



SMALL GROUP QUESTIONS

Sermon Title: Why Sincerity Falls Short

Scripture: Exodus 20:4-6; Isaiah 40:18-22

Series Title: Living with No Regrets #3

Preacher: Rev. Dr. Doug Rumford

Date: January 19, 2020

Theme/concept

The second commandment is “Do not make idols.” Some say that it doesn’t matter what we believe as long as we are sincere. But we can be sincerely wrong and bring great harm to ourselves and others! Idolatry is “disordered love,” where we give love to lesser things instead of to God. Idolatry results from our drivenness, fears, addictions, lack of integrity, envy, resentment, bitterness and despair over life’s meaning. Idolatry is building life’s meaning on anything other than the Lord. False gods can never deliver what they promise. Knowing and obeying God smashes our paltry idols.

Application

Reject the idolatry of “sincere” beliefs that offer substitutes for or subtract from the Triune God revealed in Scripture.

Icebreaker

Can you share a time when you were completely sincere in putting something forward as true, and later found out that it was completely false?

Reflections on the sermon

From your notes and thoughts from the sermon outline, what new idea, thought or reminder did you find useful in considering the second commandment?

Background/Context:

In this sermon, we are looking at the second of the Ten Commandments. The first four commandments focus on our upward relationship with God. The next six commandments center on our horizontal relationships with people around us. In Exodus 20:2, God gives the basis for these words of instruction – the deliverance of the Israelites from slavery in Egypt. In a sense, God is prefacing each individual command with verse 2. It's as if God is saying, "Remember? I rescued you! I was the One that did that! Therefore...." Some scholars say we ought to re-read verse 2 as we read each command, because it would help remind us of who God is and what God has done. If we look, we can recognize God's very character woven through the Ten Commandments. Pastor Doug also said that God, through Moses, was teaching God's people how to stay free. God had created them to know, love and walk with Him, not to live separate from Him. God intended that faith in Him, along with these commandments, would keep His people living free and living abundantly.

Scripture

Exodus 20:4-6 (New International Version)

⁴ "You shall not make for yourself an image in the form of anything in heaven above or on the earth beneath or in the waters below. ⁵ You shall not bow down to them or worship them; for I, the LORD your God, am a jealous God, punishing the children for the sin of the parents to the third and fourth generation of those who hate me, ⁶ but showing love to a thousand generations of those who love me and keep my commandments.

Exodus 20:4-6 (New Living Translation)

⁴ "You must not make for yourself an idol of any kind or an image of anything in the heavens or on the earth or in the sea. ⁵ You must not bow down to them or worship them, for I, the LORD your God, am a jealous God who will not tolerate your affection for any other gods. I lay the sins of the parents upon their children; the entire family is affected—even children in the third and fourth generations of those who reject me. ⁶ But I lavish unfailing love for a thousand generations on those who love me and obey my commands.

Isaiah 40:18-22 (New International Version)

¹⁸ With whom, then, will you compare God?
To what image will you liken him?

¹⁹ As for an idol, a metalworker casts it,
and a goldsmith overlays it with gold
and fashions silver chains for it.

²⁰ A person too poor to present such an offering
selects wood that will not rot;
they look for a skilled worker
to set up an idol that will not topple.

²¹ Do you not know?
Have you not heard?

Has it not been told you from the beginning?

Have you not understood since the earth was founded?

²² He sits enthroned above the circle of the earth,
and its people are like grasshoppers.

He stretches out the heavens like a canopy,
and spreads them out like a tent to live in.

Breaking down the Scripture

1. In the two different translations of Exodus 20:4-6 that appear above, how are the words “idols” and “images” used? How are those things similar, and how might they be different?
2. In the Exodus passage, what does God say is the reason for giving this command?
3. In Exodus 20:5, how might God’s jealousy differ from human jealousy?
4. The last half of Exodus 20:5 is difficult to consider. What do you think about sin’s potential to harm the next generation? Can you think of examples?
5. What is God’s promise in Exodus 20:6?
6. In the Isaiah passage, we see a contrast between God and idols (rivals, imposters). Who crafts idols, and what are they made of (verses 19-20)? From verses 21-22, how does this compare to the origin and activity of God?

Going deeper

1. How can “idols” and “images” threaten our lives today? Are idols limited to physical objects, or could something else be an idol? Why is God making a huge point of not sharing center stage with imposters?
2. What can we learn about God from the Exodus passage? From the Isaiah passage? How do these two passages complement each other in describing God?
3. What risks (if any) are inherent in creating idols? How might this influence the way we approach the world around us?

Taking action

4. How should we respond to a God who is so far above our own human existence?
5. How can we communicate the enormity of such a God to those around us, while being careful to avoid Deism (the idea that after God created the world, God had no further involvement in it)?

Closing prayer

Pray as a group:

- For our ability to recognize the causes of idolatry and resist such “disordered love”
- For the ability to avoid being swayed by sincerity alone
- For our ability to describe both the greatness and the goodness of God to others