

We Are What We Worship – Worship Jesus to be Like Jesus

11/11/18 – Pastor Randy

Romans 12:1,2

And so, dear brothers and sisters, I plead with you to give your bodies to God because of all he has done for you. Let them be a living and holy sacrifice—the kind he will find acceptable. This is truly the way to worship him.

Don't copy the behavior and customs of this world, but let God transform you into a new person by changing the way you think. Then you will learn to know God's will for you, which is good and pleasing and perfect.

Last week our text was Psalm 115 and I spoke to you about the subject of idolatry. We learned the following:

1. The sin of idolatry is a very serious, very grave sin, that God strongly condemns as evil and God's judgment is directed upon all who practice it. The first and second of the ten commandments are prohibitions against idolatry. Idolatry is a primary concern of God's and it receives the strongest condemnation by God.
2. The sin of idolatry is a universal problem. It was a constant problem. From Genesis – Revelation idolatry is constantly being confronted and condemned.
3. Idolatry is the worship of anything or anyone other than the one true God, as if it were God, regardless of whether or not an actual physical idol is involved.

Ezekiel spoke about "idols of the heart". When God rebuked King Saul through Samuel for defying God's clear instructions, he equated Saul's stubborn rebellion with the sin of idolatry. Why? Because Saul was acting as if he was the ultimate authority, even above God. Paul on two occasions equated greed with idolatry. Why? Because greed seduces us to treat riches and possessions as if they were God. Jesus said not to store up treasures on earth, but in heaven he explained the "why" behind his instruction as follows:

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"No one can serve two masters...he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and money."

In Paul's first letter to Timothy he warns against the human tendency to love money and to put our trust in money.

Think about that in light of what we learned last week. There were three ways worship was expressed to idols: They praised them (Isaiah 42:8), they trusted in them (Psalm 115:1-13; Isaiah 42:17), and they served them (2 Kings 17:41; 1 Thess. 1:9).

To sum it up: Our worship belongs to God, and God alone. What or who we worship is what or who we honor and esteem above all else. When we worship God we are expressing that there is no one and no thing more beautiful, wonderful, powerful, and honorable than He.

When God is the One:

for Whom we reserve our ***highest PRAISE***;

in Whom we place our ***ultimate TRUST***;

to Whom we surrender our ***supreme ALLEGIANCE***;

then we can honestly say that we are worshippers of God.

Let me expound a little on each of the above expressions of worship:

A. Praise: Verbal expressions of adoration, admiration and appreciation

B. Trust: God desires our trust in Him. Why? Because whatever or whoever we rely upon for our ultimate security, significance, and satisfaction, that thing or that person occupies the place of God.

C. Allegiance: Submitted service to the will of God. Obedience from the heart. Jesus disciples came to be called "Christians" (of Christ, belonging to Christ) by those around them because they witnessed their devotion to Christ!

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4. The final important principle we learned last week is the title of this series; “we are what we worship”. To be more precise we become like that which we worship.

Last week I borrowed an expression from Prof. Greg Beale: “What we revere, we resemble, either for ruin or restoration. Man has ruined himself by his idolatry; by replacing God with that which is not God. The bible is the history of mankind’s idolatrous rebellion against God and God’s work to redeem us from that idolatry and restore us to himself so we can reflect the image of God as God intended us to. The history of Israel was summed up by God’s word spoken through the prophet Jeremiah,

“What fault did your ancestors find in me, that they strayed so far from me? They followed worthless idols and became worthless themselves” (Jer. 2:5).

Here is a succinct statement testifying to the truth – from a negative perspective - that we are what we worship. When you worship the idol of “power” you exploit the weak and forget God. When you worship the idol status and fame you become captive to the praise of men. When you worship greed you end up using people to acquire the things you love rather than using things to love people. When you worship pleasure you become the slave of sex or substances. All these things diminish us, degrade us, and dehumanize us. They make us less like our creator and more like those creatures that were not created in the image of God.

Last week I concluded by drawing your attention to the fact that the Bible not only warns against the dangers of becoming like what we worship; it also encourages us with the good news that “we become like what we worship”. Through Jesus death and resurrection, the way has been opened for us to be born again by the Holy Spirit so that we can now live our lives as true worshippers of God.

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In Genesis 1:26 we read, “Then God said, “Let us make man in our image, after our likeness.” God created us in His own image. Idolatry is man’s attempt to recreate God in his own “images”; a God who reflects what we like and who we are. God created us to be creatures who reflect the nature of our creator as we praise, trust, and obey Him. However, when we redirected our worship away from him to other things, we were still reflective creatures, but now we reflected those worthless “idols” we replaced God with. The good news is that we who were created in the image of God can once again image God!!

We have an example of this spiritual restoration taking place in the lives of the disciples because as they began worship Jesus; to honor Jesus, trust in Jesus, and surrender their allegiance to Jesus. They were being restored from their ruined state of being like their idols who had eyes but couldn’t see and ears but couldn’t hear. Jesus said, “*But blessed are your eyes because they see, and your ears because they hear.*” – Matt. 13:16

John Calvin described the human mind as an “idol factory”. It has the capacity to imagine all kinds of idols. I think there is a lot of truth to that statement and if it is true then we will do ourselves no good by focusing our attention on identifying everything that either is an idol or can potentially be an idol and then trying to avoid praising, trusting and serving these things. Why? Because there are simply too many potential idols to identify in order to eradicate or avoid.

A better approach is to focus on living a life of continued worship of God so that there will be no room for these idols. Idols don’t need to be removed – they need to be replaced. We were created to worship. We will worship someone or something. The place of the idol you remove today will be filled by another object of worship tomorrow. Idols need to be replaced with genuine worship of God. As we worship Jesus motivated by the Holy Spirit we will find ourselves becoming like the one we worship.

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Over the next few weeks we will focus on one of the three expressions of worship and how the Holy Spirit transforms us through that form of worship. Today I am going to focus on the third expression of worship; the surrender of our supreme allegiance to Jesus. Look again at our opening text:

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Don't copy the behavior and customs of this world, but let God transform you into a new person by changing the way you think. Then you will learn to know God's will for you, which is good and pleasing and perfect.

Paul is saying that in response to God's amazing grace we now should worship him by demonstrating our allegiance to him by giving our bodies as a living sacrifice. That means surrendering to God's will. The phrase "knowing the good, pleasing, and perfect will of God implies a doing that follows from the knowing! We are to give our bodies. Giving is an action word.

Worship Involves Allegiance Expressed Through Obedience.

True worship entails allegiance to the one worshipped. Allegiance refers to "loyalty or commitment of a subordinate to a superior". Some synonyms are: faithfulness, obedience, devotion.

Colossians 3:5-10 (ESV)

Put to death therefore what is earthly in you: sexual immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry. On account of these the wrath of God is coming. In these you too once walked, when you were living in them. But now you must put them all away: anger, wrath, malice, slander, and obscene talk from your mouth. Do not lie to one another, seeing that you have put off the old self with its practices and have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge after the image of its creator

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Here is what you should notice in that passage. The transformation that makes us new people in Christ who reflect the image of God takes place through worship expressed through practicing obedience. As you and I worship God through deciding to surrender our bodies -our mouths, our hands, our eyes, and our feet – to the will of God, then we will find ourselves being transformed to become like our God.

I know practice can be a dirty word to some people in Philly, but yes we are talking about practice!! Practice?!? Yes, practice!!! Practice forgiveness. Practice giving. Practice speaking truth. Practice chastity in singleness and fidelity in marriage. Practice sobriety. Practice serving others. Practice praying

Obedience as an act of worship, is not obedience to an abstract and impersonal moral and ethical code. In other words, it is not obedience to a set of religious laws. It is obedience to a person that stems from allegiance to that person, namely Jesus. It flows from the respect and love we possess for Jesus as a result of our relationship to and with Jesus.

When we worship God by our allegiance expressed through obedience, we will begin to reflect him. We are what we worship because worshipping God entails following Jesus and following can also be described as imitating. Allegiance to Christ leads to allowing Christ's teaching to dictate our attitudes, determine our values, and direct our steps. Eugene Peterson described Christian worship as a "long obedience in the same direction." Every decision to obey is transformative; each one a step that makes the next step easier in our transformation into people that reflect the image of Christ.

We worship God when our allegiance to Him leads us to surrender our bodies in service to Him above all others. It is not a forced allegiance but an allegiance inspired and compelled by our faith in Who He is and what He has done.

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