

**Monday, October 2, 2017 - Day 274 – Ezekiel 11-12, Psalm 75, I John 5**

### **The Season of False Idols**

We are now in full swing of idol season. A month of NFL football has put us deep into our fantasy teams, moved us to call sports talk radio shows, and forced us to reconsider our weekly office pools. Don't get me wrong; I love watching football. It's probably my favorite sports seasons. However, I realize the danger of the NFL as a consumer product may have a profound effect on our relationship with God and neighbor. Sadly during football season, there is a 10% increase in the rate of at-home violence by men against their wives and girlfriends. This statistic makes a strong connection that the NFL, as a consumer product, is overtaking the relationship between people. In other words, Sunday has become so permeated by competition and the stakes for winning and losing are potentially destroying interpersonal relationships. If we take this a step further, Sunday, once a sacred time set aside for God, has been consumed by football.

In today's reading, John warns "Little children, keep yourselves from idols" (1 John 5: 21). Idols are the opposite of God and lead us away from salvation and righteousness. If we look back at our consumption of the NFL product, we then can see an increase in other behaviors that take us away from God and salvation: gluttony at the tailgating parties, greed by putting money on teams instead of helping the poor, envy of winners, laziness by making us couch potatoes anywhere from 3 to 9 hours on a Sunday, anger when our team loses, pride when our team wins, and lust for all the festivities associated with the game. *Little Children, keep yourselves from idols* so that you may hold fast to eternal life and develop an intimate relationship with God through Jesus Christ. However, our draw to false idols leads us into exile, a self-imposed exile in which Ezekiel proclaims, "Mortal, you are living in the midst of a rebellious house" and we have "eyes to see but we don't see" the self-destruction of worshipping false idols. We destroy our free gift of salvation and we destroy our intimate relationship with our spouses, partners, significant others, friends, colleagues, and other people. By putting the false idol first, we drive ourselves away from God and our neighbor. In order to restore ourselves and to bring ourselves out of exile, we must *rejoice forever* and *sing praises to the God of Jacob* not the God of the home team.

By The Rev. Tim Gavin