



Ten Commandment Series Not The Ikon Westport Christian Church July 25, 2010

"You shall not make for yourself an idol, or any likeness of what is in heaven above or on the earth beneath or in the water under the earth. "You shall not worship them or serve them; for I, the LORD your God, am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children, on the third and the fourth generations of those who hate Me, but showing lovingkindness to thousands, to those who love Me and keep My commandments. (Ex 20:4-6NASU)

Last week we began to take a look at the "Ten Commandments." I stated at the start that it is important for us to understand, how they fit in our lives today. We came to an understanding that putting God first is not just reading the Bible. It is not just coming to church. It is not just making a claim that you believe something, but it is putting God first in every aspect of ones life.

If you recall last week at the end of the message, I stated, if we will honor God as the only God in our lives, it won't matter whether the Ten Commandments are posted in courtrooms and school hallways or not. They will be posted everywhere a Christian goes. And the testimony of our lives will be impossible to silence. That truly is putting God first.

Which brings us to today's message. You shall not make for yourself an idol. What is an idol? Is it a statue? Is it some figure that we carve out of some wood? Those can be called idols, but what is God meaning here. An idol is anything that takes the focus off God and puts it on something else. So the question that must be asked is, what does your life center around? What is the primary focus? So many times when we talk about idols, we think about the Old Testament idols. However, today an idol can be parked in a garage. Some

people park their idol at the marina. Some people live in their idols. Some people put their idols in their safe deposit box. And some people bow down or lift theirs up like some mini god.

Archaeologists tell us that in every culture throughout history there have been idols: Statues of little gods or goddesses. Man has a desire, for some reason, to turn objects or people or things into objects of worship. When God said, "you shall not make for yourself," should give us some idea as to what he was talking about. That should tell us we should not substitute something or someone for God.

In an article printed in 'Christianity Today', Anne Lamott said, "you can safely assume you've created God in your own image when it turns out that God hates all the same people you do." (-- Anne Lamott in Bird by Bird. Christianity Today, Vol. 41, no. 8)

So, today in order for us to grasp what God would desire for us to learn, let us break this down into two parts. The first part, NOT to, and the second part, To. Lets begin with the not to.

I. NOT TO FORM FALSE GODS

God said you shall not make for yourself an idol. Let's first look at what it meant to the people then, then how it applies to us today. Why would God make such a statement to begin with? While they were in Egypt, the Hebrew nation was exposed to all kinds of crazy ideas about God. The Egyptians had a god for everything.

Some commentaries state that the Egyptians had more than 96 gods! And for everyone they had created an idol. Thus they would give of their time, money, and food to appease these idols, these false gods. They even sacrificed their own children to these idols.

When the Jews came out of Egypt, God did not want them to be influenced by the pagan culture. God wanted them to see that He was the One True God. The One that had provided for them. He wanted to remove everything that could pull them away from following after Him. During this time, even though there were many false gods and idols, some commentaries claim there were basically three that appears to cause more trouble than others.

There was Baal (female counter part, Ashtorah), who was the god of sex. There was Mammon who was the god of money or wealth. And, there was Molech who was the god of violence. Sex, Money, Violence – Does that sound like today?

Now, before I go any farther may I clarify something. Idols and symbols are not the same thing. Some symbols that we have are, a cross, a picture, and communion table. These are not things we worship, but things to help us to remember. With that in mind, I must tell you that some people do idolize these things. There are those that have a cross around their neck because they think if they do it will bring them good luck. There are those that have a picture of what some artist thought Jesus may have looked like and treat it like it was Jesus Himself. I feel that we must be very careful in what emphasis we put on these object.

Unfortunately, most people prefer to follow an idol, something they can see than to walk by

faith. Why should we follow some idol when we can follow after the real thing. Your obedience to God determines your image of God. "Being then the children of God, we ought not to think that the Divine Nature is like gold or silver or stone, an image formed by the art and thought of man. (Acts 17:29)

God said, "do not make for yourself an idol. This brings us to our second point.

II. NOT TO WORSHIP FALSE GODS

"You shall not worship them or serve them; for I, the LORD your God, am a jealous God." (Ex 20:5)

Let's take a look at the word worship. A word that I like to use here to show the importance of the word worship is adoration. The word worship means worthy-ship. So the one that you bow down to is worthy of praise. Adoration means strongly admired. I like putting them together so that I would have some understanding would mean one that is worthy whom I strongly admire.

Remember, an idol is anything that we place before God, but I want to take that one step farther. Worshiping an idol is the same as putting ones whole trust in that idol. It is a way of stating that God is not enough or that he cannot provide your needs. There are many people today that idolize other people. Sports personnel is a very big one especially for the younger adults. They say things like, "if only I had his or her talent, if only I had their money." "If only!"

Other people turn to some psychic hotline, Tarot Cards, Horoscopes, and even the lottery for help instead of fully trusting in God. The Bible calls this spiritual adultery! It is basically the same as cheating on God.

Whenever Israel sinned, it always began with idols! These false images and idols would lead their hearts away from the God of all creation and they would set their hearts on created things instead of the Creator. The result was always a weakened and perverted faith, and a weakened nation.

Mysticism replaced faith whenever they turned to their own images of God. Isaiah put it this way when he wrote, "They will be turned back and be utterly put to shame, Who trust in idols, Who say to molten images, "You are our gods." (Isa 42:17)

This is the kind of action that displeases God, for God said, He is a jealous God. Having idols not only disgust God and disappoint people who have them, but they also can control people. Idolatry controls those involved with it. Paul wrote, "You know that when you were pagans, you were led astray to the mute idols, however you were led." (1 Cor 12:2)

Unfortunately people today turn away from the One True God seeking after their own gods. Following anything but the True God will lead one astray.

So, God is telling us not to make, not to follow, not to worship or bow before them. In this passage we find if we do those things then we need to...

III. UNDERSTAND THE CONSEQUENCES

At the end of verse five we read, "visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children, on the third and the fourth generations of those who hate Me." Many look at this verse to say that sins are passed from one generation to the next, but, is that what this verse is saying.

In order for us to understand lets look at Ezek 18:20 "The person who sins will die. The son will not bear the punishment for the father's iniquity, nor will the father bear the punishment for the son's iniquity; the righteousness of the righteous will be upon himself, and the wickedness of the wicked will be upon himself.

God is informing us the consequences of this sins will be upon their children. Now, this does not mean that the sins they commit will be charged against them, but the consequences of those sins. God does not punish a person for someone else's sin, but the consequences of that sin could last for generations.

For example, what about a person that is driving drunk, crashes into another vehicle and kills someone. Does not the consequence from this accident affect the lives of those in the family? Sure it does. Listen, if a man and his wife worship idols, what do you think their children are going to do? Did you know that 90% of children growing up in an alcoholic home become what? Alcoholics, right.

God is wanting us to see that the life we are living has an influence upon generations to come. If parents teach their children that they need to be in church only if nothing else is going on, how are the children going to attend church when they get older. If parents don't read their Bibles, if parents don't pray in the house, if parents don't show respect to the church, if parents don't show love to each other. Do you understand now what God is trying to get us to see?

The things we do today will determine the outcome for tomorrow. If we do not make any idols, if we do not worship false gods, if we understand the consequences, then we need to...

III. UNDERSTAND GOD LOVES THE OBEDIENT

Showing lovingkindness to thousands, to those who love Me and keep My commandments. Ex 20:6

This verse states that if I chose to put God first, not placing anything before Him, walking in a life of obedience, worshiping and serving Him, then He will love me beyond my imagination.

Ps 37:4-5 Delight yourself in the LORD; And He will give you the desires of your heart. Commit your way to the LORD, Trust also in Him, and He will do it.

If I seek to serve Him and love Him then I will be filled with His love, with His good and perfect will for my life. For in Christ I have been filled with His love and I have been set free. So Jesus was saying to those Jews who had believed Him, "If you continue in My word, then you are truly disciples of Mine; and you will know the truth, and the truth will make you free." John 8:31-32 I am free from my past guilt. Free from the today's present

concerns. Free from the future, death.

By striving to be obedient to Christ will transform your life. Therefore if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creature; the old things passed away; behold, new things have come. 2 Cor 5:17

But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as from the Lord, the Spirit. (2 Cor 3:18)

If we truly love God, then we will strive to follow His commandments. Jesus said, "If you love Me, you will keep My commandments." (John 14:15)

Conclusion: Today as well as back when Moses came down off the mountain, God has given His creation free will. You see the choice is up to you. The choice to follow some idol or to follow the real God. I pray you understand there are consequences that will be passed down for your actions today. That God loves those who follow Him in a life of obedience. Jesus said, "He who is not with Me is against Me." Where do you stand?

AMEN