

Abide – No Other Gods

2/16/24

Exodus 20:1-3

Sunday AM

As you know, we're currently in a series on the topic of abiding in Christ. As we discussed last Sunday, ***while it's possible to be a Christian and not abide – it's impossible to live the Christian life w/out abiding.***

To **abide** is to live plugged into and empowered by H.S. by *remaining connected w/ or aligned under God.*

**Meaning** – the abiding life in Christianity refers to a close, continual relationship w/ Jesus that involves staying connected to Him thru worship, prayer, Scripture, and living out the teachings of Jesus.

*The WITH-God life.* Dallas Willard

**Truth** – all of us are abiding in something or someone to meet our physical, emotional, and spiritual needs – and whatever it is can be identified by the fruit being born in our *ambitions, appetites, attitudes, and actions.*

So far in our study, we've discussed the essential discipline of learning to **wait upon the Lord** – which is nothing less than carving out priority, daily time to sit at the Lord's feet to **love** Him, **long** for Him, **look** to Him, and **listen** to Him – so you can **live** for Him.

Today, I want us to turn our attention to another priority discipline most of us are familiar w/ – but I'm not so sure we fully understand it – **WORSHIP!**

In Matthew 22, Jesus said worship is *loving God w/ all of your heart, mind, soul, and strength.*

This means – worship is giving God your *mind's attention*, your *heart's affection*, your *will's ambition*, and your *body's action* fully to the Lord.

**Or as I like to say** – worship is giving God His rightful place on the throne of your life so that every aspect of your life aligns w/ God to bring glory/honor to Him.

When I think of worship – I'm reminded of the story of the man in the church choir who couldn't sing. No matter what people did to help him sing or find another ministry to serve – he insisted on being in the choir. One day, the choir director went to the pastor for help. He said, "Pastor, you have to help me w/ bro Joe. If you can't persuade him to leave the choir, ½ the choir, including me, are going to quit. So, the pastor went to Joe to suggest he leave the choir. But when Joe asked, "Why should I leave, it's my way to praise God?" The pastor said, "B/c several people have told me you can't sing." Joe replied, "That's nothing. 50 people have told me you can't preach, but you're still here."

Truth is – we can't all sing, and apparently, we can't all preach either. The good news – we can all worship.

In fact, you were made for worship? You can't help it. It's hardwired into your DNA. Whether it's the worship of Big (G) God or a manmade little (g) god, everyone's default is to worship. Here's the thing, if you won't make God the object of your worship, then you'll will choose to worship someone/thing else...

To help us understand the heart of worship, I want us to spend a few min. looking at the 1<sup>st</sup> Commandment.

*God spoke these words: "I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery. "You shall have no other gods before me."*

## I Worship is about Your **PRIORITY**

**That is** – worship is about what is important to you. It is about what stirs your heart and moves you to action.

Right out of the gate, the 1<sup>st</sup> commandment is about making God the object of your affection and the priority relationship in your life. But to have such a relationship requires we each settle the *throne* issue.

Every heart has a throne and every throne has a God. The question is who (or what) is sitting on the throne of your life? Is it the big (G) God or the little (g) god?

Why is this important? B/c **whoever sits on the throne gets to call the shots**. They get to be god! And the Big “G” God doesn’t share His throne w/ anyone/thing.

**SEE** – God has designed us w/ an internal throne where He wants to sit – this is the heart of the 1<sup>st</sup> Command. He calls us to keep this throne clear for Him alone, “*You shall have no other gods before me,*” b/c He wants to be the apple of your eye and to sole object of your affection, adoration, trust, and worship.

Notice the statement: *I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery.*

*I am YOUR God* – is a statement of relationship. It also qualifies what He did – **He rescued them**. In fact, the reason He stepped in was b/c He was their God.

The reason God made this the 1<sup>st</sup> command is b/c when we get Him in His rightful place in our lives, it directly influences our mind’s *attention*, our heart’s *affections*, our will’s *ambitions*, and our life’s *actions*.

**SEE** – in case you didn’t know... **God is smart**. Far smarter than any of us. And He knows if left to our own devices – we will always make dumb, self-centered decisions that’ll bring harmful, unnecessary results. So... to help us, He invites us to abdicate our place on the throne to allow Him to sit in the seat that only He is capable of handling – but to do this, we have to make our relationship w/ Him our highest priority.

*Everything begins w/ the right priorities – and right priorities begin w/ God.* Unknown

## II Worship is about Your **PERSPECTIVE**

**That is** – worship is about how we see/value life. It’s about our attitude towards God and the things of God.

Let me ask a simple yet profound question – **who is God to you?** Or better yet... **how do you see God?**

Does your view of God reflect the God of the Bible or the pseudo-God of our culture? Is your view of God is that He is BIG and capable or small and incapable? Is He is *like* you, *thinks* like you, and *treats* other people the way you treat them – or is your God bigger/better than that? Is your God **HOLY** – or does he turn a blind eye to sin like we often do? Is He always **LOVING** – or is His love fickle like we tend to be? Is He **JUST** – or does He give you a pass on injustice? Is He ever **PRESENT** – or nowhere around? **OMNIPOTENT** – or impotent? Is your idea of God made in your image?

**POINT** – if your view of God is anything less than who He really is – then you’re going to have a struggle w/ rightly relating and trusting Him.

But notice what God said to the Israelites here in Exodus 20 – *I am the Lord your God who brought you out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery.*

**Do you realize what He said to them** – He said – I am the one/only I AM, the only true God and the only One capable of rescuing you from Egyptian bondage. So, when you were incapable of saving yourself, dead in your slavery w/ no way out – hopeless and helpless. I willingly stepped in on your behalf to do for you what you were incapable of doing for yourself – and I saved you and provided a way into Promise!

**Does any of this sound vaguely familiar?** Listen to Paul's words to the Ephesians:

*As for you, you were dead in your transgressions and sins, in which you used to live when you followed the ways of this world and of the ruler of the kingdom of the air, the spirit who is now at work in those who are disobedient. All of us also lived among them at one time, gratifying the cravings of our flesh and following its desires/thoughts. Like the rest, we were by nature deserving of wrath. But b/c of His great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, made us alive w/ Christ even when we were dead in transgressions – it is by grace you have been saved. And God raised us w/ Christ and seated us w/ Him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus, so that in the coming ages, He might show the incomparable riches of His grace, expressed in his kindness to us in Jesus. For it is by grace you have been saved, thru faith – and this is not from yourselves, it's the gift of God – not by works, so that no one can boast. Ephesians 2:1-9*

So – when we were dead in our trespasses/sin, bound in slavery to the wages of death, the one/only God stepped in to do for us what we were incapable of doing for ourselves. Thru a miracle of grace – He rescues us from the clutches of death to lead us into His Promise. So, I ask again... **just who is your God?**

### III Worship is about Your **PREFERENCES**

That is – worship is about what we think brings us true and joyful fulfillment. It's about what we seek to quench and fill the God-shaped hole in our lives.

Another reason this 1<sup>st</sup> command is so critical is b/c it sets in motion the direction of our appetites and as we determine who/what we're going to obey.

I'm reminded of the couple discussing a trip to the holy land. The husband said, "Wouldn't it be great to visit the holy land to stand on Mt. Sinai to read the 10 Commandments?" She said, "It'd be even better if we stayed home and kept them!"

Coming out of Egypt, the Israelites had been immersed in the polytheistic culture of Egypt where they witnessed the worship of the gods of the fields, rivers, sun, moon, and so on. They'd experienced everything Egyptian, so God reminded them that it was Him, and Him alone, who brought them out of Egypt – who sent the death angel, who parted the Red Sea, who provided a cloud by day/fire by night; who brought water from a rock, and provided manna in AM/quail in PM.

So, He says – *You shall have no other gods before me.* This is a single statement w/ (2) important truths.

A No Other God but **GOD**

**no other gods** (*elohim acherim*) *no strange gods.*

While there's only one God, there are many pretenders who've been given a name and mistaken as a god. In fact, thru-out history these manmade gods have presented themselves in multiple ways. (the **Big 3**)

1 **Baal** – the god of **POWER**

Baal was the god of the Philistines – the god of power. They believed Baal was the supreme god who could call down fire from heaven to consume.

Of course, if you remember Elijah at Mt. Carmel – it was the showdown at the Carmel Corral as the God of Israel went toe-to-toe w/ the god of the Philistines and the 450 prophets of Baal. Baal's prophets spent all day dancing and asking Baal to show up but he never did – b/c he's not a god but a manmade substitute. But the God of Elijah showed up/showed out b/c he's real!

## 2 **Ashtorath** – the goddess of **PLEASURE**

Whether it was Bast (Egyptian), Aphrodite (Greek), or Hedone (Roman) it's the relentless pursuit of pleasure and sensuality to find some sense of fulfillment. And such hedonism is alive and well in our world.

## 3 **Mammon** – the god of **PROSPERITY**

Mammon is the idol of materialism and the love of money. It's when your possessions possess you and when the desire for more can't be satisfied.

It's when you forsake faithful stewardship to put your trust in your 401k/bank accounts instead of trusting God and following His will for His blessings.

## B No Other Place but **BEFORE** God

*Whatever we make the most of is our God. Luther*

**before me** – means *before my face* – and means we're to have no other gods/idols at all.

- ***not instead of*** – we substitute something for God
- ***not in addition to*** – we crowd God out w/ things
- ***not in front of me*** – we put God behind our idols

What does this mean? What am I to do w/ this truth?

It means vigilantly checking your heart and motives to stay under/aligned w/ God b/c you understand that the flesh is weak, the demonic is cunning, and the world is constantly trying to stuff you into its mold.

## IV Worship is about Your **PURPOSE**

That is – worship is about why you exist. Depending on the object of your worship, it gives life meaning, direction, and vitality. I think of Romans 12:1-2

*I urge you, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God – this is your spiritual form of worship. Do not conform to the pattern of this world – instead, be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is – His good, pleasing and perfect will. Romans 12:1-2*

W/out a doubt, this text is loaded w/ the keys elements of worship, yet I think what Paul was trying to say is that when a person has truly experienced the glory and redeeming mercy of God – when they've genuinely come face-to-face w/ grace – *they can't help but to **bend their knee, bow their hearts, surrender their will and offer their lives as a living sacrifice to God in worship.*** That is – the very purpose of one's life is now to live out God's will for their lives as an act of worship to God.

***This is the purpose of every believer.*** B/c God's grace was made available thru the finished work of Jesus on the cross and so generously poured over our lives to rescue us from the wages of sin – our purpose now is to offer our lives back to Him as a living sacrifice to live out His good, pleasing, and perfect will.

**IOW** – my purpose is to worship God thru giving Him all that I am to all that He is to bring glory and honor to Him every minute or every day.