

“The Tower and the City”
By Rev. Lucas Bruder de Oliveira
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Readings:

Genesis 11:1-9

INTRODUCTION

- Most of you have probably seen or heard of the movie "Sister Act".
 - A club singer witnesses a crime and is taken into hiding in a convent, disguised as a nun.
- This film was turned into a musical, a hilarious one, by the way.
- In the musical *Sister Act*, there is a song called **“Here Within These Walls”** in which the Mother Superior sings with deep conviction that the convent is the safest place on earth.
 - Outside is dangerous, unpredictable, and spiritually questionable.
 - Inside, everything is orderly, holy, and well-controlled.
 - The nuns are protected - I would say *over*-protected.
- And honestly, the sanctuary *should* be a safe place.

- It is where we pray without fear, sing without embarrassment, and speak our faith without explanation.
- It is a challenge when safety slowly turns into hiding.
 - When the walls meant to shelter us,
 - quietly become walls that separate us.
- Like the convent in *Sister Act*, we can start believing that church and world are oil and water, never meant to mix.
- But the Word of God keeps nudging us toward a different story,
 - one that doesn't end at the sanctuary doors.

1 – HUMAN ATTEMPTS

- Generally, the text about the Tower of Babel is read only as a symbol of human pride.
- But the text also talks about a **city** and after that **tower**.
- The human attempt was to keep the people united, protected, and preserved.
- So they built a city to gather together, stay together, and no longer enjoy living in any kind of nomadic lifestyle.
 - It was a concern born out of fear.

- Fear of losing identity.
- Fear of blending in too much.
- Fear of ceasing to exist.
- We live in a country where the Christian faith no longer occupies the center of public life, and the temptation is to transform the church into a closed space.
 - Here we speak of God.
 - here we sing,
 - Here we pray,
 - It's a different world out there.
- Without realizing it, we diminish the Kingdom of God
 - to what happens within the walls of the temple
 - or to what happens only in our lives.
 - We forget to see the reality around us through the eyes of faith.
 - We distance ourselves from the political life that happens on a daily basis.
- The danger, then, is failing to contribute our practical faith to situations that extend beyond our own walls.
- But the Kingdom of God was never designed to fit into a building.

2 – The Action of God

- Up to verse 4 of the text, everything is human action.
- From verse 5 onward, God enters the scene.
 - God sees the city.
 - God sees the tower.
 - And God intervenes.
- What seemed to be organization, God understands as restraint.
 - What seemed like protection, God perceives as a limitation of the mission.
- Then He confuses languages and causes dispersion.
- That sounds strange, almost like a punishment.
 - Ultimately, the people only wanted to preserve their identity.
 - They wanted to preserve God's people.
- How many times have we thought like that too?
 - Pastors then... many of us constantly find ourselves thinking these things:
 - If we don't protect the church, if we don't hold onto the people, everything could be lost.
- But God is not only interested in preserving institutions.
 - He is committed to expanding his love.

- When faith is confined to the space of worship, it ceases to touch
 - the work,
 - the school,
 - the neighborhood,
 - politics,
 - the economy,
 - relationships.
- The walls become a refuge,
 - but also a prison.

3 – Grace in Destruction

- God's intervention is not punishment; it is grace.
- God knows where that city would lead:
 - concentration of power,
 - exclusion,
 - exploration,
 - All this in the name of "preserving the people."
- By preventing human control, God prevents the Kingdom from being confused with religious control.
 - He prevents faith from becoming an instrument of domination.
- Furthermore, dispersal does not mean abandonment.

- By mixing languages and scattering the people, God fulfills the promise made to Abraham:
 - all the families of the earth would be reached.
- The faith that was once confined to the city now walks the roads.
 - The Kingdom emerges from the closed center,
 - And goes to the margins, to unexpected encounters, to everyday life.
- The separation between religion and state does not mean that God has been removed from public life.
 - It means that God is not bound by power structures.
- The problem isn't living our faith within the church;
 - the problem is thinking that faith can only exist within the church.
- God's invitation to us today is to reflect on how we should live our faith outside of these walls.
 - How should our faith shape our conversations, including our

conversations with those who are not Christians?

- How can our faith be lived out in everyday life, so that God's love extends through us?
- How can we live our faith, not hiding it, but explicitly, without being ashamed of having faith?

CONCLUSION

- By the end of Sister Act, something changes.
- The walls are still there, but they no longer function as a barrier.
- Music overflows. Joy overflows.
- The sanctuary does not lose its holiness,
- it gains purpose.
- That is God's invitation to us as well.
- The church is meant to be a place of refuge, yes,
- a place where faith is nurtured, rehearsed, and strengthened.
- But it was never meant to be the only place where faith is visible.
- When safety becomes an excuse to withdraw, the sanctuary turns into a spiritual hiding place.
- Comfortable, familiar, and quietly disconnected from real life.

- God calls us to something braver and far more incarnational:
- to carry what we sing, pray, and confess here
- into the ordinary rhythms of work, family, grief, joy, suffering and uncertainty.
- God does not ask us to escape the world, but to live faithfully within it.
- Not locked behind holy walls, but sent from within these walls into everyday life, where grace is most needed.
- Our church, through the Facilities Team, has a wonderful initiative of opening our doors.
- Our doors are not a barrier to those who wish to enter.
- The daily invitation to all of us is that our doors should not become a barrier that prevents our faith from going forth.
- May we receive the courage so that our faith is not built from earth to heaven,
- but lived, every day, from heaven to earth.