

# Bespoke Religion

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Preacher: Rev. Thomas Hinson

[ 0 : 00 ] So, again, let me say good morning to those of you, especially if you're new. Really delighted that we can be here this morning. All summer we've been in a series looking at Psalm 106, and Psalm 106 was written as a song that tells the story of Israel's wandering in the wilderness, and it remembers all of these formative experiences that God's people went through during their time in the wilderness.

And this was written down probably during the time of Babylonian exile because God's people realized something very important, that the wandering in the wilderness still goes on. Every time they think they've arrived at a place that's their permanent home, they realize that that's not their permanent home. And one of the things that we realize thousands of years later as we read the Bible is that we are also in the wilderness.

The story of God's people is really a microcosm of the story of the world. And one of the things the Bible says about human beings is we're all like pilgrims wandering in the wilderness. We live in a place that's not our home, and we are searching for that home.

And that's because we were all made to live with God. And so these lessons that God's people wrote down in Psalm 106 are lessons that also apply to us. And so we've been looking at various challenges that we are likely to face.

[ 1 : 22 ] Temptations that we are likely to wrestle with that are part and parcel of life in the wilderness. And so this week, we're continuing to look at these stanzas that refer back to specific times in Israel's history.

And we're going to be looking at verses 19 through 23 in Psalm 106. And that section of Psalm 106 refers back to one of these highly formative experiences that God's people had to go through, which we can read about more fully in Exodus chapter 32.

This is the story of the golden calf. It's one of the most famous stories in the Bible, and it is absolutely foundational. It's a foundational story, not just for people who are Jewish or people who are Christians, but it's foundational for all human beings, even for people who consider themselves to be non-religious.

And so what we're going to do this morning is summarize the events of Exodus 32. We're going to summarize what happens, and then we're going to talk about implications. And we're going to talk about implications not just for religious people, Christians, but also for people who might consider themselves to be not religious at all.

So let's pray, and then we'll open God's Word together. Lord, we thank You for Your Word, and we thank You that these words could have been written down thousands of years ago, and yet they continue to speak.

[ 2 : 49 ] And they continue to speak because human beings don't change. As much as the world around us may change, and as much as our technology may change, we don't change.

Our hearts don't change, Lord. And this Word can also speak to us because of Your Holy Spirit, because it's a living Word. And we pray this morning as we come to You with hearts that do need to be changed, that You would speak to us through this written Word, but that ultimately You would bring us face to face with the living Word, the Word become flesh, Jesus Christ.

He's the reason that we're here. It's at His invitation, and He's the one that we need to see and hear from this morning. And we pray that this would happen by Your grace, Lord, through the power of Your Holy Spirit.

Amen. So let me give you a summary of what's happening. First, let's just get an overview of the story of the book of Exodus. If you're unfamiliar with the story, most people are somewhat familiar.

The book of Exodus starts with God's people living in slavery in Egypt. And then God raises up Moses, and then through Moses, God demonstrates His absolute sovereign power over the pagan gods, over Pharaoh.

[ 4 : 02 ] God demonstrates His superiority over all of these other gods, and ultimately He sets His people free. And then He promises His people that He's going to lead them to a promised land, a place that He's set aside that will be their home just for them where they can live into eternity.

But in between slavery and the promised land, there lies the wilderness. The wilderness is a place of struggle, and it's a place of hardship, but it's also a place of transformation.

And God intends to form Israel during their time in the wilderness to form them into a people. Who are defined not by slavery, who are defined by the freedom that they now have through God's grace.

And the idea is that they will be formed into the kind of people who, when they reach the promised land, they are made for the promised land. They will belong there as they belong to the Lord. So that's the overarching story of the Exodus.

Now, in chapter 24, God calls Moses up to Sinai. There are several experiences along the way where God calls Moses to ascend the mountain so that they can speak to one another.

[ 5 : 20 ] So God calls Moses up in chapter 24. Moses tells His people, wait patiently for me. I'll be back soon. And then He goes away. And He goes away for a long time. The Bible says that He goes away for 40 days and 40 nights.

Now, that could be literal 40 days, 40 nights, or it could be an expression that simply means a long time. But He goes away for a long time. And in the book of Exodus, from chapter 24 all the way to chapter 31, that is the time when Moses is on the mountain.

And during this time, God is giving Moses detailed instructions. Here's how to build the tabernacle. We read all about that. Here's the Ark of the Covenant and the role that it's going to play.

Here's how you're going to build the altar and what it's going to do for you. He's giving specifications for the priestly garments, not to mention the Ten Commandments written by God's finger on tablets of stone.

And you ask, well, why is all of this happening? Why all this detail? And the answer is very important. The reason that all of this is happening is because God wants to have a relationship with His people.

[ 6 : 26 ] And God is saying, this is how our relationship is going to work. He's defining the relationship and thereby really defining the religion that His people will take up.

Religion really is about relationship, right? And so, He's defining this relationship with His people. So, that's what's happening up on the mountain. But down at the foot of the mountain, the people are starting to get nervous.

You can imagine somebody saying, you know, Moses has been gone a long time. What if something happened to him? We would have no way to know if something happened to him. What if he's had an accident? What if he's stranded? What if he fell off a cliff? What if there was a rock slide? What if Moses is dead?

And before long, the whole camp is buzzing with anxiety and fear over what has become of Moses. And they realize we can't just wait around forever.

[ 7 : 29 ] Somebody's got to do something. And so, they go to Aaron and they say, what are we going to do? And Aaron says, here's what we're going to do. Give me all your gold jewelry. Now, this is most likely plunder that they took from Egypt when they left.

Give me all your gold jewelry. And then Aaron melts all of it down and he fashions it into a golden calf, an idol of a golden calf.

And we ask, well, okay, what's going on here? Because at first, when you read this, it seems like the people have simply decided to not only give up on Moses, but they're also going to give up on Yahweh and they're going to go worship other gods.

And for a long time, that's how I thought about this story until you really read it. And then you realize that's not actually what's happening. It's not that simple. It's, in fact, a lot more subtle than that.

And if you look at verse 5, you see what I'm talking about. In verse 5, Aaron declares, tomorrow we're going to have a feast to Yahweh. So, tomorrow we're going to have a big feast, a big celebration to honor Yahweh.

[ 8 : 35 ] But, of course, what's he pointing to? He's pointing to the golden calf. And you begin to realize they have not rejected Yahweh in favor of another god.

The issue here is that they have refashioned Yahweh. They have redefined Yahweh, and they've redefined Yahweh into the kind of god that they wanted given the fact that they are in the wilderness and facing fear and uncertainty.

They fashioned him into a god that is strong, but more importantly, a god that they can see and touch. Right? Moses, up to this point, Moses had been the way they did commerce with God. And without Moses, they need another way to do commerce with God. And by the way, it doesn't just stop with the golden calf. If you read in the text, in verse 4, they point to the golden calf and they say, these are your gods, O Israel, who brought you up out of the land of Egypt. Now, that should sound familiar because that's how Yahweh had described Himself earlier in the book of Exodus. But now they're attributing that to the golden calf. The calf is also made of gold, which is a parallel to the Ark of the Covenant.

[ 9 : 50 ] In verse 5, Aaron builds an altar, which is a parallel to the altar that will be built for the tabernacle. And then we see Aaron proclaiming that there will be a festival to the Lord, to Yahweh, but earlier God had commanded His people to hold the festival of the Passover and the Feast of Unleavened Bread.

And the reason that I'm pointing all of that out is because we need to understand what's really happening here. As one commentator put it, by building the calf and reciting what was earlier said in Exodus chapter 20, Israel is fashioning a new false religion according to the pattern of what God revealed to them earlier.

So I want you to hear the irony of what's happening here. While God is giving Moses the terms of the relationship that He wants to have with His people up the mountain, the people down the mountain are already redefining the terms of that relationship.

They're essentially saying, we want to have creative control over what this religion looks like and in fact over what God looks like. And they're creating a false religion that is actually a perversion of the true religion.

They're perverting the image of God and they're perverting the religion that enables us to have a relationship with that God.

[ 11 : 17 ] And if we really understand the subtleties of this, then we begin to see why this story is so relevant for those of us here. And so I want to talk first to those of us who are Christians and then those of us who are not.

In general, what we see is we see this is what happens when people face a kind of spiritual vacuum, right? When either God feels distant, when God is doing things that we don't agree with, when God doesn't seem to be answering our prayer, when we're facing lots of uncertainty and stress, as God's people were as they waited for Moses and He took longer than anyone thought. It creates a kind of spiritual vacuum. And our tendency as human beings is to fill that vacuum. If God feels distant or if God is not doing what we want Him to do, then we will fill that gap in ourselves.

And so for Christians, you know, it is shockingly easy for us to lose hold of the true God and to begin to reimagine God in ways that fit our preferences, our ideas, our values.

So anytime you read something in Scripture, as anybody who has spent time reading the Bible, especially if you spent time reading the Old Testament, you will inevitably come across a section of text where you say, I can't imagine God doing that.

[ 12 : 39 ] And some people go so far as to say, I don't believe in the kind of God who would do that. And people historically have sometimes even separated the God of the Old Testament from the God of the New and said, I believe in the God of the New Testament, I believe in Jesus, but I don't believe in this God that I read about in the Old Testament.

And what this would say is, anytime we begin to say those words, I would never believe in a God who, in response to something that we've read in Scripture, we are beginning to build a golden calf. And what we need to understand is, a calf wasn't just something that they pulled out of nowhere. A calf was a very common type of idol in the ancient world. Chances are they got the idea from the calf from all of their time in Egypt.

They probably would have seen many calf idols around Egypt during their time there. So this is a common thing that they borrowed from the surrounding culture. So the question we need to ask is,

how many images or ideas or values do we borrow from our surrounding culture and then used to refashion God into an image that is more palatable for us?

You know, I don't think we can overestimate the influence of things like consumerism, individualism, politics, and how they influence our view of God.

[13:59] You know, we had a parish survey not too long ago, and our team has been working through all the feedback, and it's been tremendously helpful. So thank you to all of you who offered any kind of feedback.

But I read one comment where somebody said, I don't understand why we spend so much time talking about culture and politics. Why can't we just talk about God? And I very much understand where that's coming from, but I would say in response to that comment, we have to understand that our view of God is constantly being influenced by culture and politics.

And the less aware we are of that influence, the more influence those things are going to exert on our view of God. And so it's no surprise that in our culture, some Christians believe in a God of health and wealth and prosperity.

Other Christians believe in a God who celebrates free love, polyamory. Other Christians believe in a God who is aligned with a certain political party or nation or people group.

And in all cases, if you ask people, what faith are you, they would all say, well, I'm a Christian. I think actually this sits behind the phenomenon of some Christians who are deconstructing their Christian faith.

[15:11] And here's the relationship I see there. Very often when I talk to somebody who is deconstructing their Christian faith that they grew up with or they've already deconstructed it and they've said, I've left the church, I'm no longer a Christian.

A lot of times if it's appropriate, I like to ask about the idea of God they had growing up. Okay, so when you left the faith or when you deconstructed your faith, what were you deconstructing?

What ideas about God did you grow up with? And very often I hear answers that help me understand their impulse to deconstruct.

Very often what you realize is that these people have grown up, not in all cases, but in many cases, at least in my experience, they've grown up with a truncated or twisted or distorted view of God, a kind of what I would call golden calf version of God.

So sometimes somebody will say, well, I grew up with a version of God that is very anti-intellectual, very anti-science. And then I went to university and then I went to grad school and now I'm a scientist and I just can't possibly believe in that kind of God.

[16:22] Other people say, well, I grew up with a version of God that stigmatizes certain people groups as being extra sinful. Those are the really bad people. Some people grew up with a version of God whose litmus test for faithfulness was sexual purity.

The way you really indicate whether you're a Christian is saving yourself from marriage. And so people grow up with a kind of golden calf version of God and then as they get older and as they get on the internet and as they read and as they learn, they begin to say, there's got to be more to it than this.

And so one question that I encourage people to ask, and if you're someone who's sort of deconstructing your faith right now, I encourage you to ask yourself, am I deconstructing God as He has revealed Himself in all of its fullness?

Or am I deconstructing a golden calf version of God? And if that's the case, it's very important because it may be that the impulse behind your deconstruction is not necessarily to leave religion behind, but there's a right and true impulse that is saying, I know deep down that God is so much bigger, that God is so much bigger than the version of God I was handed as a child, and perhaps that is what you're yearning for.

So this is some of how this applies to Christians. Now, if you're listening to this and you're not a Christian or you consider yourself to be not really religious, I think this also has implications for you.

[17:53] You know, there are a growing number of people in our culture who describe themselves as nuns, the religious nuns, and there's been lots of stuff written about the rise of the religious nuns, the religious N-O-N-E-S, unaffiliated.

But what we've realized by looking as sociologists have sort of looked at this group of people, the truth is what we realize is we're not actually becoming less religious as a society. Some people look at that and they say, oh, well, the West is finally leaving religion behind.

That's not actually what's happening. What's actually happening is people are simply leaving organized, traditional, institutional religions, and they are gravitating to other forms of religion. So we're every bit as religious, maybe even more religious than we ever were, but the shape that religion takes has changed quite a bit. There's a great book on this, by the way, if you want to read it, by Tara Burton called *Strange Rites*.

And she points to a whole array of new American religions. And here's how she describes these kind of new religions in our context. She says, this is religion for a new generation of Americans, raised to think of themselves both as capitalist consumers and as content creators.

[19:08] A religion decoupled from institutions, from creeds, from metaphysical truth claims about God or the universe or the way things are, but that still seek in various and varying ways to provide us with the pillars of what religion always has.

And once you begin to recognize them, you begin to see them everywhere. Because all of these quasi-religions, they may be decoupled from institutions, they may not have creeds or metaphysical truth claims that they're putting out there, but they may.

But they all share this in common. They all offer the same three things. They all offer an explanation of what's wrong with the world, a solution to that problem, and then what we would call an eschatological vision of a better future.

So all of these quasi-religions, here's what's really wrong with the world, here's how to overcome that problem, and here's a vision of hope for what the future could look like if everybody were to do this.

Okay, so now with that in mind, with that framework in mind, think about the story of the Exodus. This is what the Exodus story gives us. What's the problem for God's people?

[20:21] We were born into slavery in Egypt. That's the problem. Slavery in Egypt. What's the solution? God sets us free by raising up Moses and demonstrating his power.

What's the eschatological vision of a better future? We need to follow God to the promised land. Right? So slavery, God sets us free, promised land. That's how the Exodus answers these questions.

Now here are some of the examples from Barton's book that she gives, and I just want you to look for the parallels here. She talks about the wellness culture. What's the problem according to the wellness movement?

Society has been duped by big pharma and processed food manufacturers. That's the problem. What's the solution? Self-optimization through exercise, meditation, nutrition programs.

What's the future hope being offered? Through hard work and self-discipline, we transform ourselves into our best selves. We optimize ourselves.

[21:22] Right? And so for some people, that has become an almost religious way of living. Now, is everybody who cares about health and wellness religious about it?

No, absolutely not. But for some people, it becomes a kind of substitute religion. She then talks about, broadly speaking, the social justice movement. What's the problem?

The world is defined by patriarchal, racist, heteronormative power structures. What's the solution? Education and political activism. What's the future hope on offer? Through social action and cultural reform, we can pursue a utopian society of equity and uninhibited self-expression.

Right? Same three answers, just different content. She then talks about what I would probably summarize as the alt-right men's movement.

What's the problem there? Men in our society have become woke, effeminate beta males who are dominated by feminism and political correctness. What's the solution? We need to reconnect with our primal selves, our inner savages.

[22:26] What's the future hope on offer? Through masculine pursuits like weightlifting or eating a piece of meat, we can become alpha males who go back to the age where men were men and women were women.

Right? Now, is everybody who cares about justice religious? Is everybody who cares about men in our society religious about it? No. But again, the point is these are quasi-religions that become what religion used to be for groups of people in our society.

Last example from her book, she talks about what I might call the techno-utopian transhumanists. Right? What's the problem according to them? We are limited by biology and aging and death.

What's the solution? Silicon Valley, technology, tech moguls. What's the future hope on offer? Through our own ingenuity, a lot of inventiveness, and a lot of money, we can transcend all of our limits and take humanity to the next phase of evolution.

Right? So, the point that I want to make here, the thing that I want you to see is that all of these movements have a similar structure to them because they're all offering the same things. And what's more, they all offer a community where followers can belong.

[ 23 : 40 ] They all offer a community where followers can belong. Want me to switch? Check, check.

There we go. So, they're all offering all of these things as well as a community that for some people who are looking for it, they can gain a sense of belonging really like a church. And so, somebody who used to go to church, maybe now for them, the wellness community has become their church. Maybe the people that they exercise with at CrossFit has become, that has become their source of community and belonging. And it meets all of those deeper religious longings that they have.

So, the overarching implication is this. Whether we're talking about Christians in the church or these other quasi-religious movements, the tendency is the same as it was for the Israelites at Sinai.

We all want bespoke religion. We all want the freedom to customize our spiritual experience. We all ultimately want a God of our own design, a God that we can make in our image and then remake as we see fit.

[ 24 : 52 ] Now, you know, somebody might hear this and you might say, well, what's the problem with that? Right? Well, I mean, what's the big deal? Why not have mix and match religion that is decoupled from institutions and from creeds and from metaphysical truth claims?

As long as it meets your needs, why does it matter? And this actually leads to one of Barton's key points. While these systems seem starkly different, she says, each places the fundamental judgments of goodness, morality, and progress in the hands of human beings, not God.

So, to put it more bluntly, if we worship a God of our own making, then ultimately we are worshiping ourselves.

If we worship a God of our own making, then ultimately we are worshiping ourselves. And this is why the Israelites failed before their religion ever got off the ground.

This is why any human-centered religion is going to fail no matter what. Because ultimately, we can't save ourselves.

[ 26 : 04 ] We can't be our own saviors. Unfortunately, this is a lesson that we in the West have to learn over and over and over in history because every few generations, we forget.

And we start to become more and more optimistic in our ability to save ourselves. In the West, I think our optimism over human potential was peaking right around the turn of the 20th century.

If you read everything that was being written right at the end of the 19th, beginning of the 20th century, we had sort of ascended to new heights of optimism about what we as the human race can accomplish through our own intelligence, through our own science and technology.

We were very excited about being human and what was possible. And this idea of progress was very real. The kind of myth of progress was very strong in the imaginations of people.

And we were moving into this kind of eschatological, utopian vision of what we could build ourselves. And then we enter into the 20th century. And we have two major world wars.

[ 27 : 18 ] We have the Holocaust. We have the gulags. We have things that shattered the notion that we as human beings are really progressing at all. Our science changes. Our technology changes. Our institutions change.

Our politics change. Lots of things change. But we as human beings, the human heart, was the same as it had always been. We just had more and more and more elaborate and effective ways of doing harm in the world.

So you realize, well, okay, well, if we can't save ourselves and if this kind of creating God in our image is really just a way of doing that, then what's the answer? What's the answer that the Bible offers?

And we see a glimmer of that answer here in Exodus chapter 32. God is angry with his people and rightfully so because of their idolatry. They haven't just broken the first commandment, have no other gods but me.

They've also broken more clearly the second commandment. This is the issue of making a graven image of God. So idolatry is not just about turning things into God.

[ 28 : 22 ] Idolatry can also be the other way around, turning God into things, taking something from the created world and saying, this is Yahweh. This is the God that I worship. And so God is rightfully angry with his people.

And for a moment, it actually looks as though he's going to destroy them. And to really understand this passage, we need to understand God is not just faking that he's angry, but he was always willing to forgive them. Everything that we read here indicates God is truly angry.

That doesn't mean that it's a different God than the New Testament. It's meant to show us this is how serious sin is. This is how serious of a problem sin is. So God is looking as though he's going to wipe out his people.

And he says, Moses, maybe we'll just eradicate this whole plan with Abraham and we'll start over with you and I'll build a nation out of you. But Moses intercedes and he says to God, remember your promise.

Remember Abraham. Remember Isaac. Remember Jacob, or as he refers to him, Israel.

Remember this plan that is unfolding. And then he says to his people, Moses says to his people in verse 30, you've sinned a great sin.

[ 29 : 31 ] And now I will go up to the Lord. Perhaps I can make atonement for your sin. Now you need to remember this is before the temple. This is before the priesthood.

This is before the sacrificial system had been established. This is before any of that had been set up. But Moses knows God. And he knows that because God is a just God, because God is a God of justice, he can't allow a sin like this to go unpunished.

Up until now, there's not been much mention of sin in Exodus. And then we get to chapters 32, 33, and 34, and all of a sudden we see sin coming up again and again.

And this is really the place in the story where we see, how is God going to deal with people who continually sin and rebel against him? What's he going to do? And the whole promise seems to hang in the balance. So Moses goes up knowing all of this about God and says, this sin has to be dealt with.

Somebody has to pay the price because God is a perfect and just God. So who's going to do it? And he says, well, the only one I know of is myself. And so Moses goes up and he offers himself. He says, forgive them.

[ 30 : 46 ] And essentially he says, take me instead. Blot out my name from your book so that you can forgive them. I'll take the blame. But God says, essentially, no.

Does that mean that God doesn't like the idea? No. So why would God say no to this idea? The reason is because Moses can't be the one to do it.

Moses is a sinful human being. And the only kind of person who can take on the guilt of humanity and to take the place of guilty human beings is a person who is themselves absolutely sinless, absolutely perfect.

And so Moses, as much as the instinct is right, he can't be the one to do it. This wouldn't really make sense for another roughly 1,500 years until another man would look at all of the sin and idolatry in the world and then he would say to God, Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.

But of course, as he said those words, he did so while hanging from a cross like a criminal. And yet, unlike Moses, he was absolutely, completely innocent and sinless and perfect.

[ 32 : 13 ] Because of that, God was able to put all of the sins of humanity onto him. Not just the Israelites, not just Christians, but all of the sins of humanity.

As the Apostle Paul would later write, God made him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf. So this is the mystery that we need to understand is that Jesus Christ didn't just figuratively, in a kind of representative way, act as the guilty party.

He became guilty. He became sin. And I don't even pretend to be able to fully understand, much less explain what that means.

But what we need to understand is, is at the end of this passage in Exodus, when God says, when I visit my people, I will visit their sin upon them. I will deal with this sin.

I will deal with those who are guilty. That ultimately, he fulfilled that promise by bringing judgment on Jesus Christ, the one who became sin, so that, as Paul says, in him we might become the righteousness of God.

[ 33 : 29 ] So the gospel ultimately says that Jesus Christ came to do what Moses could never do, what no human being can ever do. He came to offer himself as a sacrifice for our sin.

So if you think that all of these various quasi-religions, if you think of all of these quasi-religions, the examples that Tara Barton writes about, think about all of those stories, all of those worldviews that say, here's the problem, here's the solution, here's the future hope.

There are a million of them out there. The gospel is the story to which all of those other stories point. It is too simplistic to say, oh, social justice doesn't matter.

That's a false religion. It's too simplistic to say, health and wellness doesn't matter. That's a false religion. What's false is when those become the religion. The thing that we need to understand is these are all stories that have within them grains of truth.

But we need to understand that they're all pointing to a deeper, truer story. They're all pointing to the truest story of all, which is the story of the gospel.

[ 34 : 41 ] And this is even what we see in the story of the Exodus. For the Israelites in chapter 32, the biggest worldview they had was their experience in the Exodus. But what the gospel says is that's not actually the truest story.

Our true problem is not just Egypt or big pharma or oppressive power structures. Our deepest, truest problem is that we're all born slaves to sin and death.

The true solution, unlike all of these other stories, the gospel says that we can't save ourselves. It says that God has to save us through Jesus Christ. Who is the truer and better Moses, the one to whom Moses points.

And then, of course, the gospel gives us our true eschatological hope. Those who ask Jesus for forgiveness and become his disciples follow him through the wilderness of this life.

And as we do so, Jesus transforms us through the work of the Holy Spirit and prepares us for the true promised land. Not Canaan, but the new creation where we will all dwell with him for eternity.

[ 35 : 51 ] So whatever golden calf, whatever golden calf religion, we may be presently constructing in our own hearts. And we are all tempted to do this, especially when God feels far away.

The gospel invites us to tear those down. The gospel invites us to put our hope in the true God and the true story of the gospel. Because we cannot save ourselves, and the good news of the gospel is that we don't have to.

Because God has already accomplished our salvation through Jesus Christ. Let's pray. Lord, we thank you for your Son, and we thank you for the cross, and we thank you that we, like those people in Exodus, our hearts are wayward, Lord, and we are so prone to look to created things, Lord, and to allow those things to become God.

God, we are so prone to truncate and shrink you down and to make you manageable and to make you the kind of God that fits into our categories.

And Lord, I pray that you would, by your grace, decimate those golden calves in our hearts and in our lives, and that you would do so by revealing yourself as you have done, Lord, through your Word and through your Son.

[ 37 : 16 ] And I pray that even as we come around your table in just a little while, and even as we receive your Son, Lord, that even in that act of receiving your Son, that you would reveal yourself to us and that our golden calf ideologies would be ground into dust, Lord.

And we pray this, that we might be set free to be the kind of people that you want us to be, people who are not slaves to idols, people who have been set free to worship you in true freedom. We pray this in your Son's holy name.

Amen. Amen.