

The Gospel and our Idols, Part 2 - Acts 19:21-41 **Notes, Family Worship, Bible Reading**

Notes from the Sermon

Our idols die hard. Ephesus reminds us of this, but this is also one of the key themes of the whole of Scripture. The central problem addressed in Scripture and by the Gospel is our idolatry. Yes, Adam and Eve sinned, but there was a motivational structure in their heart that caused them to eat fruit, and we see from Genesis 3 that it was the desire to be God rather than have a god. They substituted themselves for the God that created them and then turned to something in creation to provide their identity, hope, and salvation. We are at the core worshipers, and once we were alienated from God our hearts went on a quest to find something or someone worthy of our devotion and adoration by whom we can find some form of salvation. And the world does not lack options. There are potential idols everywhere. We might be a bit more sophisticated than the people in Ephesus, but make no bones about it. There are spiritual beliefs and creeds that demand our allegiance everywhere, and all of us are drawn to things that demand our affection and sacrifice. We run to them and create pathways of worship in the hopes that these things will save us and give us meaning and fulfillment in life. Just listen to the loudest voices in our world this week. On the one hand there is a frenzy about the lottery, and Americans are handing money over by the hundreds of millions as an act of sacrifice and worship to the god of money. And you can't turn on the TV or radio without hearing ads from politicians and pundits who offer a form of political salvation while at the same time revealing the true enemy of the people. It amazes me how we so easily sweep up the Man who laid down His life for his enemies in the cause to demonize our current political enemies.

Here is the point, we all have them, idols of the heart. All of us have places where we move from the worship of Jesus into what Christopher J. H. Wright calls the great reversal. "A great reversal happens: God who should be worshiped becomes an object to be used; creation, which is for our proper use and blessing, becomes the object of our worship." (Christopher J. H. Wright, *Here are your Gods*) This is what I mean when I say that our behaviors that we call sin are downhill from our idolatry. We need to confess our sin and repent, but to truly get to the root of any sinful action we have to realize that at the moment we sin we are choosing to love something and give ourselves to that "god" in an act of sacrifice and worship. We overeat, get drunk, end up on a website, or in bed with a person who is not our spouse because at that moment we are seeking a form of momentary salvation and have placed our faith in another god. Our problem is not primarily a sin problem, but a love problem. We should love God more than anything, and then receive all of his gifts with joy. Yet, God has designed us and all of His gifts for a context, and when living in faith and obedience the gifts found in creation can be enjoyed rolling into thanksgiving for the One who gave. But we turn to the created thing and give our affection and service to the thing.

So the way out is for us to be honest about our idolatry, seeking to discover the ways we and the culture around us redefine god, salvation, identity, and purpose. The following is a list of questions written by David Powlinson from his book *Seeing with New Eyes*. It is designed to show us the dominant temptations toward idols so we can root them out and walk in repentance. As we do this we can then lift our chin to the cross to see Jesus in His glory and experience the True and Living God. And we can worship Him instead of seeking to use Him to serve our idols.

1. What do I worry about most?

2. What, if I failed or lost it, would cause me to feel that I did not even want to live?
3. What do I use to comfort myself when things go bad or get difficult?
4. What do I do to cope? What are my release valves? What do I do to feel better?
5. What preoccupies me? What do I daydream about?
6. What makes me feel the most self-worth? Of what am I the proudest? For what do I want to be known?
7. What do I lead with in conversations?
8. Early on what do I want to make sure that people know about me?
9. What prayer, unanswered, would make me seriously think about turning away from God?
10. What do I really want and expect out of life? What would really make me happy?
11. What is my hope for the future?

Bible Reading for the Week

Daily Bible Readings

Sun	Mon	Tues	Weds	Thurs	Fri	Sat
Psalm 35	Psalm 36	Psalm 37	Psalm 38	Psalm 39	Psalm 40	Psalm 41

Reading from this past week: Acts 19:21-41

Reading in preparation for this coming Sunday: Acts 20:17-39

Family Worship

Song - *Oh Give Thanks to the Lord*

<https://youtu.be/cAV10BszJSk>

Gospel Project

Unit: Into Captivity

Story: Jonah Warned of God's Judgment

Big Picture Question: What makes people special?

Answer: People are special because we are made in God's image, as male and female, to know Him.

Scripture: Jonah

New City Catechism

Question #45: Is baptism with water the washing away of sin itself?

Answer: No, only the blood of Christ can cleanse us from sin.

Verse: Luke 3:16

Scripture

Acts 19:21-41

- Why would Demetrius and the city of Ephesus get so upset at Paul and the believers in this town.
- Where do you see people in our culture getting angry about their idols?
- Did your work through the questions above? If so, what are the key areas of idolatry in your life? How can you walk in repentance?
- Why is Jesus ultimately better than any idol?

Prayer

*Spend time this week giving thanks for God's creation and the gifts of his love around us.

*Pray that God would help you identify your idols and lay them at the foot of the cross.