

S030202a – 6/21/26
“Don’t Make for Yourselves Idols”
Exodus 20:4-6
Father’s Day 2026

Introduction – Read Exodus 20:4-6

- Have father’s stand and pray for them - This morning we continue our Sunday mornings in the book of Exodus
 - Now this Wednesday we will continue our chapter by chapter study of this book and in doing so we are going to start our look at the 10 plagues – and we will explore them because some people say they never happened, some say they have a natural explanation and some of course like me believe they actually happened as the Bible says but we want to see why and what the alternatives are

Then this Wednesday Night we also want to take a look at the controversy which comes from these chapters concerning who is to blame for Pharaoh and his actions?

- Because in some places it seems like God is to blame because He is hardening Pharaoh’s heart and other places it seems like Pharaoh is hardening his own heart – so we will examine what is going on, what happened to bring on the plagues and we will look at the first few plagues of the 10 including the plagues of frogs and flies and I have been doing some research about those two things and have some great stuff and some great slides this Wednesday night
 - Really good stuff this Wednesday Night, hope you can be with us!

But this morning I want to continue our look at the 10 commandments

- And as we saw last Sunday the commandments are something very important for us to study

I know some people think they are outdated, that changes in culture and time make these laws something that don't apply anymore

- But we saw last week that you can make that case for certain parts of God's law ceremonies and procedures that were based on the ways the Jews were to relate to God and approach God before the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ

But God's moral law of which the 10 commandments are certainly apart are based on God's holiness that does not change, they are based on our need to be like Him in the way we live our lives, and that need does not change

- I believe the 10 commandments are for all people at, all times – why again? Remember...

Why are the Ten Commandments Important?

#1 – The Law Drives us to Christ

- When I see the standard of perfection that God requires, and I see how far I fall short, when I truly get that the wages of sin is death, well then becoming a Christian isn't just about bettering my life or making me feel good, it is saving me from sin and death and eternity apart from God – well then I see my need for a savior – and the law helps me get there – it shows me our need for Christ
 - But the law doesn't stop there, it also...

#2 – The Law Directs us in Christ

- The law also shows me how we are to relate to our fellow man and to God Himself

If we remove God's commandments as the standard to live our lives, then our heart becomes our guide and that is frankly why we are so messed up in Christian culture today

- We base things on our preferences, likes and dislikes rather than on the unchanging Word of God
 - so it is important that we give ourselves to the study of God's heart, God's commandments

#3 – The Law helps us Discover Christ

➤ You learn something about the Law giver from the laws
Some of the laws on the books in our city governments let us know that at one time someone making laws was not thinking everything through

- In our own state, Senate Bill 1221 - it is illegal to let your dog peruse a bear in the state of California – and all dogs say amen – do we really need that one?

And it is not just the state of California

- In Texas when two trains meet each other at a railroad crossing, each shall come to a full stop, and neither shall proceed until the other has gone. – think that one through for a minute
 - And also in Texas it is still a law on the books that it is illegal for one to shoot a buffalo from the second story of a hotel

Those laws tell you something about the lawgivers

- well the 10 Commandments are the same
 - and what we primarily will discover about God from His law is that He is love and His love for us
 - the apostle John said...

“For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments. And His commandments are not burdensome” – 1 John 5:3

- As we keep His commandments
 - Not to save us, not to qualify us for His love - But just as we are directed in Christ - I experience His love for me

This morning as we get to Commandment #2...

“You shall not make for yourself a carved image—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 nor serve them. For I, the Lord your God, am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children to the third and fourth generations of those who hate Me, but showing mercy to thousands, to those who love Me and keep My commandments.” – Exodus 20:4-6

- And there are 3 things we want to consider as we as work through this second commandment of God

“You shall not make for yourself an idol”

#1 – The Rule – Exodus 20:4

#2 – The Reason – Exodus 20:5a

#3 – The Result – Exodus 20:5-6

- Let's consider these one at a time

“You shall not make for yourself an idol”

#1 – The Rule – Exodus 20:4

- Many people don't know this, I sure didn't until I starting studying more in-depth – but there is a division in the church on how the 10 Commandments are to be divided

Catholics and Lutherans believe and teach that verses 3-6 are one commandment, in other words the first two commandments we have studied they say are really one

- Whereas the rest of Protestantism see them as two
 - the Catholics and Lutherans make up the difference and still get to 10 commandments, (because you can't have 9 commandments) by divided the last commandment on coveting into two
- Their Commandment #9 – You shall not covet your neighbor's wife
 - Their Commandment #10 – You shall not covet your neighbor's goods - Protestant see one commandment at the end to not covet

And of course, Protestant Websites say the Catholics did this on purpose because it doesn't really fit with their theology since they do make images

- And of course the Catholic websites say, the Protestants lump the last two commandments together, you shall not covet your neighbors wife and you shall not covet your neighbor's stuff because we are insensitive to women and want to consider women as property
 - Personally I think we need to be a little more mature than accusing and name calling

The real reason the Catholics and Lutherans combine verses 3-6 into one commandment is they believe the whole section is about the same subject - worshipping the right God

- And I understand that but I and all of the other protestants other than Lutherans would disagree because I think what they are missing is the fact that there are two different things in view in Exodus 20:3-6

Commandment #1 – You shall have no other gods

- is about worshipping the right God, but....

Commandment #2 – You shall not make any idols

- the second commandment is not about worshipping the right God, but about worshipping the right God in the right way

A great way to see the difference is illustrated in the life of King Jehu from II Kings Chapter 10

- He passionately gets rid of the worship of Baal in Northern Israel, he cuts down all the high places, he murders the priests of the Baal religion – everywhere Jehu went he chased the worship of Baal out
 - and God commends him for doing so, but then it says in II Kings 10:29 that he did not turn away from the sins of Jeroboam in that he allowed the people to worship the golden calves at Bethel and Dan

Now the question is - why would King Jehu who did so much to get rid of Baal worship, why would he keep these sacred cows?

➤ listen, listen, this is key to understanding this morning
He did it because the “cows” were supposed to represent God, the God of the Bible

- They didn't represent the false gods of Baal and Ashtoreth
 - They were supposed to represent the true and the living God

You see, we will see later in Exodus as we study the whole book on Wednesday Nights - Aaron, Moses' brother, is watching after the people while Moses is on Mount Sinai, when Moses is receiving these commandments from God and the people get antsy and demand that Aaron make them a god

- And as some of you know that Aaron makes a golden calf and then he says...

“This is your god, O Israel, that brought you out of the land of Egypt!” – Exodus 32:4

- but notice that, not here is your new god you are to worship, Aaron says “this is your god”

Aaron wasn't trying to give them a new god, he was trying to give them a picture of who God was

- So when later in Israel's history, when King Jehu is ruling he gets rid of Baal and Ashtoreth and in doing that he keeps commandment #1 – no other Gods

But in keeping the cows – he was trying to worship the right God but he was doing so in a wrong way and by that violating commandment #2 – Worshipping the True God in a way He never intended to be worshiped

- And we can all be guilty of this from time to time as well

Just like we can violate Commandment #1 – We put other things ahead of God in our lives

- so too we can worship God differently from how He wants us to worship Him
 - and please don't misunderstand what I mean when I say that

When I say we often worship the right God in the wrong way, I don't mean with the style of music, I don't mean with choruses instead of hymns

- What I mean is we worship with the wrong approach toward God

We make fun of the ancients who made their idols out of the same wood that they used the other parts to make a fire with – We think how can you worship that?

- But archeology and research has shown they were not worshipping the idol they made, like the actual statue, this article of stone is really my god, that wasn't, contrary to popular belief, what they were doing at all

Actually, they would recite incantations over the idols and what they believed was not that piece of wood was their god, but that it was a conduit to their God

- much like today as if I speak into a that camera back there – hello all of you online - I understand that my message will be transmitted to others
 - I don't think there are tiny people inside that camera, I just know what I am saying is going to be transmitted to other people as I speak into this microphone and look into the camera
 - And that was what they were doing with their idols
- they believed as they spoke to the idol their words and worship would be transmitted to their false gods

Also it is interesting for us to learn that the ancients believed their gods could do anything but feed themselves – which I admit is kind of weird – I serve a god who can't feed himself, wouldn't make me feel good to trust my life to such a god, but they taught the gods could not feed themselves

- And the way you would feed them, what they were hungry for was “worship” or “sacrifice” – that was how they were maintained, it was their sustenance

And the belief that humans had to provide that for the gods, Baal and Ashtoreth, it provided a power the humans had over the gods in their minds

- when you fed them with sacrifice and worship, then they would then be obligated to bless you because you took care of them

Another thing that struck me when we study idol worshipers of the past is that it was easy

- in the sense that you did have to go to Jerusalem to worship, you could worship your false god anywhere, they had high places set up on almost every hill and under many trees I Kings 14:23 tells us,

“For they also built for themselves high places, sacred pillars, and wooden images on every high hill and under every green tree.” – I Kings 14:23

- you didn't have to go to any temple, you didn't have to follow any commandments, just offer the sacrifices wherever you wanted and live however you wanted
 - it was relatively easy, especially compared with Judaism

And you put that together with the understanding that when the people of Israel would worship these false gods, the idea of a personal and a national God was always present

- they would have a local god like Baal or Ashtoreth for their personal lives and then a national God like Jehovah
 - You see unlike what we might think - No Jew would answer the question in ancient Israel - do you believe in the God of Bible with the answer of “No”, no one in Joshua's day or the Judge's day or even Jeremiah's day when idolatry was so prevalent, no one in those days would say, “I don't believe in the God of the Bible” – they just saw Jehovah as their national god and their personal god, the one that effected day to day living was Baal or Ashtoreth

And when you put all of these things together

- idolaters believed the gods were obligated to bless them as they gave them what they needed – worship
 - idolaters believed there were no standards of living to follow, just worship your god the way you want to worship him - no commandments

And idolaters had many gods – they wouldn't deny Jehovah – He is the national God, but I just have these personal, local gods on the side

- But this shows us that the essence of idolatry is actually how many people, even many people who call themselves Christians, try to approach and worship God today

They think I can do something to gain an audience with God, to put Him in a place where He has to bless me

- we see that in branches of Christianity – if I pray this prayer or do certain things or give a certain amount, then God is obligated to show up and bless me
 - in older days, if I whip myself, if I do some great sacrifice then God is obligated to bless me

Secondly, just like idol worship was easy as in no real rules or standards, so many people see their relationship with God that way today

- forget that God says there are rules we need to live by, disciplines we need to have
 - no – this is how I express my life toward my God
 - don't tell me about commandments – as long as I am sincere that is all my God cares about
- People even use that phrase, well that is not how my God operates

Listen, I admit it's a little pet peeve of mine, but there is not a different my God and your God, there is only one true and living God and who He is and what He is into, what He wants from my life and your life is not just something you get to decide in your mind, for you to personally take it or leave it – His attributes, His laws, His standards are clearly in His Word and do not change!

- So I don't mean to seem insensitive but I don't really care what your God that you have made in your own image, I don't really care what you think He thinks and feels
 - Because there already is a God and who He is, and what He wants is already outlined in this book
 - And we better get that precious believers, because we are losing that in Christianity today

We can take on the idolatrous idea of God is my national God – did you know 77% of Americans believe in God according to a recent poll in US News and World report

- And yet 70 percent of Americans also believe it is up to each individual to decide what is right and wrong for themselves - And you see the problem with that?

We believe in God, because we were born in the Christian Western World

- I believe in God, I would never deny Him, but I am also deciding what is right and wrong for myself

And what so many are doing in Christianity today is exactly what God is forbidding in the second commandment – we are creating a God in our own image, who thinks like us, acts like us, has my exact opinion on everything, He even votes like me!

- We make the Lord into a grandiose version of ourselves
 - But precious men and women that is not the Lord!

What we are doing is making God into our own image

- we are deciding what His values are
 - we are deciding what is important to Him
- It's all coming from me
 - I am not worshipping a false god – no I believe in the God of the Bible
 - I am just worshipping God in a false way
- And what is the problem with that some think? (glad you asked)

“You shall not make for yourself an idol”

#1 – The Rule – Exodus 20:4

#2 – The Reason – Exodus 20:5a

- The rule is I shall not make an idol for myself

I am not to create God in my own image and decide what He thinks and feels

- I already have His Word to tell me who He is and what He wants - But what is the reason for that rule???

God says, “because I am a jealous God”

Now right there that strikes us as strange, we think that can't be the heart of God (My God would never be jealous – well He says He is, it's right there, so let's explain it)

- We read, God is a jealous God and we think – that can't be true – We picture our psycho boyfriend or girlfriend from high school and we know the Lord can't be like that

But be careful – because again what you are doing is taking what you imagine, what your image of a phrase means and putting that on God

- Don't do it
 - We have to get our understanding of God from His Word, not our hearts and emotions

So what does it mean in the Word when it says, “God is jealous?”

The Word “jealousy” would be better understood in our day as “zealous” - “jealousy” as we think of it today is more like the biblical word “envy”

- And God is not envious – Again He is not like the creepy guy you dated in High school – “why are you talking to another guy?”

God is not like that – He is not envious of your worship, like part of Him is missing if you don't worship Him

- Godly jealousy is not the insecure, insane and possessive human jealousy that we often encounter in this world, rather it is an intensely caring devotion toward the objects of His love

I'll explain it this way...

- I am jealous for my wife and kids, meaning...
 - I want the best for them
 - I want them to be happy and loved and secure
 - I want that so badly for them
 - I am jealous for my family

We want to teach our kids to share, but there are things that are not intended to share, there are things that it is okay to be jealous for – I.e. - a piece of gum you are chewing

Sharing your gum that is disgusting – picture – want some?

- a unicycle is not to share

Picture of a unicycle with two guys on it

- you see these guys, should just get a bicycle built for two instead of sharing a unicycle – a unicycle is for one person – it is okay to be jealous of your unicycle
 - on a more serious note, the intimacy between a husband and a wife – to be properly enjoyed, it is not be shared outside the marriage - there are things that we are not to share, things to be jealous for
- And a God that was not jealous for His people would be as contemptible as a husband that didn't care who his wife was with or what kind of pain his kids had to endured

So again the Bible's term "jealous" used here in Exodus 20 is closer to our word - zealous

- God is passionate about you, He has a zeal for you, and when you make an idol, when you start to say this is the way the Lord is, when you start to make God into your image – He gets jealous because you are missing out
 - You are missing out on who He really is
 - And that is lame because who He is, is amazing!

But more than that – if I make a wrong image of what the Lord really is, I am also missing out on what He wants me to become - For God says one of His purposes for all of us is... "to be conformed to the image of His Son" – Romans 8:29

- God wants to make us like Him
 - And yet if I make God into an image like myself, first I don't know what I'm missing
- But then if God thinks like me, acts like me, behaves like me
 - Then what is there for me to be conformed into?
- And I will end up like all those worshippers of the Greek and Roman gods

Their gods were just like them – they were lustful, full of anger and bitterness, just like the men who made them up

- And so there was not a goal, nothing to be changed into
 - And so the end result of worship was to be made just like your already empty self

And God is saying, I have so much more for you

- I don't want to make you into a person that is just another version of you with all of your sin and rebellion
 - I want to conform you into the image of My Son, which is what you long to be
 - What you will be fulfilled in being
- I am jealous that you experience this, God would say

“You shall not make for yourself an idol”

#1 – The Rule – Exodus 20:4

#2 – The Reason – Exodus 20:5a

#3 – The Result – Exodus 20:5-6

- The rule – don't make God into an idol, don't make Him into image of yourself or anything else

And the reason – if you do, you will miss out on who He really is, and what He wants to conform you into

- And then God gives us the result of the decision we make to either listen to His loving words or not

Our decision to worship the right God in the right way is so important – and the reason is, it will affect the next generation

- that is what God is saying, as we read verses 5-6, we almost gasp
 - what? – God is going visit sin upon children that sounds so horrible – My God would never do that!
 - Stop it, don't be like that church, if the Bible says it, there must be reason, so let's discover what it is
- If you hear verse 5 in the New Living Translation, I think it will really help you understand better – God says...

“I lay the sins of the parents upon their children; and the entire family is affected—even children in the third and fourth generations of those who reject me.” – Exodus 20:5 – New living Translation

- Let me be as clear as I can – I do not believe in generational curses – and what I mean by that, is I don’t believe that just because your parents or grandparents were a certain way, that that is what you are destined to become

No, what I do believe that Word of God teaches is not that we are destined to become our parents because of some generational curse, but instead, how you live affects the next generation

- And of course, we all know that to be true
 - If your parents were addicts or abusive, that obviously had an effect you
- It is not a curse that is destined to be passed onto you, but something that obviously has affected you
 - And something we must choose to turn away from in our lives

And for some of us we grew up in households where our parents worshipped a god they created in their own image, and it effected the way we view God and interact with God, but we must choose to be different! We must choose to worship not some idea of who God is made in the image of us

- But we must choose to open up this book and let it, not our parents, not our grandparents, not the church we used to go to
 - We need to let God speak for Himself.

And what I know you will find is there is no one like Him

- No one so wonderful, and so worthy of not only our worship, but our imitation of the way He is! The values He holds, and the way He interacts with all of us
 - Amen? Amen!