are wound up. We use to be the generation of callus hands. Now we are the generation of furrowed brow. So we are filled with anxiety, we are filled with emptiness, we have come to the realization that all of what we have built with our own hands is not worth having. Someone has said that we have been able to put a ladder against the wall and we have climbed it and now we realize that it is against the wrong wall.

T. S. Elliott who was the great English poet said about America these words, "This is going to be the epitaph of America. "Here lies a decent Godless people, whose only monument is the asphalt road and a million lost golf balls". We have built our tower and we tried to do it without God and God is mocking our attempts and He is saying, *I will so confuse you that instead of bringing people together I will pull you apart, instead of being able to look at what you have done, you will see only the broken shards of stones and you will go away speaking languages that nobody understands.* What a judgment! I think the judgment of confusion is a lot worse than the judgment of fire and water. That takes you away pretty quick but when you are confused you go through life recognizing you will never enjoy what you made. I need to remind all of us today that you cannot fool God. If you begin to try to live your life apart from Him, you are going to end up in the wilderness of lossness and you will never be able to find your way out. Do I need to remind you that the word evil is the word live spelled backwards and that when you live a life of evil you don't live? You get everything backwards, you get confused, you don't know where it is or life is not enjoyed, and life doesn't mean anything at all. What a tragedy! What a tragedy that some people in this room today, if I gave you an IQ test you would score very high and yet when you look at your own life, that what you have given your life to, has no meaning to you at all.

Our telephone rang at three o'clock in the morning and on the other end of the phone was Jeff. I knew Jeff very well. He had been in my office recently and we had talked about all the troubles that he had and the trouble in his family. He said, "You need to come, Sue is very sick". So I got dressed at three o'clock in the morning and I went heading toward Jeff's house and as I was driving I was thinking of Jeff and Sue. Jeff was just 29. He already was financially secure. He had everything that the American dream talked about. I pulled into his circular driveway with the columns in front. His sports car out and Jeff met

me at the door and said, "Sue is back in the back. I went in and I am sure the house had been decorated by an interior decorator and as I began to walk down the hall I began to notice spots of blood and what had happened was that about two o'clock in the morning, Sue, twenty nine years of age, a beautiful young girl with two children, \$400,000 house, sports car at the front, had tried to cut her wrist and take her own life. The doctor had already come, the police had been there but she said I am not going to leave until the preacher gets here and so I asked everybody to leave the room and I said, "Sue tell me about it". She said, "Preacher have you every chewed a piece of gum and you got all the sweet out of it and you want to spit it out. She said, "I want to spit life out". She said, "I thought I had everything. I realized I had nothing and I don't want to go on. I want to tell you that I have spent a lifetime with people who have gone down dead end streets, blind alleys and have come back to me and said that the world has been so constructed by God that when you try to live it apart from Him you are going to find nothing but confusion and heartache an emptiness and lossness .

I want you to now hear it again. You cannot outsmart God and if you try to live apart from Him -- God will bring upon you the judgment of confusion. In the area where my children are missionaries, which is classified as one of the poorest countries in the world, where there is absolutely nothing, my daughter laughing, wrote us the other day and said she could come on home now, the scripture says we would go to the end of the world. She said, I have been there. That little area, there are 500 Baptist churches, little straw huts where people this morning worship God. You know why it is there because here is a country in war, they destroyed each other. They have absolutely nothing. They have no homes, they have nothing and they have come to realize again and again that when every thing has gone the thing that matters most is God. It frightens me to live in this kind of culture and wonder what does God have to do, does He have to take it all away to make us realize what is important in life or can we learn the lesson of learning that the tail has been wagging the dog of confused values and if we try to live apart from Him we will have absolutely nothing.

It happens all over the world. It happens right here in Richmond. I was baptizing one day and a red headed lady burst into my dressing room and she said, "Is there hope for me"? I said, "Of course there is". I said, "Sit down". I sat down in my wet clothes and talked to a young girl who made her living with soldiers, when one would transfer he would pass her off to another and pass her off to another. She was 47 years old and she had been passed off year after year after year. She said, "I have everything". Everything they have I have. I have everything I want. She said, "I have nothing". "Is there hope for me"? And this morning there is a vivid memory of a young 47 year old prostitute with her arms around my knees crying her heart out and saying, "I have been on the wrong road. I have been on the wrong road. Is there hope for me?"

I wanted to come to you today and tell you what I told her. Yes there is. If you have been building your own towers, if you have been living your life or trying to live it apart from God and if you will come in a spirit of brokenness this morning and recognize that life cannot go on like this, three is hope. I don't want it to go on like this. I want to be able to find a hope and a joy in a meaning of life. I want to tell you, you can find that in Jesus Christ. Listen to what Jesus Christ says, *I am come that you might have life* and that when you give yourself to Him and begin to live in Him and trust in Him, and depend in Him, you can find life. But it begins when you climb down off your tower, and get down in the bricks made with your own hands and say, "God , I can't build my own life, I want to ask you to build it for me."

I wanted to ask you this morning if you would, just to bow your heads and close your eyes for just a moment. There are people in this room today who have got some bricks in your hand, been trying to build your own life. You don't have anything against God, I mean He is just not important to you. I wanted to ask you today, isn't it time you put those bricks down and said, "Dear God, if I am ever going to have a life that I want, you are going to have to help me"? There are people in this room today who need to make that kind of decision. You need to come to Christ, you need to come to be a part of His church, you need to come to move your life and membership, you just need to come in a spirit of brokenness and say, "Lord here I am." Amen