

American Idols - Judges 3:1-6

Notes, Family Worship, Bible Reading

Notes from the Sermon

This sermon may be the most important for our entire Judges series because we are getting to the root of the core problem in the book of Judges, and the core problem for each and every one of us. As I grew up in church I was told over and over again that our central problem was sin. Now, on one level this is absolutely correct, sin leaves us guilty, stained, broken, and separated from God. But the sins we commit, the evil and self-centered actions are actually the fruit of something much deeper. In other words, adultery, cheating, lying, and even murder are outcomes of a deep problem that lies in the human heart, the problem the Bible calls idolatry. Now, let's pause for a minute. When you hear idolatry you probably think about little gold statues placed in some kind of shrine with incense, something out of an Indiana Jones movie. Theologian John Calvin stated that "the human heart is a perpetual factory of idols."

Simply put, idolatry happens when anything is more important to you than God, anything that absorbs your heart and imagination more than God, anything you seek to give you what only God can give. Idolatry always begins with placing ourselves at the center, our desire to be our own authority and creator of our own identity. We don't want a God, we want to be god. In that space our heart seeks for transcendence, for something with the power and even purpose greater than our own. Yet, we want to define this god so that he or she is captive to the desires of my heart. These gods take shape and expression as we pursue the things we deem ultimate or most important, and these things replace the True and Living God as central in our affections and pursuit. The outcome is that we will either form a new God or shape-shift the God of our religion into the god we desire to fit the sinful longings of the heart. Either way, the god we worship is not the true Jesus revealed in Scripture. Most of the time, the things we turn in to idols are good things, part of God's good gift of creation. But we make those good things ultimate things, building our identity and sense of self upon the longings of the heart. And here is why this is a massive issue in Scripture, human history, and in your and my life. We are always, by a secret trajectory of our hearts moving toward and becoming whatever we worship.

The cycle in Judges is all about idolatry. Jehovah God rescued them from slavery, sustained them in their journey, and has given Israel the Promised Land. He fought for them, giving them victory after victory. But He also warned them that the presence of these other nations among them would introduce them to the idols in their cultures and eventually draw their hearts to their false gods. Rather than obeying the word of the Lord, the Israelites thought it would benefit them to conquer these people and make them slaves. But it didn't take long before they started intermarrying and it doesn't take any time before they start mixing in the worship of Baal and Asheroth with the worship of Jehovah. Why do they do this? The promises of free sex, big crops, wealth and prosperity, and health was overwhelming. Baal and Asheroth promised to give God's people the things they wanted most without the pesky little problem of obedience and allegiance to the True God. Yet, in each cycle of the Judges we see this pursuit of idols leading to ugly and awful injustice and wickedness. Rather than being shaped by the steadfast love and faithfulness of Jehovah they are shaped into the image of their idols and the only remedy is judgment from God.

So, back to the first point. Why do we sin? At any given moment why do we choose to ignore the commandments of our God and get sucked into the thoughts and actions that lead to our sin. The answer is always idolatry. At that moment something in your life is more important than the true and living God, His mercy and grace. We don't want a God who gives commands, we want to be god, and we want to dictate the direction and affections of our heart. It doesn't take long before we are doing the very same things we find in Judges 2.

We “go after” these things, pursuing them as ultimate and central to our identity (2:12). Next thing you know we are bowing down to these created things, forming shrines of worship and pathways to obtain these things (2:12). Before long we are serving our idols, giving blood sweat and tears to them believing these idols of the heart will bring happiness, fulfillment, and hope (2:13). They don’t but at this point we have become slaves to the idols, and literally “whore after” (2:17) these Gods. The Bible uses incredibly strong language here, because idols become pimps that ruin lives and leave us in complete bondage while abandoning the God who loves and saved us.

So what are the idols of your heart? What good things that are part of God’s good gift of creation have you turned into an ultimate thing? What do you pursue, create pathways for worship, serve, and even give yourself wholly to? What are the things that take the place of God in your life, and what are the things that if you don’t have them will cause you to be bitter to God? These are your idols. And you are becoming what you worship.

Bible Reading for the Week

Daily Bible Readings

Sun	Mon	Tues	Weds	Thurs	Fri	Sat
Jeremiah 45	Jeremiah 46	Jeremiah 47	Jeremiah 48	Jeremiah 49	Jeremiah 50	Jeremiah 51

Reading from this past week’s sermon: Judges 3:1-6

Reading in preparation for this coming Sunday: Judges 4:1-24

Family Worship

Song - *His Glory and My Good*

<https://youtu.be/NsUMTtEamkc?si=EL-qNTmf0y0tst2q>

Gospel Project

Unit: Ezra Taught God’s Law

Story: The Prophet Zechariah

Big Picture Question: What is the Bible all about?

Answer: The Bible is the story of God’s plan to save people through Jesus.

Scripture: Ezra 7-10, Nehemiah 8

New City Catechism

Question 5: What else did God create?

Answer: God created all things and all his creation was very good.

Verse: Genesis 1:31

Judges 3:1-6

- What is idolatry and why is it such a huge issue? What did it look like in Judges and what does idolatry look like in America?
- What are the most significant idols in our culture? How can we know if these are shaping us?
- What are the four steps toward idolatry in chapter 2? How does this help us understand how idolatry works?
- What are the strongest idols of your heart? Can you name them? How can you submit these to Jesus in repentance and faith?

Prayer

*Pray that God would show us our idols and we would repent to serve Him fully.

*Pray for our Women’s Ministry and those who lead and teach our women.