

Genesis 10: 6-12; “Nimrod, the Mighty Hunter”, Sermon # 1 in the series – “The Lives of Great Men in the Bible”, Delivered by Pastor Paul Rendall on June 25th, 2023, in the Morning Worship.

The purpose of my preaching to you, Sunday by Sunday, is so that you might understand what the Bible is saying. And then in hearing it, and studying it for yourself more and more, that you might grow in wisdom in the application of the Scripture to your heart. All of my preaching to you is so that you will grow in your obedience and conformity to the Lord Jesus Christ. This I hope will be the case in regard to this sermon. This morning we are going to talk about hunting. And since we have a number of men who are hunters in this congregation, it will be particularly interesting to them. But it will also have application to all the rest of us as well.

To hunt, the dictionary tells us, is “to chase game or other wild animals for the purpose of catching or killing them.” “It is hence, in general, to pursue with force and hostility,” as it says in Psalm 140, verse 11 – “Let not a slanderer be established in the earth; let evil hunt the violent man to overthrow him.” Nimrod was a very great man in his day. He became famous, even world renown for his hunting ability. So much so, that his name became a proverb. Verse 9 states, “Therefore it is said, ‘Like Nimrod the mighty hunter before the Lord.’” He became the personification of all hunters, so good he was, at hunting.

And so what I want to do this morning is to take Nimrod’s life as the life of a hunter and to describe his ambitions. And then I want to take the life of a Christian, and describe his ambitions in terms of what he hunts for, what he searches for, and what his aim is in that search. I would like to look at 3 ambitions which Nimrod had, which every true Christian has in a different, a better, and a more spiritual sense.

1st of all – Nimrod had the ambition to capture and to kill what was wild in order to help others. And so do faithful Christians. (verses 8, 9)

Chapter 10 of Genesis gives us a list of the descendants of the sons of Noah. It was these male descendants which settled in various places of the world which became the distinct nations and peoples of the world. Verse 32 says, “These were the families of the sons of Noah, according to their generations, in their nations; and from these, the nations were divided on the earth after the flood.” These nations existed before the distinction of Jew and Gentile really came into being. Therefore, the distinction of nations, as people groups with geographic locations and boundaries, continues after Christ breaks down the barrier between Jew and Gentile.

In Acts 17: 26 it says, “And He (that is God) made from one blood every nation of men to dwell on all the face of the earth, and has determined their pre-appointed times and the boundaries of their dwellings so that they should seek the Lord, in the hope that they might grope for Him and find Him, though He is not far from each one of us.” These verses that we are studying, they are the first that we hear of nations in the Bible. And it was from the one man Noah that all these nations came. His 3 sons spread out to the North and the South, to the East and the West in accordance with the Lord’s plans and purposes.

The words, “before the Lord,” indicate to us that the Lord watches and oversees everything that is great in men. He evaluates and judges their actions, and He makes sure, that if they are evil, that those actions are bounded by His purposes with regard to the salvation and sanctification of His people. He will only let evil go so far. And, He makes sure that if their actions are good, that everything that they purpose to accomplish will glorify him. And that it will be for the good of those whom He calls to Himself. We will see here in this passage, that even though Nimrod was a mighty hunter before the Lord, that his hunting was not always something that the Lord approved of. But we can be assured that the Lord will use hunters, who He does approve of, to accomplish His purpose to save sinners with the gospel.

It will be good for us to realize that the word “hunt” is not used exclusively to refer to those

who chase game for the purpose of killing it. It also can mean – “To search and seek often, for something for the purpose of finding it.” That is, for a good purpose. So, in the midst of the naming of these descendants in Genesis 10, we find a few verses inserted, that tell us about one unusual and significant man, in the history of those days – Nimrod. It says in verse 8 that, “he began to be a mighty one on the earth.” We should understand that for any person to be mighty is always in God’s hand. “Power belongs to God.” (Psalm 62: 11) And, “It is in His hand to make great and give strength to all.” (1st Chronicles 29: 12)

This is what God did for Nimrod. He gave him the interest and the skill to hunt, and to be good at it. God does this in some men’s lives, whether they are wicked or righteous. I think that Nimrod had this ambition in him from his youth. And he excelled at everything related to it. He was good at knowing where all the animals were, that he hunted. He was an outdoorsman. He was agile and quick in his reflexes. He loved the bow and the lance, and he often practiced using them for accuracy. He loved the strategy of hunting. He learned how to move quickly and quietly in the woods. He studied to be in just the right place at just the right time to find, and to capture, or kill an animal.

He knew how to use nets and snares. He knew the animal’s habits and abilities. He was probably taught by his father how to hunt. But if not, he was surrounded by men who did know how to hunt. And so he enjoyed learning all that they had learned in their hunting. Nimrod saw that there was a real need in his day, for someone to be able to be a great hunter, because the wild animals had so grown in numbers, as to become a great danger to people, on a regular basis. He knew that he could help people in this way, by hunting for these animals. So, slowly, even in relation to all that he had learned in hunting, Nimrod began to see the advantage to himself of having power and control over other people by force. And by degrees he began to desire to have control over the whole world of his day.

Listen to Martin Luther on this. “The name Nimrod is significant, for it is derived from a verb which means to become apostate and rebellious.” “Nimrod received his name either because he made war upon his brethren, and especially the generation of the pious, in order to spread his ruthless dominion, or because his generation began to fall away from the religion of Shem and to tyrannize all the other sons of Noah.” “Moses says of him that he began to be a mighty one in the earth, but that it was not by God’s command, nor by that of the patriarchs Shem and Arphaxad, but because of his lust for power.” “He became mighty by wars, murder and bloodshed.” “His hand was against all lawful government in Church and state until he obtained complete control, though this rightly belonged to Shem.” “Moses calls Nimrod a mighty hunter before the Lord. That is, he tyrannized not only the state, but also the Church.” “He hunted not only animals, but the saints, prophets and priests of God.”

I suspect that this was true. Nimrod gained the confidence of people by doing them a great service in getting rid of the harmful beasts of the field, but he went on to use the principles of force and violence to persecute and oppress the true people of God, who would try to hold him in check in his lust for power and control. Perhaps he had heard of the prophecy against Canaan which was uttered by Noah, that he should be a servant of servants. And he said to himself – That will never happen to me. Instead, I will control and have dominion over as many people as I can. And especially those who worship the God of Shem, and who would try to tell me what I can and cannot do. So Nimrod’s ambition to help others in the beginning, was perverted over time. It changed to become an attempt to hunt men and to control them. In this way he became the most powerful man of his day.

The ambition of the Christian should be just the opposite of this. He may desire to help others, but he does not seek to establish his own ambitions. He seeks to establish every holy ambition. The holy ambition of a Christian is to hunt and to kill sin in his own heart. He will hunt what is wild and dangerous in himself in order that he may truly help other people. He will hunt and

search for the right way to help other people and to glorify God. And He will not be a man to attempt to control and dominate others, or to force them to his own selfish conclusions. Romans 8: 13 says, “But if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live.” This is what the true Christian hunts. He hunts sin in his own heart first. He hunts pride, and selfish ambition and the desire to control and dominate others. He hunts them in himself, to put them to death. Then he is in a position to help other people and glorify God.

But this can only be done by the power of the Spirit, which is the gift of Christ. A true Christian also has the ambition to see sin destroyed in others around him, and the wild beasts of men converted, as we shall see in the next points.

2nd – Nimrod had the ambition to build a kingdom based on his efforts as a hunter, and so do true Christians (verse 10)

We see this in verse 10. “And the beginning of his kingdom was Babel, Erech, Accad, and Calneh, in the land of Shinar.” So Nimrod was also a man, who, based upon the principles that we have just spoken about, had ambitions to build his own kingdom, and not God’s. If you remember, in Genesis 4: 17, it was Cain who having killed His brother Abel because he was angry, upset, and jealous of God’s blessing upon Abel’s offering of worship; left the presence of the Lord and dwelt in the land of Nod on the east of Eden. He built his own city there and called the name of the city after the name of his son Enoch.

This was, I said to you, the beginning of the concept of the two great cities mentioned at various points in Biblical history. There is the City of Man, which is built according to his own efforts and conception. And then there is the City of God that is built by grace. That is, all that God has revealed and done for us through the work of the Lord Jesus Christ. Cain was the first representative head of the City of Man. All of his followers were destroyed in the Flood. But now in Nimrod, we see a resurfacing of this same sinful concept. It says – “And the beginning of his kingdom was Babel...” It is the great efforts of a man to promote himself and his own kingdom, his own works, wisdom and rule, over other men.

It is in this sinful sense that Nimrod became a mighty man on the earth. He was attempting to rebuild what God had destroyed. Luther says that, “Babel was built by Nimrod at perhaps the same place where Cain had erected the city of Enoch.” He wanted to establish a center for a false and idolatrous worship. He was seeking for his own glory and the glory of man’s efforts and wisdom to be exalted. This is what the kingdom of Babylon eventually became in Daniel’s time. It was the first world monarchy, the head of gold, the personification of all the efforts that men would make to establish a great city in opposition to the true city of God.

The church of Jesus Christ is the city of God. She is the New Jerusalem. And she is a holy city. But the mystery Babylon is still with the New Testament church. She is comprised of all the false religions which exalt man’s works, and man’s false notions of what religion ought to be. Nimrod is the founding father of this city, spiritually speaking. He would hunt and persecute true believers who believed in the promise of the Messiah, the Christ. He would seek to establish his own word above the Word of the living God. He would downplay Christ and His grace. And he would lift up the supposed wisdom of man’s works in its place.

He would build a substitute city on a false theology. This is the spirit of antichrist. We see its founding, in the world after the Flood, in Nimrod. But the spirit of a true Christian is not so. The kingdom of Christ is what he wants to see built. He knows that only the Lord can build His church. But his ambition is to be a worker together with God. He knows that the preaching of the gospel will build this city. And he will joyfully join with the Apostles in building upon that foundation, and become a hunter of men to bring them to Christ.

Turn with me over to Acts chapter 10. Here, in this chapter we find that God is calling the Gentiles to be a part of the church of Jesus Christ. The man who is about to gain entrance into this kingdom is Cornelius. He was a devout man; but he was unsaved. He was told in a vision

that he must send to Joppa and have the Apostle Peter come and preach to them. Peter was meanwhile receiving a vision, telling him that he is about to become a hunter. In verse 10 it says, ...“he fell into a trance and saw heaven opened and an object like a great sheet bound at the four corners, descending to him and let down to the earth.” “In it were all kinds of four-footed animals of the earth, wild beasts, creeping things, and birds of the air.” “And a voice came to him saying, ‘Rise, Peter kill and eat.’” What the Lord was telling Peter was that he should not feel any qualms of conscience about preaching the gospel to Gentiles, who the Jews thought to be unclean. Many Jews thought they should not associate with them.

The Lord was saying – Peter, rise up and become a hunter of such people, for Jesus Christ. He was giving Peter a license for such a kind of hunting. It was the hunting for sinners who need Christ, and delivering to them the gospel. The Law will be used to kill the thoughts in them that they can save themselves by their good works and ceremonies. The gospel will penetrate their hearts and bring them life. This is the ambition of every true Christian. This is how the true city of God is built.

3rd – Nimrod had the ambition to see his kingdom expand to many places. And so do true Christians. (verses 11, 12)

In verse 10 of Genesis 10 we are told that the beginning of Nimrod’s kingdom was Babel, Erech, Accad, and Calneh, in the land of Shinar. But in verses 11 and 12 we find that he was not satisfied with just a beginning. From that land he went to Assyria and built many more cities. He built Nineveh, Rehoboth, Ir, Calah and Resen, between Nineveh and Calah. (that is the principal city). Any man of great power, and lacking godly principles, like Nimrod was, would want to see “his kingdom” expand to as many places as he could. But, as great as this man was in power and force to establish his dominion on the earth, and to promote a man-centered false worship; we will find God himself opposing him in the next chapter.

But a true Christian, he has the ambition to see Christ’s kingdom expand to many places which are not his own. Turn with me over to Jeremiah 16: 14-16. Here we find a prophecy given to Israel that even though she had been brought into captivity in Babylon, that the time was coming when God would bring them back. It is a prophecy which also looks forward to the time when the Jews would be restored to their land, and eventually be converted as a nation to Christ. This is a time which is yet to come in history.

Verse 14 says, “Therefore behold, the days are coming, says the Lord, that it shall no more be said, ‘The Lord lives who brought up the children of Israel from the land of Egypt,’ ‘but, the Lord lives who brought up the children of Israel from the land of the north and from all the lands where He had driven them.’ For I will bring them back into their land which I gave to their fathers. Behold, I will send for many fishermen, says the Lord, and they shall fish them; and afterward I will send for many hunters, and they shall hunt them from every mountain and every hill, and out of the holes of the rocks.” I think that we can see from this, that diligent efforts are going to be made, to bring not only the unbelieving Jews to Christ, but people from every nation. They will do this by hunting for them. This is the ambition of every Christian who would be faithful to the Great Commission.

Don’t these words remind you of the parable that Jesus told in Matthew 21: 9, where the king says to the servants – Therefore go into the highways and as many as you find invite to the wedding? But even more, let us remember the words of Jesus in Luke 14: 23. “Go out quickly into the streets and lanes of the city, and bring in here the poor and maimed and the lame and the blind.” “And the servant said, ‘Master it is done as you commanded, and still there is room.’” “And the master said to the servant, ‘Go out into the highways and hedges and compel them to come in that my house may be filled.’” Now that is true spiritual hunting. May each of us who is a true Christian, and each of us who is called to this holy work, pray that Christ will make us mighty hunters for the Lord.

