

The Presence of Idols

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Date: 12 January 2020

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[0 : 00] Father, your word talks about things which many of us never think about, and virtually nobody in our culture thinks about.

And so sometimes, Father, your word is just a bit of a stretch for us. It talks about things that don't seem to be very, very relevant, yet your word says that this is very relevant to us.

So we ask, Father, that you create within us an openness and a curiosity to see how you and your word analyze our situation and how your word wants us to see ourselves and see our own situation. We ask, Father, that you make us open to that, hungry for that, and that you grant us that teachable heart, Father, that allows your word to speak deep into our heart and create deep change within us for our good, for the good of this city, and for your great glory.

And all this we ask in the name of Jesus, your Son and our Savior. Amen. One of the things which was, many of you know, about two years ago and a bit, I had the great privilege of being able to go to Angola.

[1 : 17] I think I was gone for 20 days. I was invited by SIM, an important missionary agency. I was invited to come and be the speaker at their conference for all of their missionaries in Angola.

They gathered them together for a six-day conference, a time of retreat and refreshment, and many other missionaries came to it as well. And I got to do some other stuff and do some other speaking in and around Angola.

And one of the really interesting things about going to something like this is because I was going to be with missionaries, it meant I went to parts of Angola that tourists don't go to, not that Angola is much of a tourist destination.

It could be, but that would require a great change in the culture and everything like that. Like I, some of you know, I joked how, I think it was like every day when I woke up in Angola and I was there in July, every day you'd wake up, the question would be whether you'd see one cloud in the blue sky or two clouds in a blue sky with a high of 31 degrees with no humidity.

And at night it would go down to 18 degrees with no humidity. And that sounds like the perfect summer holiday destination for many people. But anyway, so I got to go to a part of Angola that, I mean, I don't know why any tourist would ever go there, but missionaries were there because there were a lot of very, very needy people.

[2 : 38] And most of the missionaries were connected with a medical work and other types of development work around water. One of the wonderful things I had, got to do is I got to go with a nurse one day as she drove around.

We were already in a very remote part of Angola, but we got to drive around other really, really remote parts of Angola. And it was very, very striking to me. Other than the fact that some people had cell phones and there was some steel, the huts, the village, the farming techniques, the village life and these back, back, back roads that you needed like a land cruiser to drive to.

It was like unchanged in many of its ways of living. Like I could have gone back 200 years ago and it would have just been the same. It was quite stunning. And one of the things that the nurse and many of the other nurses and doctors told us is not only, of course, were they trying to deal with the actual physical problems, but they were also trying to get people to change their ways in terms of how they fed babies and how they dealt with things like water.

And one of their problems was, in fact, trying to get people to change their understanding of water. They'd sort of say, and you can sort of understand why they'd say this. I mean, the Portuguese colonial power wasn't actually a very, very good colonial power in Angola.

Like it didn't add a lot to them. It was a very oppressive type of colonial power. And, you know, the nurses and doctors would say, well, you can't just drink the water out of the river or out of that well

or out of that stream.

[4 : 14] You need to do this or that. And they'd sort of go along. They'd be polite with it. But when they'd go back and in their hearts and minds, they'd say, well, woman, we've been drinking this water. You know, we've been on this part of land for hundreds and hundreds and hundreds of years.

And we've been drinking this water for hundreds and hundreds and hundreds of years. And why, on one level, should I listen to some white person come and tell me that this water is making us sick? I mean, the nurse would say, yeah, but the water has been making your family sick for hundreds and hundreds and hundreds of years. And you'd have fewer diseases and all this.

So anyway, it was an ongoing battle to try to actually have the people realize that what was going on and what part of their custom and tradition was, was actually something that was making them sick.

The Bible's going to talk about something today that Canadians generally never talk about, but it's actually something that causes us lots of distress and it corrupts us.

[5 : 14] But it's not something you'll ever hear talked about in the Globe and Mail or in CBC or at the University of Ottawa or Carleton or the Université de Québec in Hull.

I don't know if I pronounced that correct. I probably didn't. You don't hear about it. And it's going to talk about the problem of idolatry. The Lord was very kind to me this week. I mean, he's always kind to me.

But on Friday, in one of the coffee shops, which I'm a regular person at, I was there in the morning working on something and the guy asked me where I was off to.

And I said, well, actually, I'm going to Parliament Hill to speak on Parliament Hill. I spoke on Parliament Hill on Friday. And I went back to the coffee shop later on in the afternoon to get some more work done.

And he asked me two things. He asked me how it went and he asked me what I talked about. And I paused for a moment and I said, well, actually, I talked about idolatry. I talked about idols. And he said, he's a really, really, really, really, he's a friend.

[6 : 17] He's a really, really, really fine young man. And you'd love to have him as your employee. You'd love to have him as your neighbor. He's a really good guy. And he looked at me blankly when I said that I was speaking about idols.

And he said, do you mean like people you look up to? And I said, no, no, no, that's not people you look up to. That's sort of talking more like about heroes or something like that or role models.

No, I talk about idols or something that you serve, that you get your meaning and identity from. But they're not really something that will really give you a true identity or worth serving.

And he still looked blankly at me. And I'm trying to think. Somebody, you know, in heaven I'll find out that one of you was praying for me at that exact moment. And I said, well, money. You know, we can see how many people in our culture, they make a type of idol out of money.

They get their meaning from pursuing money. They get their, they serve money. They sort of put everything that they have into trying to accumulate money, keep money.

[7 : 25] And he said, oh, okay. And then he sort of paused for a second and said, I don't have any idols. And I said, well, I think every single human being has idols that they struggle with.

And he said, hmm, this was Friday. I haven't, I haven't been back to that coffee shop. He said, well, I'll think about it, whether I have an idol. So you can pray that about this young man, that he will, in fact, raise the conversation.

Or maybe I will with him on Monday or Tuesday when I see him next. But you can see here a very, very common Canadian thing. And actually a very, very common Christian thing. That idols are something that, you know, when you go to Angola.

And Angola, one of the problems with rural Angola is that they still have a great belief in witch doctors. And there's, in a sense, a very, very obvious type of idolatry and worship of gods and forces that go on there.

But we don't really think that that's something that goes on in Canada. It's something primitive. But the Bible is going to suggest that, in fact, it's a human problem. It's something we have to think about very, very deeply. So if you could turn with me in your Bibles to Judges 2, verse 6.

[8 : 37] Let's look at it. Judges 2, verse 6 and following. And just as you're turning to this, a bit of a geek moment for those of you who are geeks about things to do with the Bible.

The way the book of Judges is written is that there's two introductions. There's also two conclusions. And the first introduction is what we looked at last week, chapter 1, verse 1 to chapter 2, verse 5.

And in some ways, that emphasizes a type of historical thing which happens after Joshua had died and brought them into the promised land. But they haven't taken the whole promised land.

The book of Judges covers the time from entering the promised land to the time of the first kings.

And about 250 years or so, depending on how you date things in the book.

And so last week, we looked at the first introduction, which sort of just says nine tribes and what they did or didn't do to take the promised land. Most scholars, all scholars, say that what we're looking at today, chapter 2, verse 6 to chapter 3, verse 6, is the second introduction.

[9 : 40] And it's, in a sense, the more theological introduction, where you get, in a sense, God's perspective on what happens when you give yourselves, when you're in the presence of idols and you don't deal with them properly.

And for those of you who like, like, just straight, like, theology and straight ideas like that, then this is the part of the book you'd like.

And then the rest of the book, really, it tells the same thing as chapter 2, verse 6 to 3, verse 6, but it tells it in the form of stories. A series of stories about 12 judges and what happens.

So the stories later on will, in a sense, you enter into truths in a different way when you read a story.

And that's what's going to happen in the rest of the book.

So this is the second introduction, and here's how it goes. It begins with sort of a flashback to the past. Verse 6, when Joshua dismissed the people, the people of Israel went each to his inheritance to take possession of the land.

[10 : 43] And we saw what happened with that last week. And the people served the Lord all the days of Joshua and all the days of the elders who outlived Joshua, who had seen all the great work that the Lord had done for Israel.

And Joshua, the son of Nun, the servant of the Lord, died at the age of 110 years old. And they buried him within the boundaries of his inheritance in Timnath-Heres, in the hill country of Ephraim, north of the mountain of Gesh.

And all that generation also were gathered to their fathers. And there arose another generation after them who did not know the Lord or the work that he had done for Israel.

And so what this is talking about here is how the Lord has saved them out of bondage into slavery. He took them out of Egypt, and it was the Lord who did that.

And then the Lord kept them, even though the people of Israel had been unfaithful, he kept them and provided for them for 40 years. And now they've come to the edge of the promised land. And Joshua is the one who God uses to bring them into the promised land.

[11 : 49] And once again, God saves and delivers them. It's God who brings them into the promised land. And Joshua, in a sense, is the leader that he has called to do that.

But then you'll notice here what it says at verse 10. And all that generation also were gathered to their fathers, their forefathers, and there arose another generation after them who did not know the Lord or the work that he had done for Israel.

And the word there, know, is the same word that's used when I want to talk about matters of sex. What I'll talk about is knowing another person.

And that's a biblical way of talking about it. It's a bit of a more polite way in church to talk about a certain type of thing. And it's the same word which is used there. And so it's not talking about as if you went back in a time machine and asked the people of Israel just after all this generation had passed, do you know who the Lord is?

They'd say, oh yeah, I know who the Lord is. The Lord is the one who, you know, did this and that. And they might even be able to give you a bit of a theology about him. But they don't know him. They don't have that intimate relationship with him of trust.

[12 : 59] That's sort of what a good marriage should be where there is a knowing of the husband for the wife and the wife of the husband that both involves something physical but is far more than physical.

It's something which should involve the imagination and the emotions and how you spend your time and there's a sense of intimacy. And so this new generation doesn't have that with the Lord.

And they don't even know those works of the Lord. And once again, it's not so much that they don't have a sense of being able to recount some of them. But if you think about it, if you understand this fundamental image of almost a marital type of sexual imagery, a knowing imagery, it's the same thing of I can tell you certain things about Louise and I can think about different things that Louise has done and there'd be many things like that that would make me smile, that would give me pleasure, so to speak, just thinking about it.

Like the way she stands or the way she walks. Like I can recognize her walking from a great distance. And like I like it. Like I know things about her.

It's not just that I know things about her, that I know them connected to intimacy and connected with affection and connected with delight. And that's what has been lost.

[14:21] There's no personal knowledge. And when they think about different things that he's done, they might just say, oh yeah, yeah, it'd be the same thing as one of you being able to tell me who the shortstop was for the New York Yankees in 1935.

It's just a fact that you could roll off. I don't know if there'd be anybody here who could do it, but there might be. And it's just, there's not that intimacy. And that's been lost. So if you know the last week thing, is the people of Israel didn't fulfill what Joshua had said.

And they also, there's been a lostness there. There's been a loss of that relationship with the Lord. And so what happens? Well, that's what happens if you look at verses 10 to 13.

We'll look at, well, actually, we'll look at verse 10 again. And then notice verse 11. In my version, there's like a different little chapter heading. But it's really important to notice the move between verse 10 and verse 11, 12, and 13.

Look at verse 10 again. And all that generation also were gathered to their forefathers. It's a way of referring to death. And there arose another generation after them who did not know the Lord or the work that he had done for Israel.

[15:35] And verse 11, And the people of Israel did what was evil in the sight of the Lord, and served the Baals. And they abandoned the Lord, verse 12, the God of their forefathers, who had brought them, not the forefathers, but God, who had brought them out of the land of Egypt.

They went, this is Israel, after other gods from among the gods of the peoples who were around them. And they bowed down to them. I'll talk about that in a moment. And they provoked the Lord to anger.

However, they abandoned the Lord and served the Baals and the Ashteroth. And Ashteroth is a plural word for those different goddesses.

So they served these male gods, the Canaanite pantheon of gods and goddesses. And you'll notice here, it's very, very subtle, but it's very, very important between verse 10 and 11, is that when they stop knowing the Lord, it isn't as if they go to something neutral.

But when they stop worshipping the Lord, they immediately start, in a sense, worshipping something else. I'm going to unpack this more in a few minutes.

[16:44] But you see, one of the things which the Bible wants to communicate to us as human beings is that, in a sense, human beings are hardwired to worship. Every human being is a creature made in the image of God who's hardwired to bow down.

And the word which is translated as bowed down, what it's really talking about is, this is very old-fashioned language. Those of you who like fantasy novels, which often recreate lots of things from medieval times and ancient times in a fantasy or science fiction context, what they really do, that the language is of paying homage.

That's what it says. It would actually be more literal to say they paid homage to the Baals and the Ashtaroth, to the gods and goddesses of Canaan.

And to pay homage means to become a vassal under a Lord and swear fealty to the Lord.

So they no longer, in a sense, understand themselves as being the Lord's people, that he is their great deliverer, who delivered them out of Egypt, provided for them in the wilderness, brought them into the promised land, and has carried them and cared for them.

[18:11] And that when he refers to them, he uses languages of almost like marital intimacy, that that's what he desires for his people.

And as they lose that, they don't become neutral, but now they enter into a new relationship instantly, and this instance is now one of homage.

They acknowledge themselves or see themselves as the vassals of these gods and goddesses, and they pledge fealty to them.

They will serve them. They understand that these gods and goddesses are higher than them, and are worthy of their service, and of their loyalty.

Now, the problem is, and most of the rest of the Old Testament, there's many, many scathing, scathing, scathing things about idolatry.

[19 : 11] The shocking thing in an entire ancient, a whole planet that saw idolatry as natural, God begins to teach the Israelites to have no image and no likeness, that there's not gods, excuse me, that there's not gods and goddesses, that there's only the Lord.

And Isaiah and Ezekiel and all, they make fun. They say, you know, you go into the woods, and you kill some game, and then you want to cook your game.

So you see a nice piece of, you see something there, a tree, and you cut the tree down, and you take half of the tree, and you turn it into fire, and you roast your game, and you eat your game.

And the other half of the tree, you carve it into an idol. And that same tree, part of it you burned in the fire, to roast your meat. And then after you've roast your meat, you bow down to the other half of the tree, which has become your idol, and worship it, and give that other half of the tree thanks for the fact that you've received this food.

And the prophets keep saying, how foolish is this? How can you not see that this is completely, utterly ridiculous? ridiculous. You see, the fact of the matter is, is that every human being is made in the image of God.

[20 : 28] No other created thing, no other created thing, no other creature will most help you to know what God is like, rather than actually seeing another human being. And yet human beings, who are made in the image of God, they pledge their allegiance and loyalty to something vastly less than them, a piece of wood, to money, to the job, to having power, to having sex with a particular person, with having a war where you're able to kill other people.

And all these things are less, or evil, or demonic. And we bow to them, and say, you are greater than me. I will serve you.

I will be loyal to you. I will do whatever I have to do. Because you are my Lord. Now, this other type of theological critique, this prophetic denunciation of how foolish it is, how foolish it is.

You killed the game. You cut down the tree. You took half of the tree to make a fire, to cook the meat. And the other half of the tree, you turned it into an idol, and then you bowed down to that wood, thanking you for this.

Like, how can you not see that that's nuts? That type of theological critique will come later on in the Bible. But, what Judges does is set the stage for it, by talking about how, well, let's look at how it talks about it.

[22 : 22] Verse 14 and 15. So the anger of the Lord was kindled against Israel, and he gave them over to plunderers who plundered them.

And he sold them into the hand of their surrounding enemies, so that they could no longer withstand their enemies. Whenever they marched out, the hand of the Lord was against them for harm, as the Lord had warned, and his Lord had sworn to them.

And they were in terrible distress. Now, there's several things here that we see from the rest of the text. First of all, we can see that God is angry, but he's justly angry.

Just as I would be angry, just as Louise would be angry. Why make it me? I'll be the bad guy.

Louise is far better than me. If Louise came in and found me flirting with women, none of you would say, she's wrong to be mad at me.

You'd all say, you go, girl. You go, girl. You give it to him. Let me help. That's what you'd say, right?

And so, because there's this desire for the Lord to have this relationship with human beings like us, and when he sees human beings like us serving money, or serving the state, or serving the race, or serving nation, or serving our own ambition, serving our ego, serve, and it, it, there's a proper anger which is there.

[23 : 51] And the language, it's very, very important language here, because it's, it's how you have to understand a whole lot of the Lord's judgment in the entire Bible from the Old Testament to the New Testament.

Look at this here again in verse 14. So the anger of the Lord was kindled against Israel. And notice here, he gave them over to plunderers who plundered them, and he sold them into the hand of their

surrounding enemies so that they could no longer withstand their enemies.

Here's the thing. You see, what happens is that God, by his common grace, restrains us from the full effect of evil. Day after day, I want to serve an idol.

Day after day, I want to serve my ego. Day after day, I want to be my own boss, my own law. Day after day, I want to think I'm the center of the universe. I want to think I'm the center of the church. This is the most important person in the world. I want to think this over and over and over again. And God in his kindness, and so do you, and God in his kindness and his mercy, he restrains us experiencing the full consequence of such ideas and such desires.

[24 : 59] He restrains us. But at some point in time, God's judgment is to remove his common grace and let me have what I want.

He gives me over. The language of sold into is a technical language in the ancient world for committing. He, in a sense, commits into our hands what it is we want to do.

But this type of committing is also connected to slavery. And what we end up doing is, if you think back to that analogy, what is it like if your entire imaginative world and everything is that you bow down to something which is either less than you or evil or demonic, it will plunder you.

It will cause you vast distress. So, let's just sort of capture some of these things and some of the points.

Here's the first thing which we have to understand behind all of this text. If you understand that even in the Old Testament, how it's the Lord who delivers them out of slavery, how it's the Lord who keeps them safe, how it's the Lord that fed them in the wilderness.

[26 : 20] It's the Lord who brings them into the promised land. It's the Lord who desires that they be idol-free. The Lord longs for you to be fully human, fully free, fully whole, fully his, fully idol-free.

That's what the Lord longs for each and every one of us who is here and every person in the city of Ottawa and every person in Angola and every person in any people group, his desire for every human being is to be fully human, fully free, fully whole, fully his, and fully idol-free.

But here's the problem. As a creature made in the image of God, you are hardwired to give homage and fealty.

As a creature made in the image of God, you are hardwired to give homage and fealty. And that's because we've been made for God.

We've been made to be fully human. We've been made to be whole. We've been made to be free. We've been made to be at home in our bodies and at home in the planet.

[27 : 38] I mean, part of being at home in the planet is I mean, even the worst polluter wants somewhere else to be polluted. They don't want to live where the pollution is, right? So if you understand that to be fully at home in the planet is that you have to be opposed to things that degrade the planet.

Nobody wants to live. Nobody wants to go swimming in a polluted river. They go somewhere else where it's not polluted. Right? But the Lord wants us to be fully idol-free. No idols at all.

He made us to walk with Him to be fully transparent, to be at peace with the garden, at peace with one another, at peace with Him, to be able to have conversation and not to bow down to anything that Him, but He made us to know Him and to acknowledge that He is our God, He is our creator, He is our sustainer.

We were made for Him. He's made in His image. He hardwired that into us. And when we turned away from God and rejected God and desired to be our own God, the terrible irony is that seeking to be wise, seeking to be a God, we became fools.

And that part of us which is hardwired to bow down, we now bow down to the evil within us. We bow down to the pride within us. We bow down to the narcissism within us.

[29 : 03] And we start to bow down to other things. You know, you look at the terrible history of the 20th century, you bow down to the social class, you bow down to ethnic purity or racial purity, you bow down to capitalism or ideology or communism, and you bow down to sex, you bow down to violence, you bow down to war, you bow down to consumerism, you bow down to things which are evil or demonic or which are just vastly less than you and they corrupt you and they plunder you.

And the main problem with most idolatry, it is something that we see as a problem for other people and not for ourselves. It's other people who serve money, not us.

It's hard for us to think that that other person might look at us, look at me, as an example of somebody who serves money. I think, I don't serve money, they serve money. And they're thinking,

I don't serve money, they serve money.

It's always somebody else's problem. If you could up the third point, Andrew, idols seem full of promise but really only plunder you.

Idols seem full of promise but really only plunder you. I want to just give you two quotes, I'm mindful of the time. Many of you are famous, familiar with David Foster Wallace and a very important intellectual and writer, committed suicide, but about a year or two before he committed suicide, he gave a commencement address at Oberlin College.

[30 : 33] It's a very famous, you can go Google it, it's still available, it's very, very famous. And one of the things he talked about is he uses this example. He said there's this old fish swimming in the water one day in the ocean and swimming in the water and old fish comes across these two young fish that are swimming the other way and the old fish says to the young fish, how's the water?

And the two young fish say, great. And they swim on and a couple of minutes later one young fish says to the other young fish, what's water? Because it's just so part of their environment they don't even think about the fact that they have an environment.

And David Foster Wallace went on from that to say the fact the matter is is that human beings live as idol worshippers. This is a secular agnostic and that idols beat you up and plunder you and destroy you.

Remember, those of you who were here last week who remember I shared how I came across one of these Ricky Gervais type writers. He's a novelist by the name of Mike Marshall. He also does screenplays and stuff and I was reading a novel because I don't look up quotes.

I do this weird thing. I read books. I don't look up quotes. I read books. And sometimes you come across good quotes. And in this book one of the characters in the novel it's all about this person.

[31 : 54] He's always doing the right thing. He has the right political views. He's concerned about the environment. He has the right type of possessions.

The right type of career. And he uses social media and he does all the right things and his life starts to unravel and this is part of it. I'm going to say a word which you don't normally say in church and you have to give me a pass.

I'm just reading it. Okay? Here's the quote. From Mike Marshall. He's in a burger place. The place reeked of fries and ketchup. He's brought into a burger place sort of against his will as his life is unraveling.

So sort of again. The place reeked of fries and ketchup and sounded like an experimental station called Radio Human. People chewing, bawling out kids, talking on phones, belching, breathing, existing.

I don't come to burger joints very often for the very same reason that I do head to the gym and read positivity blogs. Because we're supposed to.

[32 : 54] Supposed to eat right, think right, act right by the planet. That endless series of secular rituals intended to keep others thinking well of us or keep us thinking well of ourselves.

People rag on about God, how lucky we are to be getting rid of him, short of him. But he at least would throw the occasional bone, handing down a good harvest or a ticket to heaven once in a while.

The internal taskmaster we're working for now doesn't believe in fripperies like motivation. He, she just wants you as his bitch.

Steph and I have a ritual though. Once in a blue moon we'll go out to an ultra burger, a kingdom of fries, though usually it's a McDonald's and slum it, showing the world that we are bigger than how the world all talks.

That we can make our own choices. And I suddenly realized we hadn't done this in months and months and months. I had been getting deep into the program. We both had. Time had been patiently breaking Steph and me, turning us into everyone else.

[34 : 08] Like what he's describing as idolatry. The serving of these things that at the end of the day don't care about us, don't love us, don't die for us, don't save us.

Very conscious of the time. But let's, let's look at how God responds to all of this. If you could go back to verse 16. We're going to read verse 16. How does God respond to this?

People giving themselves to idols. In fact, actually this is really, just before we go to this, you know, I was thinking about this a lot yesterday.

So my friend at the coffee place who said he had no idols. And then I said everybody has idols. And he said he was going to think about whether he had an idol.

And I was thinking about this. Let's say he finds out that he has an idol. Like what, what can he do? Because you see, if we're hardwired to have idols, then all we can do is switch idols.

[35 : 16] Right? And this may be, in many cases, this is probably progress. Right? If you've gone from, you know, from making pornography into something you serve and instead you're able to defeat that, but you end up doing that by making your husband or your wife into your idol.

Or, you know, you've been maybe serving money and that's wrecking your life up. You're serving career and it wrecks your life up. So you make your family into your idol. And it's, in a sense, a better idol.

Less harmful. Better. Still an idol. Like there's a problem. In a sense, that's the problem of Canaan. All they could do is they could maybe say, you know what, I think I'm going to stop worshipping Moloch because I want to stop having my kids burned to death.

So maybe we'll switch to this idol because it's not as bad. But in a world where all you have is idols, all you can do is switch to one which is less bad.

You see, unless God replaces the idols, listen to what happens. Verse 16. Then the Lord raised up judges.

[36 : 32] Remember, they were in terrible distress to serving the idols. The Lord raised up judges, deliverers, who saved them out of the hand of those who plundered them. Yet they did not listen to their judges for they prostituted themselves after other gods and bowed down to them.

That's paid homage to them. They soon turned aside from the way in which their fathers had walked to obey the commandments of the Lord and they did not do so. Whenever the Lord raised up judges for them, the Lord was with the judge and he saved them from the hand of their enemies all the days of the judge.

For the Lord was moved to pity by their groaning because of those who afflicted them and oppressed them. Just pause there before we read any further. You want to notice this is very, very important. It is, it's that, it isn't that the Lord said, look at these people they've become so religious and so hard working.

I think I'll show mercy. Or, whoa, look at those people. They've become very penitent. They really repent well. I think I'll show mercy. They're not seeking the Lord.

They're not showing repentance. They're pursuing idols. And it's plundering them. And it's oppressing them. And the Lord's heart breaks with mercy and compassion for them.

[37 : 51] You see, His mercy and compassion precedes our religion and our spirituality and our achievements and our holiness and our religion and our accomplishments.

His mercy and compassion comes out of our distress, not out of our secular or idolatrous or religious accomplishments.

Verse 19, it continues, but whenever the judge died, they turned back and were more corrupt than their fathers, going after other gods, serving them and bowing down to them. They did not drop any of their practices or their stubborn ways.

So the anger of the Lord was kindled against Israel and He said, because this people have transgressed My covenant that I commanded their fathers and have not obeyed My voice. I will no longer drive out before them any of the nations that Joshua left when he died in order to test Israel by them, whether they will take care to walk in the way of the Lord as their fathers did or not.

So the Lord left those nations not driving them out quickly and He did not give them into the hand of Joshua and His people. I don't have to unpack all of that. I just want to, I noticed the time we have to just close.

[39 : 06] If you could put up the final point, Andrew. In light of your idol problem, you need the true and greater Joshua. In light of your idol problem, my idol problem, I need the true and greater Joshua.

Some of you might not know this, but Jesus, the name Jesus and the name Joshua are the same name. My oldest son, Tosh, he married Amy and by coincidence, Amy's father had the same name as me except he's an immigrant from Germany so his name was Jorg and I'm George but it's the same name, just one's German and one's an English pronunciation.

It's the same pronunciation, Jesus and Joshua. It's the same name and it means God saves. I mean, you're true and greater Joshua. You see, because people go to sacrifice to idols and to evil

things because they feel senses of guilt and senses of shame that they have a sense need to be atoned for but we need a true and greater Joshua who can deal with those sense of our need for atonement and our need to deal with shame by dealing with everything that we ever have to atone for and we can't atone for and he deals with it in his sacrifice and we feel incomplete and need to have some type of other things to buffer us up, some other type of accomplishment excuse me, because we feel incomplete and we need a true and greater Joshua whose death upon the cross would not only deal with those things that need to be atoned for but would in fact clothe us with all of the righteousness that we ever possibly need to stand before God and we need a true and greater Joshua who is not just the one that God uses to deliver but then he dies and we are left helpless but we need a true and greater Joshua who after he has not only dealt with atonement and giving us righteousness will actually come to live within us to take that seat in the heart of every human being that was designed for the Lord and not for an idol.

and because we cannot not be hardwired for idols we need the true Lord in our heart to give us that sense of security and that presence and that power whereby we can examine the idols of our lives and realize why should I pursue that idol or serve that idol when there is the true Lord and the true God whose way I should follow and whose way I should serve whose way is only that which will make me whole and make me free and make me idol free and not oppress me and not corrupt me and not in fact be my enemy but my friend who desires to be in a relationship of love with me and his people for all eternity.

So just in closing if you feel anxiety or distress in your life one of the things to do is ask the Lord what idol is causing me that anxiety and distress what am I serving that is not you and my lack of service is causing me this anxiety and this distress if you feel compulsions to have to do certain things ask the Lord what idol am I serving that creates this sense of compulsion with me to look at your life whether it's money or time and ask yourself would I do what the Lord says in all of these areas of my life or would I not want to do it and if you don't want to do it there's an idol.

[43 : 01] You see one of the reasons why we give an offering and why we give a tithe is because the most one of the deepest most persistent idols is money and one of the ways of being free of the idol of money is to give money away.

Money says I will protect you I will bless you I will make you safe I will make you secure I will blah blah blah blah blah blah blah can't take it with us.

Second after Bill Gates dies and the poorest person in the world if they die at the same moment the second after they die they both have the same bank account after death which is zero and part of the way we put the idol to death is by giving money away.

Part of the way that we put to death the idol around sexuality is by being faithful in heterosexual marriage or being abstinent in singleness. Part of the way we deal with the idol of pride is by learning to be humble humble not by thinking less of ourselves but much of Christ.

part of the way that we deal with the idol of violence is by being gentle. The idol of pride by showing compassion. Please stand.

[44 : 23] Let's bow our heads in prayer. Father many of us are just like my friend from the coffee shop we either don't think we have any idols well we just don't think we have idols and we don't even think in those categories because Father we have to be honest like nobody thinks in those categories like nobody nobody on Instagram or Facebook or hardly anybody thinks in these categories so we don't think in these categories Father we just don't.

We ask Father that your word would become deeply real to us and we ask Father that you help us to see Father don't help us to see the idols in other people's lives ask us Father we ask that you help us to see the idols the functional idols in our own life and we give you thanks and praise that through faith in Jesus you are so patient with us and so kind with us that we keep wanting to put some idol Father on the throne of our heart to sit there with Jesus and Jesus never leaves the throne of our heart and he nudges us and pushes us to throw that idol away so that it has no place in our lives Father we ask that your Holy Spirit your word would make the idols that we are tempted to real to us that we might flee them that we might make much of Jesus we might make much of you that we might make much of your kindness and your grace to us that that would form us and be how we understand who we are and how we see our life in this world and our future and all these things we ask in the name of

Jesus your son and our savior amen our gravel Sports after Jobpas