

Idol Worship 02.06.11

Exodus 20:1-6 ESV

Video: "Idol Worship" [1:34] by Skit Guys

Introduction: "Idol Worship - It's not just about graven images anymore." When you watched that video, what was your reaction? Here we are on the day of the Super Bowl - the number one cultural event in our country. It's estimated that 130 million people will watch the SB this year. 8 million pounds of guacamole will be consumed. Fox is charging \$3 million for a 30-second commercial. Some people (like me) love football and have never missed a SB. Others like the parties and the commercials. But idol worship? My first response when I watched this video was anger. Over the top. So I love football. I've always thought that if Jesus were here with me now in bodily form like he was 2,000 years ago, maybe he and I could go to a game together. Then I got to thinking about how we tend to act at football games and I began to think a little differently. Today, as we prepare for the big game, I'd like to give you a few things to think about... just to consider... about idol worship.

The BIG picture: We were made with WORSHIP in mind.

Of all of God's creations, we were the ones who were created to be able to worship. We have will. We have choice. We have emotions. We're the only creatures who CAN worship. If we don't give any thought about this, then to whatever we give our mind's attention and our heart's affection become the objects of our worship. We can worship Jesus. But we can also worship football... food... status... achievement... that cute boy... that gorgeous girl. We are worshipers by nature. It's in our DNA to give praise, honor, attention, affection, focus and an intentional following to things outside of ourselves.

The question is not WHETHER we worship, but WHO?

This might come as a surprise to you, but it doesn't come as a surprise to God. He created us. He knows about our worship abilities... and the great opportunity, but great dilemma that comes to us as a result. **That's why He said...**

"You shall have no other gods before me." Exodus 20:3 ESV

Think about it this way. When God created His "Top Ten List," what we've come to know as the Ten Commandments, the first two were about worship. From God's perspective 20% of the Ten Commandments deal with idol worship. This is clearly a BIG DEAL to Him... and so it should be a big deal for us as well. But really, how much time do you give to thinking about it?

Webster's Dictionary of Idol: "any object of ardent or excessive devotion." Christian definition: "anything that takes the place of our highest affection, praise, and adoration." To what or to whom do you bestow your highest affection, praise and adoration? **In these few minutes before the big game today, I'd like to give you just four things to think about, when it comes to your highest affection, praise and adoration.**

Four Things to Think About...

1. The Lord God is a gracious God.

“I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery.” Exodus 20:2 ESV

Consider the way the Lord identifies Himself at the beginning of these ten commandments. Not “I am the Creator.” Not “I am all-powerful, ever-present, all-knowing.” Not “I am the One Who judges you / Who holds you accountable.” All of which, by rights, He could have said. No, He identifies Himself as the One who frees us.

When you think about this issue of idol worship, do you begin with the idea in mind that the Lord God is a gracious God, who has freed you from whatever it is that has created bondage to you in the past. Consider how the Apostle Paul describes our relationship with God:

For all who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God. For you did not receive the spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received the Spirit of adoption as sons, by whom we cry, “Abba! Father!” Romans 8:14-15 ESV

So, before you dismiss this question of idol worship as a non-event for you, start from the position of your Abba Father. He has freed you. He has brought you into the family. He has given you permission to consider Him as intimately as a toddler considers his own “daddy.” So if this is important to Him, it should be important to me (and you) too.

2. The Lord God sees all my worship.

“You shall have no other gods before me.” Exodus 20:3 ESV

I used to read this in terms of priority. “You shall have no other gods *more important* or *higher than* me. But that doesn’t really make sense from a couple perspectives. Can you really imagine the one true God saying that *any* other gods would be ok for us?

Before me: Consider this. God sees everything. Everything you do, you do before God. It’s as if God is saying - part of Who I am is that I see and know everything. So don’t worship any other god. Because if you do, you will do it before me.

To bring this home, think of the one person in life whom you love the most. In my case it would be Mary Kay. I could say to her, “Don’t be kissing any other guys.” And that would be true. I wouldn’t want her to do that. However, consider how much harder this would be to watch: “Don’t be kissing any other guys before me.” Don’t get me wrong. I don’t want her kissing ANY other guys either before me or behind my back. But I especially don’t want to be watching. If she did that *right in front of my eyes* it would be like she would be saying, “I don’t really care about you or about what you think or feel.”

When we worship anyone or anything else, we do it before God. It’s hurtful! *That’s why...*

3. **The Lord God is zealous for my worship**.

“For I the Lord your God am a jealous God...” Exodus 20:5b ESV

When we read that the Lord God is a jealous God, we automatically read this in a negative light. Jealousy is often viewed as a negative character trait. When you say that someone is jealous, often we say this without meaning a compliment. However, I'd like you to consider:

- A. When we love someone with our whole hearts and they love us back equally, we can say with all truth (and in positive terms) that we are jealous for their love. I am jealous for Mary Kay's love in my life. I don't want her taking the love she has for me and giving it away to anyone else! I know she feels exactly the same for me... and that's a good thing.
- B. With God, it's even more so. We love imperfectly. But God loves perfectly. We are humans and prone to mistakes, errors and sin. But God is holy and full of love. He perfectly deserves our love. God loves us perfectly, fully, completely. He gave His own Son that we might have a relationship with Him!
- C. What kind of God would you prefer? One who loves you so much that He is jealous for you or one who doesn't care about you? In Hebrew, the word jealous and the word zealous have exactly the same meaning. Can both be translated. The Lord God is zealous for your love and devotion.

4. **Long-term consequences for my wrong worship**.

“... visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children to the third and the fourth generation.” Exodus 20:5c ESV

At first blush, this seems harsh... unfair even. Why should the children of the third or fourth generation have to pay the price for the wrong worship of the grandparents and great-grandparents. Aren't we each individuals? Shouldn't we only be responsible for our own sins? Isn't it wrong to punish us for the sins of others?

I'd like you to think about this another way. What your parents did (and their parents before them) affects you - your life, your thoughts, your direction, your philosophy, your faith. And what YOU DO and how YOU LIVE will affect your children and even their children!

I'm really lucky (in multiple ways) to have my dad. Specifically today I mean that because he has put his mind to studying the history of the family. And because of that study on his part, I know a lot more about the genealogy of where I come from. When I consider the poverty of not only material goods, but also philosophical and religious thought of my grandparents and their parents before them, I know I am most fortunate. We can watch the spread of 5 generations from my grandparents to my grandchildren and watch the consequences of how we have lived our lives. Our lives are better than our parents - not just materially, but spiritually. I pray we have done a good job in passing this on to our children and grandchildren.

The point is that there are long-term consequences to the way we act, which go far beyond our own lives. What we do, how we do it, and why we do it affects our children and their children after them!

So how we worship, who we worship matters! If you look back and see a history of parenting and grand-parenting that is not so good, you don't need to despair. You are not locked into a predetermined future by virtue of what your parents have done. God's power is great to break past bondage. **This is why Paul writes...**

“Put to death, therefore, whatever belongs to your earthly nature: sexual immorality, impurity, lust, evil desires and greed, which is idolatry. Colossians 3:5 NIV

We have an earthly nature, bent to evil and away from God. Christians, however, have the benefit of God's Spirit, with His power to break the chains of living an idolatry life style. Did you notice that Paul calls this evil, earthly nature - sexual immorality, impurity, lust, evil desire, and greed - the same thing as idolatry? Why? Because how we live and who and what we worship goes hand in hand. **Eugene Peterson translates it this way:**

“And that means killing off everything connected with that way of death: sexual promiscuity, impurity, lust, doing whatever you feel like whenever you feel like it, and grabbing whatever attracts your fancy. That's a life shaped by things and feelings instead of by God.” Colossians 3:5 MSG

Conclusion: Today, as we venture forth to the parties and fun of the Super Bowl, I just want to give you pause for thought. I don't want you to not have a good time. I want you (and I believe God too wants you) to enjoy yourself. God is a gracious god. Jesus was one who was (and is) a friend to sinners!

However, I'd like you to think about this topic of idol worship a little more seriously than maybe you have in the past. You are going to watch a lot of commercials and be exposed to our world's philosophy of life today. You'll hear: “Go for the gusto!” “You only go around once!” “Get all of life you can get!” But what does God's Word tell us? We need to kill off the idea that we can do whatever we feel like doing. “Grabbing whatever attracts your fancy” is the route to death, not to life. We should desire God first and foremost, not what grabs our fancy. We should want a life shaped by God first and not by things or feelings.

For God, idol worship is a big deal. And it should be for us as well. This week, be honest about what it is that might be an idol in your life. Confess it to God. And ask Him for His help in living a life that is pleasing (and worshipful) to Him.

Let's pray.