

***For all the gods of the nations are idols: but the LORD made the heavens.
(Psa 96:5)***

I am going to talk a little bit more about idolatry today. You could maybe call this a continuation of my last sermon focusing on the cross and how pseudo-christianity has turned this device of murder into a global idol, a lying symbol of a fake religion trying to pass itself off as the worship of Christ; I'm not trying to build a series on the subject, but it is something that has occupied a lot of my thinking lately. I increasingly feel a sense of kinship to this situation:

“Now while Paul waited for them at Athens, his spirit was stirred in him, when he saw the city wholly given to idolatry.” (Act 17:16)

This is not idolatry that sits in a person's heart, that “secret” kind of idolatry where you turn something into the focus of all your energy at the cost of serving God. This isn't turning your child or job or a hobby into a personal idol. This is widespread, visible, “worship anything but God in heaven” behavior. Of course, in the further details, we learn that these Athenians literally had idols to everything – for every god man had imagined at the time, they had temples full of idols for worshipping. Historians chuckle and say that in Athens they had more gods than men. Paul certainly describes that as the situation to me. He wasn't one that seemed to hyperbolize, so when he says “wholly given” I envision temples and statues and little alcoves all over the city with gods of all shapes, sizes and sorts being actively worshipped.

This sort of scene may seem an extraordinary sort of thing in this supposedly Christian nation. But think about the cities we have traveled to, where we can literally get half a dozen preaching opportunities in a 2 or 3 block span. Places where you've got a smorgasbord of these pseudo-christian denominations, one on each corner of a city block. Is it really that different? Moreover, I contend you have plenty of physical idols even in this day and age:



Is that much different than what Paul would have been seeing?



Diana



Zeus

Today is Xmas – December 25, 2022. A day of **great** idolatry. A day where the pulpits of pseudo-christianity all across the globe are full of “teachers, having itching ears” declaring that Jesus is the “reason for the season” – a season of pagan revelry and drunkenness! They declare the catholic invention of Xmas to be a holy day for Christians, demanding to put “Christ back into Christmas” – a place He has never been. This is the very definition of changing

“... the truth of God into a lie, and worshipped and served the creature more than the Creator, who is blessed for ever. Amen.” (Rom 1:25)

I don't have to hear all the sermons to know that they are actively positioning the traditions of men as the truth of God, calling this idolatrous behavior “unity of the spirit” (Eph 4:3). I don't have to hear all the words all of them say because the foundation of the whole holiday is nothing more than a collection of pagan practices slammed together into one holiday (or 12 days depending on how you celebrate it). Remember, not one mention is made in Scripture of God declaring December 25 or any date related to the birth of Christ as a holy day. If the Bible doesn't say to memorialize the thing, it isn't scriptural to memorialize it!

Despite the plain, undisputed facts that this day was co-opted by catholic whoremongers and involves the “eating of things sacrificed to idols”, these pseudo-christians demand that Christ is worshipped in these lying behaviors, and of course in this era if you say it (or it's on the Internet) it has to be true.

Back in 2019 I delivered a sermon on Xmas and some of the details around its inception, and those facts haven't really changed, so I'm not going to rehash them all today. I do want to address one part of their fairy tale, as I have seen and heard a lot of talk about gift-giving this year. For some reason it has been a greater focus amongst the people I know that participate in this idolatry, to the point that I've had people I know are Hindus expressing how important it is to give gifts to people. I actually had a person say to me they want “to be like the wise men”. I hope that makes your jaw drop like it did mine.

The catholics built this tradition by warping pagan traditions with this passage of Scripture

“Now when Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judaea in the days of Herod the king, behold, there came wise men from the east to Jerusalem, Saying, Where is he that is born King of the Jews? for we have seen his star in the east, and are come to worship him... And when they were come into the house, they saw the young child with Mary his mother, and fell down, and worshipped him: and when they had opened their treasures, they presented unto him gifts; gold, and frankincense, and myrrh.” (Mat 2:1-11)

These men came to worship and pay obeisance to the King of All. They, unlike the Jews, recognized Him for who and what he was, humbly acknowledging Him. I don't pretend to know how they knew outside of saying God gave them the knowledge. That's good enough for me, frankly. There's a whole segment of pseudo-christian study devoted to making up answers to that question, and I'm not all that interested in academic discussions. They had knowledge of what was happening here, and they came to pay obeisance to the King of Eternity. These gifts they brought were to honor Him, not for any tawdry or tacky human reason.

When you stand before the King of a foreign land, especially to address him, you present gifts designed to honor him and show respect. Consider this example:

“And she gave the king an hundred and twenty talents of gold, and of spices very great store, and precious stones: there came no more such abundance of spices as these which the queen of Sheba gave to king Solomon.” (1Ki 10:10)

To honor Solomon's greatness, the queen of Sheba delivered great gifts to him, gifts of things he may have little or no access to especially. These gifts are meant to demonstrate thought and consideration, to display the largesse and finest things of your land.

Consider this instruction from Jacob to his sons:

“And their father Israel said unto them, If it must be so now, do this; take of the best fruits in the land in your vessels, and carry down the man a present, a little balm, and a little honey, spices, and myrrh, nuts, and almonds:” (Gen 43:11)

You see here Jacob sending the “best fruits”. You don't present shabby gifts to a king when seeking to honor him, you present the best you possibly can.

These wise men, by the providence of God, brought these gifts to Mary and Joseph, to sustain them in Egypt. This wasn't some tawdry tacky thing to be taken and treated lightly, to be made a mockery of with trinkets and toys and stockings over fireplaces. This was serious business and deserves proper treatment. These men came to serve, not show off or materially pamper.

How, except through sublime evil or exceptional ignorance, can you turn the honored presentation of a gift to the King of Grace into some orgy of materialism? This is the power of idolatry! Making a thing of the flesh look as if it has some tie to Godliness is how people are so easily sucked in.

“Having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof: from such turn away.” (2Ti 3:5)

Remember, this “form of godliness” is spoken of in the context of the last days. In order for the Antichrist to succeed in his effort to be worshipped as God, there must be a general rejection of the actual God and a replacement of Him with something else. The widespread, universal idolatry of this season gives us some insight into how that can happen.

The reach of this idolatry is global and deeply pervasive. We aren’t just railing against something here. We don’t reject Xmas out of our own sense of tradition or a desire to simply be different. It certainly isn’t out of some sort of contentious spirit. This refusal to conform to the world in this matter is deeply critical.

This is another one of those things that is important to understand why we oppose these traditions. Teaching our children the ‘why’ is perhaps more important than the ‘what’ in this case. We focus on these matters because we are the watchmen. While every other pulpit in the pseudo-christian world is distorting the truth and talking about little baby Jesus in the manger with some smelly animals, we’re warning them to flee that foolish lie.

“But if the watchman see the sword come, and blow not the trumpet, and the people be not warned; if the sword come, and take any person from among them, he is taken away in his iniquity; but his blood will I require at the watchman's hand.” (Eze 33:6)

How can we see this and not warn? It would be irresponsible and rebellious of us to ignore these things, or worse behave as though operating in sin with the rest of the pseudo-christian world is an act spiritual unity. No, warning plainly is our job and we’re going to do it to the best of our ability.

Look, I don’t think I can say this any plainer – idolatry is a big deal and there is a reason that John admonishes against it with a rather out of the blue statement in his first epistle’s closing. He directly and plainly says to us

“Little children, keep yourselves from idols. Amen.” (1Jn 5:21)

I say this is a little out of the blue because he hasn't been talking about idols or idolatry before this statement. In chapter 5 John is talking about obedience, faith, love, the happiness of faith, the power of prayer and the truth that Christ is the son of God. But he ends it with – “keep yourselves from idols”.

I'm not sure I can adequately articulate the powerfulness of that statement and its placement. It should serve as a warning that even in the knowledge of Christ's righteousness and majesty, the love and forgiveness of Christ for His people, the testimony of all creation that Jesus is the son of God, there is danger of idolatry. I don't see any other way to take that in its context.

Put plainly, the reason John articulates this warning is this

*“But the fearful, and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and **idolaters**, and all liars, shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone: which is the second death.” (Rev 21:8)*

Those are the words of Christ Himself! There are lots of other sins that could have been explicitly called out in that list; they certainly are included as perhaps “lesser offences”, but when a thing is explicitly listed as a primary entrance criterion to the eternal lake of fire? You might want to pay a lot of attention to that thing to make sure you're not within a country mile of committing it.

And that's where pseudo-christianity fails the sniff test. Rather than stay as far from it as they can, they do everything in their power to insert new and inventive things into the supposed worship of God, including the use of idols. This is going to become, I think, a more pronounced and physically evident thing. Like what Paul experienced in Athens. Not just idols of the heart, but as things continue to spiral down toward their inevitable end, idolatry will increase. I believe that is the case because as the situation worsens, as the hatred and despair skyrockets people will covet relief. We see it all around us even now, the blind leading the blind, the contentiousness exhibited in even the least of things, the almost daily total despair expressed over the state of things, and preachers with all their “God loves everyone unconditionally and doesn't have anything to do with these things” mantra providing no hope and no relief from this despair. This coveting, desiring, even demanding of relief and some sort of hope is only going to increase.

Paul tells us that idolatry is covetousness

“For this ye know, that no whoremonger, nor unclean person, nor covetous man, who is an idolater, hath any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God.” (Eph 5:5)

“Mortify therefore your members which are upon the earth; fornication, uncleanness, inordinate affection, evil concupiscence, and covetousness, which is idolatry.” (Col 3:5)

Those who look to idols covet a thing which they cannot have –

“And he said, Thou canst not see my face: for there shall no man see me, and live.” (Exo 33:20)

They seek to see that which has been forbidden to us to see as the creation of a greater, far superior and perfect spiritual entity. They seek to equalize themselves with God by creating a physical manifestation of Him in **their image** to “reverence” in defiance of His will. It was the promise of the garden:

“For God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil.” (Gen 3:5)

The covetousness of idolatry is founded in the fleshly idea that “seeing is believing”. They refuse to believe in God if they aren’t allowed to see Him, so they “create” something they **can** see to fulfill the lust of that covetousness.

That isn’t how God’s people operate. His people do not need to see to believe

“Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.” (Heb 11:1)

It is a narrow way which we walk, and except by the grace of God we will not keep to it. That’s the warning John gives us and why. And before you think I’m crazy that we would take up idols, remember that we have an example of what this looks like provided to us. Consider this event closely:

“And when the people saw that Moses delayed to come down out of the mount, the people gathered themselves together unto Aaron, and said unto him, Up, make us gods, which shall go before us; for as for this Moses, the man that brought us up out of the land of Egypt, we wot not what is become of him. And Aaron said unto them, Break off the golden earrings, which are in the ears of your wives, of your sons, and of your daughters, and bring them unto me. And all the people brake off the golden earrings which were in their ears, and brought them unto Aaron. And he received them at their hand, and fashioned it with a graving tool, after he had made it a molten calf: and they said, These be thy gods, O Israel, which brought thee up out of the land of Egypt. And when Aaron saw it, he built an altar before it; and Aaron made proclamation, and said, To morrow is a feast to the LORD. And they rose up early on the morrow, and offered burnt offerings, and brought peace offerings; and the people sat down to

eat and to drink, and rose up to play. And the LORD said unto Moses, Go, get thee down; for thy people, which thou broughtest out of the land of Egypt, have corrupted themselves: They have turned aside quickly out of the way which I commanded them: they have made them a molten calf, and have worshipped it, and have sacrificed thereunto, and said, These be thy gods, O Israel, which have brought thee up out of the land of Egypt.” (Exo 32:1-8)

This bears critical analysis as an example to us of the dangers of idolatry. Look at the connection being made by the people. They demand of Aaron, “make us gods because the man which brought us up out of Egypt has disappeared and we don’t know if he’s coming back”. They utterly disregard the things they had only recently born witness to – the many things that God had done in their sight, sparing their firstborn, even sparing their own lives at the Red Sea. Disregarding the things that they had clearly seen, again with their own eyes, all because they cannot see the God who performed them, losing the faith they demonstrated with the blood they placed on their door posts and lintels. Abandoning that faith to establish their own form of godliness.

What a warning! These men and women saw these tremendous miracles, partook of their delivering grace, and even in the terror of the mount see evidence of the Living God, but evidence isn’t the same as seeing the real thing.

They covet a god they can see with their eyes, touch with their hands and attribute the miracles to – but don’t forget that in the background of all this rebellion they had this

And it came to pass on the third day in the morning, that there were thunders and lightnings, and a thick cloud upon the mount, and the voice of the trumpet exceeding loud; so that all the people that was in the camp trembled. And Moses brought forth the people out of the camp to meet with God; and they stood at the nether part of the mount. And mount Sinai was altogether on a smoke, because the LORD descended upon it in fire: and the smoke thereof ascended as the smoke of a furnace, and the whole mount quaked greatly. And when the voice of the trumpet sounded long, and waxed louder and louder, Moses spake, and God answered him by a voice. And the LORD came down upon mount Sinai, on the top of the mount: and the LORD called Moses up to the top of the mount; and Moses went up.” (Exo 19:16-20)

The majesty and glory of God’s presence was simply not enough. They demanded to have a god they could physically see and touch, something infirm as they were themselves, and Aaron gave into the demand.

This should be a terrifying truth for all of us to behold. If the chosen people of God, who He preserved and was bound to by unbreakable covenant can disregard Him and His ways with such a cavalier attitude, how are we not at risk of the same thing?

We are provided an answer many places in Scripture, but I think the same place we are admonished to keep ourselves from idols provides the best

“For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments: and his commandments are not grievous. For whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world: and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith. Who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God?”
(1Jn 5:3-5)

Faith in God has always been the answer to overcoming the weakness of our flesh; overcoming this global trend toward idolatry is no exception. This isn't a thing to be taken lightly. Paul admonishes us about idolatry throughout his epistles, and we are no less susceptible to it than those early churches – if the Jews could fall to it so totally, how can we as Gentiles not? I would argue that churches in our age are perhaps more susceptible to these failings, being further away from those direct words from the Apostles.

But the Word has been preserved for us, to warn us of the dangers. My prayer and hope is that we heed the warnings and keep the faith. Just because this church has been in the earth preaching this message for all these years doesn't make us exempt from falling away. Like I said last time, the churches Paul and Peter and the other Apostles founded and wrote to no longer exist. It appears there is only a little longer for us to persevere until our King returns. Let us be constant in prayer for the deepening and continuation of our faith; to be kept in His ways and let us follow a path of obedience that these failings might not easily befall us.

I leave you today with these words of David

“O sing unto the LORD a new song: sing unto the LORD, all the earth. Sing unto the LORD, bless his name; shew forth his salvation from day to day. Declare his glory among the heathen, his wonders among all people. For the LORD is great, and greatly to be praised: he is to be feared above all gods. For all the gods of the nations are idols: but the LORD made the heavens. Honour and majesty are before him: strength and beauty are in his sanctuary. Give unto the LORD, O ye kindreds of the people, give unto the LORD glory and strength. Give unto the LORD the glory due unto his name: bring an offering, and come into his courts. O worship the LORD in the beauty of holiness: fear before him, all the earth. Say among the heathen that the LORD reigneth: the world also shall be established that it shall not be moved: he shall judge the people righteously. Let the heavens rejoice, and let the earth be glad; let the sea roar, and the fulness thereof. Let the field be joyful, and all that is therein: then shall all the trees of the wood rejoice Before the LORD: for he cometh, for he cometh to judge the earth: he shall judge the world with righteousness, and the people with his truth.” (Psa 96:1-13)