

**Title:** Worship God in the Right Way

**Passage:** Exodus 20:4-6

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Summary:

The Second Commandment:

1. Teaches us about God's character: majestic and jealous.
2. Points out our sinfulness (our propensity to worship anything else other than God).
3. Directs us to Christ and the need we have for Him.
4. Teaches us how to live freely.

Key Truths:

- The Second Commandment prohibits people imagining God in some physical rendering.
- Idolatry is not only worshipping other gods but also worshipping the true God in the wrong way
- There is nothing created by human hands that can accurately reflect all of God's attributes.
- We all fail in keeping this commandment. We have consciously or unwillingly worship something different than God.
- What can we do to be right with God? We turn to Christ. We turn to worship Him.

Applications:

- Be on guard of images of God (both external or imagined) and placing upon them extra meaning. Do not make something more special than warranted.
- Worship God as He commands in His Word.

Possible Discussion Questions:

- What point(s) in the sermon did the Lord most impress upon you?
- How may you have worshipped God incorrectly or incompletely in the past?
- Who or what have you worshipped in the past other than God? What happened to transform your worship to be only for God?
- How does your heart tend to wander in devotion or worship of God if left unchecked? What has helped you reset your heart's devotion to God?
- James 1:22 admonishes us to be "doers of the Word." What next steps will you take in response to the truths you have been exposed to?

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**Introduction**

Worship of God

- in the Old Testament, was in the Tabernacle and later in a Temple built in Jerusalem.
- In many churches today, especially in orthodox churches, people place special emphasis in certain spaces or areas.

But in the New Testament (and under the New Covenant through Jesus):

- Each believer is a temple of God through the Holy Spirit

#### 1 Corinthians 3:16-17

Do you not know that you are God's temple and that God's Spirit dwells in you? If anyone destroys God's temple, God will destroy him. For God's temple is holy, and you are that temple.

- Anything that hinders our worship should be removed.

#### **Passage:**

#### Exodus 20:4-6

“You shall not make for yourself a carved image, or any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth. You shall not bow down to them or serve them, for I the LORD your God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children to the third and the fourth generation of those who hate me, but showing steadfast love to thousands of those who love me and keep my commandments.

#### **Second Commandment - overview**

- This is the longest commandment.
- In Catholic/Lutheran traditions, the first and second commandments are combined while the last one about coveting is separated into two.
- In Protestant traditions, separate the first and second commandments while combining the last one about coveting into one.
  - Generally speaking, the exact distinction is not important but rather the whole of the Ten Commandments.

#### Idolatry

- Is not only worshipping other gods.
- Also worshipping the true God in the wrong way
- How we worship is just as important as who we worship.
  - Sincerity alone cannot be the guide.
  - One can be sincerely wrong.

## **The Purpose of the Ten Commandments:**

1. Teach us about God's character
2. They point out our sinfulness.
3. They direct us to Christ and the need we have for Him.
4. They teach us how to live freely.

## **I. THE SECOND COMMANDMENT TEACHES US ABOUT GOD'S CHARACTER**

Compare

- First Commandment: there is no other God but the God of the Bible.
- Second Commandment: prohibits people imagining God is some physical rendering.

Why?

- There is nothing created by human hands that can accurately reflect all of God's attributes.

Exodus 32:1-4 (The Golden Calf)

When the people saw that Moses delayed to come down from the mountain, the people gathered themselves together to Aaron and said to him, “Up, make us gods who shall go before us. As for this Moses, the man who brought us up out of the land of Egypt, we do not know what has become of him.” So Aaron said to them, “Take off the rings of gold that are in the ears of your wives, your sons, and your daughters, and bring them to me.” So all the people took off the rings of gold that were in their ears and brought them to Aaron. And he received the gold from their hand and fashioned it with a graving tool and made a golden calf. And they said, “These are your gods, O Israel, who brought you up out of the land of Egypt!”

God is a majestic God.

- Calf symbolized lies about God.
  - Lie that God is material (but He is Spirit)
- Nothing can parallel God's majesty, character, and attributes.
  - Any image would be destructible but God is indestructible.
  - Any image is of finite value but God is invaluable.
  - Any image is impotent but God is all powerful

God is a jealous God.

- God is jealous for His worship.
- Compare: current definition of jealousy
  - Similar to envy of

- Holy jealousy: rightful feeling of protecting one's own possession.
  - Ex: Husband's jealousy of one's wife in the arms of someone else.
    - Marriage is exclusivistic between one man and one woman.
      - Any alternative is breaking of one's marriage vows
    - Similarly, our relationship with God is exclusive.
      - We belong to God.
        - If we put anything else between Him and us or worship something else, that is idolatry.
- Holy jealousy: intense, caring devotion to the object of one's own.
  - Ex: mother's love for her child; father's protection over his home.
- Only God has an exclusive claim over us, His beloved.

## II. THE SECOND COMMANDMENT POINTS OUT OUR SINFULNESS.

- Commandment was given because Israelites were prone to wander and worship pagan gods like those around them

What sin?

- Sinful propensity to worship anything else other than God.

What is worship?

- Definition: continuous outpouring all that I am and all that I do and all I could ever become in light of the Chosen God.
- We all worship something all the time.
  - We pour our lives out to something or someone.
- Question: What or who are you worshipping?
  - The opposite of Christianity is not atheism but idolatry.
- Common examples:
  - Pleasure (activities such as sports or self-pleasure)
  - Materialism (reflected through shopping or accumulation of material things)
  - Politics (worship people or political parties)
- Idols lie
  - They always over-promise and under-deliver
  - Sin always promises freedom but actually enslaves us.
    - What we look to for "salvation" or "joy" actually turns to enslave us.

**How does this impact the church?**

- Many orthodox or catholic churches and cathedrals can become idols themselves.
  - People place more emphasis on the images than God Himself.
- Under Christ, we are each God's temple. We are all the body of Christ.

- The building is not the church.
  - The people are the body of Christ. The people are the church.
- The building doesn't sanctify people.
  - It is the people who sanctify the building.
- What about visual images about Bible stories?
  - The correct way is through reading God's Word.

#### Romans 10:17

So faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ.

### **III. THE SECOND COMMANDMENT DIRECTS US TO CHRIST AND THE NEED WE HAVE FOR HIM.**

#### Exodus 20:5-6

You shall not bow down to them or serve them, for I the LORD your God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children to the third and the fourth generation of those who hate me, but showing steadfast love to thousands of those who love me and keep my commandments.

#### Misperception

- This verse points to a generational curse

Truth:

#### Ezekiel 18:20

The soul who sins shall die. The son shall not suffer for the iniquity of the father, nor the father suffer for the iniquity of the son. The righteousness of the righteous shall be upon himself, and the wickedness of the wicked shall be upon himself.

- this commandment points to not follow habits of idolatry from prior generations.

#### Important Implications

- Importance of leaving behind a godly legacy
- We all fail in keeping this commandment.
  - We have consciously or unwillingly worship something different than God.
    - So how can we be right with God?
      - We turn to Christ. We turn to worship Him.

Jesus is God.

#### Colossians 1:15

He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation.

#### Hebrews 1:3

He is the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of his nature, and he upholds the universe by the word of his power. After making purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high,

Caution: Be aware of visual depictions of Jesus and how much hold them in regard compared to Jesus Himself.

#### **IV. THE SECOND COMMANDMENT TEACHES US TO LIVE FREELY.**

Be on guard of images of God (both external or imagined) and placing upon them extra meaning.

- don't make something more special than warranted.

Worship God as He commands.

- God revealed Himself in His Word how He is to be worshipped.

#### 1 Chronicles 16:29

Ascribe to the LORD the glory due his name; bring an offering and come before him!  
Worship the LORD in the splendor of holiness;

#### Colossians 3:2

Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth.