

October 11, 2020

The Golden Calf Exodus 32: 1-14

The issue of idolatry has become a huge problem amongst the fleeing Hebrews in the desert. They want and are looking for a tangible God to pray to. One that they could see and touch. They are having difficulty relating to the aloof God in the clouds on Mt. Sinai. The one that only Moses is only allowed to see and talk too. This made me wonder what constitutes an idol in the traditional sense. An idol is a manmade statue or other image of a false God; also anything that is worshiped in the place of the one true God. Money, possessions, fame, even family members can become idols if we put them ahead of God. I like this definition because it addresses the traditional concept and challenges us to think about the modern idols we create.

Back to the Hebrews in the desert. The idea of pouring and sculpting a golden calf idol is so far removed from being Jewish. The idea of a cow god is very Egyptian and Canaanite. They had such gods and idols amongst them. So, it would seem that the Hebrews were resorting back to what they saw in Egypt. By building the golden calf idol they have forgotten the God who rescued them from slavery and their identity as God's chosen people. This story may be more about identity, blasphemy and forgetting who you are. The lack of gratitude and thanksgiving in this situation is the big sin.

Idolatry seems to be the problem that will not go away. It will continue on and be the problem for any faith in the Roman Empire. The Roman Emperor was to be worshipped as a living God. That is idolatry if you were a Christian or a Jew. There were many Christian martyrs who refused to worship the emperor. This was the root of the Macabee's revolt. St. Paul addresses the issue and gives very clear advice. 1Cor 10:14, "Therefore my beloved, flee from idolatry." So how do you go about doing this. St. Paul later goes on to quote Isaiah 52:11. "Come out from among them and be separate, says the Lord. Do not touch what is unclean and I will receive you." Seems like the best approach is to just walk away and

distance yourself from it. I would also add that the less attention you draw to yourself the better. In the end the Lord will draw you to Himself.

In our modern times it can be difficult to discern the idols that are around us. That is why I liked that definition I gave you at the start. It addresses some of the modern idols we have and create. The enemy of the Christian will be very cunning and sly as to how those idols are presented to you. That is why discernment and perspective are so important. If you find yourself in the middle of such a situation, St. Paul gives good advice on how to get out of it. Separate yourself from it. Colossians 3:5, "Therefore put to death your members which are on the earth: fornication, uncleanness, passions, evil desires and covetousness which is idolatry." Our Lord warns us about having two masters. That we will either love one and hate the other. The key is perspective in order to keep God as your number one. When you do this everything else falls in behind it. Always be discerning and questioning have I placed God as number one in this decision or situation.

Idolatry has been a problem in our relationship with God. Unfortunately it still continues today but in new and creative ways. It requires the devoted Christian to be far more aware and discerning in this age to place God as the number one in our lives. It is not easy in our modern and secular society. That is why we struggle and persist. Relying all the time upon God's grace.

This weekend we gather as God's children to give thanks for all that He has done for us and continues to do. This unique year has truly stretched us to reflect upon our lives. To find the things that we are grateful and thankful for. Listening to peoples complaints and griping, I try to turn them around. If you are complaining about the Covid protocols, you are alive to do so. Your mind and your tongue are working fine. Either way, you are blessed. If you have your health, either mental or physical, count yourself lucky because you are blessed. Be grateful to God in all things, even the bizarre and strange situations. Take comfort in knowing that He is still in control even when we are not. Have a safe and joyous Thanksgiving,

Pastor D