

Series: The 10 Commandments

Sermon: Carved Images

Scripture: Exodus 20:4-6

Teacher: Jeff Norris

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Exodus 20:4-6 (ESV)

⁴ “You shall not make for yourself a carved image, or any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth.

⁵ You shall not bow down to them or serve them, for I the LORD your God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children to the third and the fourth generation of those who hate me,

⁶ but showing steadfast love to thousands of those who love me and keep my commandments.

"The first word (commandment) prohibits worship of anything *other than* God, but the second prohibits worship of any version of God *less than* God, specifically through images ... Anytime we take the attributes of the gods the world around us worships and apply them to God to make him more palatable and less threatening, more accommodating and less thunderous, we produce a graven image. We whittle down his transcendence, we paint over his sovereignty, we chisel away his omnipotence until he is a pet-like version of the terrible pagan god we would never be so foolish as to bow down to."

- Jen Wilkin, *Ten Words to Live By*, p. 37, 39.

The second commandment forbids "the making of any representation of God, or all or any of the three persons, either inwardly in our mind, or outwardly in any kind of image or likeness of any creature whatsoever."

- *Westminster Larger Catechism*, Question 109

"If the first commandment is against worshipping the wrong God, the second commandment is against worshipping God the wrong way."

- Kevin DeYoung, *The 10 Commandments*, p. 42

"The first commandment forbids the worship of any false god, and the second demands that we do not worship the true God in an unworthy manner. It is not enough to worship the correct God. We must worship the correct God correctly!"

Alec Motyer, *Look to the Rock: An Old Testament Background to Our Understanding of Christ*, p. 65.

The What ...

"You shall not make for yourself a carved image, or any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth."

(v. 4)

Inward application:

"...the human mind is, so to speak, a perpetual factory of idols."

- John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*

"The human mind, stuffed as it is with presumptuous rashness, dares to imagine a god suited to its own capacity; as it labors under dullness, nay, is sunk in the grossest ignorance, it substitutes vanity and an empty phantom in the place of God. "

- John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*

Common ways we conceive of God in a way untrue to who He is and worship Him as such:

1. God the cosmic cop. (Low view of His love)
2. God the benevolent grandfather. (Low view of His power)
3. God the faith healer. (Low view of His sovereignty)
4. God the distant father. (Low view of His intimacy)
5. God the landlord. (Low view of His care and provision)

Outward application:

"To these evils another is added. The god whom man has thus conceived inwardly he attempts to embody outwardly. The mind, in this way, conceives the idol, and the hand gives it birth."

- John Calvin, *The Institutes of the Christian Religion*

Exodus 32:4-6 (ESV)

⁴ And he received the gold from their hand and fashioned it with a graving tool and made a golden calf. And they said, "These are your gods, O Israel, who brought you up out of the land of Egypt!"

⁵ When Aaron saw this, he built an altar before it. And Aaron made a proclamation and said, "Tomorrow shall be a feast to the LORD."

⁶ And they rose up early the next day and offered burnt offerings and brought peace offerings. And the people sat down to eat and drink and rose up to play.

"Interestingly, Aaron seems to conceive of the golden calf as an image of Yahweh, not a lesser or different deity."

- Wilkin, p. 38

"Have you ever wondered why Aaron chooses the image of a calf instead of some other animal, like a bird or lion? Remember that Israel is in the in-between space, fresh from Egypt and heading to Canaan. One of the principal deities of Egypt was the bull god Apis, and the supreme head of the Canaanite pantheon was the bull god El. Bull-worship was all the rage in the region. But it is a knobby-kneed calf, not a raging bull, that Aaron manufactures. When Aaron conceives of a Yahweh-of-his-own-imagining, he produces a nonthreatening, approachable version of the principal gods of the surrounding pagans. And so do we."

- Wilkin, p. 38-39

The Why...

"You shall not bow down to them or serve them, for I the Lord your God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children to the third and fourth generation of those who hate me, but showing steadfast love to thousands of those who love me and keep my commandments." (v. 5-6)

Exodus 34:6-7 (ESV)

⁶ *The LORD passed before him and proclaimed, "The LORD, the LORD, a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness,*

⁷ *keeping steadfast love for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, but who will by no means clear the guilty, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children and the children's children, to the third and the fourth generation."*

Numbers 14:18 (ESV)

¹⁸ *The LORD is slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love, forgiving iniquity and transgression, but he will by no means clear the guilty, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children, to the third and the fourth generation.*

Jeremiah 32:18 (ESV)

¹⁸ *You show steadfast love to thousands, but you repay the guilt of fathers to their children after them, O great and mighty God, whose name is the LORD of hosts*

"It's not a reference to generational curses, hexes, or demonic oppression. Not does it mean that a righteous child will be punished unfairly for the sins of the wicked father."
DeYoung, p. 43.

Ezekiel 18:20 (ESV) seems to correct this line of thinking: "The soul who sins shall die. The son shall not suffer for the iniquity of the father, nor the father suffer for the iniquity of the son."

The Hope...

God and God alone makes god-like images. We are his image-bearers! But we image him in a diminished way. There's only One who images Him perfectly: Jesus.

Colossians 1:15 (ESV)

He is the image of the invisible God.

Hebrews 1:3 (ESV)

He is the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of his nature.

John 14:15 (ESV)

If you love me, you will keep my commandments.

John 14:21 (ESV)

Whoever has my commandments and keeps them, he it is who loves me.

Galatians 2:20 (ESV)

I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself up for me.