

Keep Yourselves from Idols

Ty Combs | Trinity Church | 7.28.24 | 1 John 5:18-21

Intro

- Name, role, past stories – farm, youth ministry – Basketball
- Poll – College vs. NBA
 - Larry O'Brien
 - Travis and I got tickets to 10 or so games this season
 - Pacers turned out to be good this year- ECF
 - Started watching games live instead of highlights
 - Putting Kids to bed
 - Story of friends coming to hang out
 - Lord's timing to knock them out – I was prioritizing watching them way too much
 - **I gave a basketball game authority over my calendar.**
 - **It hit me when I watched them pass around the trophy and it made me uncomfortable – In some ways, I was no different.**

Text

- Turn to 1 John 5:21
- I don't actually think God knocked them out of the playoffs, but God did present this passage to me at the same time and it was no coincidence – it was God revealing something to me.
 - The same week they got knocked out was the same week we started prepping for this series and I read our passage for today:
- **Dear children, keep yourselves from idols. (1 John 5:21)**
- This verse actually seems so random. Throughout the letter John talks about obedience, light and darkness, love and fear, but then this last verse is about idols?
- Even in context: 1 John 5:20-21 ²⁰ *We know also that the Son of God has come and has given us understanding, so that we may know him who is true. And we are in him who is true by being in his Son Jesus Christ. He is the true God and eternal life. Dear children, keep yourselves from idols."*
- Actually a perfect summary.
- Read it again, what word does John repeat or amplify? TRUE/understanding
 - **John uses contrast in the final sentence in His letter to magnify Jesus as the True King by showing the only thing idols can do is tell lies.**
- In other words John ends by saying, **'do not fall into believing the dark lies of the world, but walk in the light where you can see the truth.'**
- **Notice the idols John is pointing to are not constructs or objects, but rather he implies that idols are better defined by the lies they tell**
- All throughout history people have been making idols



- Moses on the mountain
- Elijah and Baal
- Daniel & Nebucadnezzar
- Isaiah talks about at length
- “they look for a skilled worker to set up an idol that will not topple” - **Isaiah 40:20b**
- **Acts 19:24-26**
- A silversmith named Demetrius, who made silver shrines of Artemis, brought in a lot of business for the craftsmen there. ²⁵ He called them together, along with the workers in related trades, and said: “You know, my friends, that we receive a good income from this business. ²⁶ And you see and hear how this fellow Paul has convinced and led astray large numbers of people here in Ephesus and in practically the whole province of Asia. **He says that gods made by human hands are no gods at all. -Acts 19:26b**
- Idols are as old as mankind itself.
- **Italy w/ Kelly – ruins everywhere.**
 - Colosseum – courtyard of “Colossus Neronis”
 - Statue of Emperor Nero, when he died they turned it into a sun God
 - When it fell, they took the materials and put them in it the colosseum
 - **Colosseum walls pic (Ty C Sermon Pic 1)**
 - Holes drilled all through the colosseum, they extracted the materials to build other structures and statues, even some of it went into St. Peter’s
 - Rome, the capital of the world for most of history, has been recycling idols for centuries – for millennia. Emperor Nero – that didn’t satisfy, a pagan god, that didn’t satisfy, Colosseum, that didn’t satisfy, church
 - That materials in that church will too someday fail.
- My point is not that Rome finally figured it out and built a church – no my point is that **All throughout human history that not a single idol has ever stayed an idol. They all topple. If it’s not because they topple physically, it’s because people realize that idol does not satisfy what it promised it would so they recycle it into a new idol.**
- “But I don’t have idols. I don’t worship a statue or an object. In fact I worship God.
 - **The enemy loves to convince us that if we worship God, then we don’t worship idols. You can worship both – Jesus saw people doing it all the time:**
 - **Matthew 6:24** *“No one can serve two masters. Either you will hate the one and love the other, or you will be devoted to the one and despise the other.*
- This is where we need to look closely at what John points to when he says “idols”.
- Throughout his entire letter he doesn’t reference statues of false Gods. Instead he references darkness, lies, and hatred. **John is showing us that idols today aren’t just statues – idols today are anything that has convinced us that if we love it enough, it will give us something in return.**
- But we don’t often call them idols. We just say we’re “passionate” about something.

- **Today we blur the line between passions and idols and are quick to dress our idols down as hobbies and interests.**
- Timothy Keller in his book "Counterfeit Gods" says all idols fall into one of 4 categories: Power, Approval, Comfort, Control.
- **John isn't talking about bowing down to statues, John is revealing to us that idols tell beautiful lies that given your worship they will grant you power, approval, comfort, or control.**
- John talks about **darkness** and he talks about **love**.
- **2 paths for idols Passions vs. Sin.**
- The concept of love is so deeply intertwined in John's understanding of Jesus.
- If anybody has the authority to talk about the Love of God, it's John.
- **Do not love the world or anything in the world. - 1 John 2:15**
- **Greater love has no one than this: to lay down one's life for one's friends - John 15:13**
- **Idols are born when good things become ultimate things.**
 - Kelly asking me to hang out with friends - I gave basketball too much authority
 - I believed the lie that it would make me feel better than visiting with dear friends
 - I believed the lie that it was more important than praying with my 4 year old daughter at bedtime.
 - It told the lie, I believed it, and it stole some precious moments.
 - **Basketball was a good thing becoming an ultimate thing without me even seeing it.**
- **Idols can be dressed up as many things, but at their core they are all just liars and thieves.**
- The book of 1 John is an appeal from a man who walked with Jesus. **Jesus invites us into obedience with Him. Simultaneously Jesus promises to impart His love into us - but idols are thieves of both obedience & imparted love.**
- The Lord revealed to me something that was on the path to becoming an idol, and he identified it in my life. This is not the first or only example I have.
- ***"All idols begin by offering great things for a very small price. All idols then fail, more and more consistently, to deliver on their original promises, while ratcheting up their demands, which initially seemed so reasonable. In the end they fail completely, even as they make categorical demands. In the memorable phrase of the psychiatrist Jeffrey Satinover, idols ask for more and more, while giving less and less, until eventually they demand everything and give nothing."***
— Andy Crouch, *Playing God: Redeeming the Gift of Power*

Application

- But Jesus, Jesus is the exact paradox of Idols.
 - Idols tell lies - Jesus IS truth.
 - Idols demand you give - Jesus invites you to receive
 - Idols promise something in the future - Jesus has already won the battle.

- Idols force you to strive and exhaust yourself to achieve more – Jesus takes your burdens and his yoke is light.
- Idols put you in shackles – Jesus sets you free
- Idols steal authority from you – Jesus gives YOU the authority of God to go with you.
- Idols try to climb on pedestals – Jesus willingly descended from Heaven
- Idols try to preserve themselves – Jesus willingly hung on the cross for your sake.
- Worship Team & Next Steps
 - I can't tell you what your idols are – but if you are quick to defend it, perhaps that is just an idol trying to preserve itself – be aware of that.
- Tools to identify Idols (both passion and sin)
 - If I had more _____, my life would be so much better
 - If I lost _____, I truly can't imagine what my life would look like.
- "God, I see it too"
 - Dt. 4:24 For the Lord your God is a consuming fire, a jealous God.
 - Hold firmly to Jesus, hold loosely to the things of this world.
 - No God BESIDE me (not just above)
 - What are idols in your life? What lies have they told you, what have they stolen?
 - Shame vs. guilt.