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You Are What You Worship Psalm 115

In the Old Testament portion of the Bible, we read about the pagan idols made of gold and silver and wood. The Second commandment of the 10 in Exodus 20 instructs us to avoid making any idols, or likenesses of something that is in heaven, or likeness of something on earth or even under the earth. No idol worship. Don't serve them, for God alone desires and deserves our full worship. But...we don't worship idols today. That looks to be an easy command to obey. We watch documentaries on TV showing the pagans in deep jungles worshipping wooden idols, sacrificing oxen to them....but that's not even close to us. We discount it all as some interesting cultural experience. Idol worship doesn't happen in our American modern culture...does it? It certainly doesn't happen in the church...does it?

Consider this banner seen displayed at Lambeau Field in 1996. This was the season the Green Bay Packers won the Super bowl in New Orleans and their quarterback, Brett Favre was named the most valuable player: Here is what the banner stated:

Our Favre who art in Lambeau, hallowed be thy arm. The bowl will come, it will be won, in New Orleans as it is in Lambeau. Give us this Sunday our weekly win. And give us many touchdown passes. but do not let other pass against us. Lead us not into frustration, but deliver us to Bourbon Street. For thine is the MVP, the best of the NFL, and the glory of the cheeseheads now and forever. Go get 'em!

It's apparent that some sports fans recognize their team support for what it really is; worship. For worship is basically attention, focus. Ascribing worth to someone or something. An idol is something used to represent or to take the place of the real or imagined thing. An idol is always far from reality...idolized, Idealized in the minds of the worshipper. So our culture idolizes sports people..why? They are incredibly gifted at what we watch them do...we long to be like them. Our culture idealizes musicians and singers and actors, even politicians and

great speakers and preachers and powerful rich entrepreneurs. We want to be like them. We focus on them, set them up on a pedestal. They can do no wrong. Even when they do wrong we will make excuses for them, so we can keep them up on the pedestal of perfect. Here's a secret, once you get to know idols well...be careful they aren't perfect, they will disappoint you. Your expectations could come crashing down.

Worship of anything or anybody apart from God Almighty is idolatry. It can be tempting to rob Glory from God. It can be tempting to give glory to someone or something other than God. Either way God is not pleased. This morning my purpose is to encourage God's people to worship God and God alone. To refuse to continue robbing God of any glory that is rightfully due Him. Turn with me in your Bibles to Psalm 115. (READ)

Between the lines of verse 2 we read the problem facing the writer of the Psalm. The nations, the enemies, the idols worshipping enemies of the people of God are ridiculing, mocking making fun of the Psalmist and his God Almighty worshipping friends. My guess is that they are not making fun of them when things are going well. My guess is that the circumstances of life have been pretty tough on them. It reminds me of what happened to Job. The mocking and ridicule did not come when Job's business was making loads of money. It did not come when the family was healthy and happy. It did not happen when the marriage was going strong and the kids were alive and well. Ridicule of ones faith always comes in the darkest park of the night. It's when all hell has broken loose in your life. It's when the kids go rebellious against God that the evil whispers in your ear. Psst. Where? now? is your God. It's months after your heart goes bad, someone in your families health goes slowly down that you here the whispers. Psst. Where? now? is your God. Its when you business isn't making the kind of money you hoped. Psst where is your God Now? It's when things didn't work out in your relationship...psst where now is your God? It's when you continue to struggle with those same old sins? It's when you are trudging through the spiritual desert of dry times. Psst Where now is your God. It's when you hit mid-life and your expectations are gone forever. It's when you pray and pray and pray and nothing seems to be working out. You hear the evil whispers. Psst where is your God now? Have you ever heard

those whispers? Some may have even heard them from friends, or co-workers or even family members. Where is your God now? What do we do? How can we respond when God seems so strangely silent? How are we to respond in the face of testing....even when we know that testing time serves to strengthen our faith....that doesn't seem to make it any easier. Even though we know that unless we went through dark times we would not mature and grow and strengthen or even recognize the joy of faith in Him. It's hard to be strong in the Lord when the evil whispers brush through our minds. God is really not there. It's all a lie. It's irrelevant. It's a waste of time and money. Don't try so hard. Give it up. Live it up. Loosen up. Come on have a little fun.

It's tough during the dark testing times of life when Christ's presence is not readily apparent. Have you ever been there? I have. I want to shout out. Where are you God. What do you want me to do. I will do it if you just show your face. The circumstances of life are making it very difficult for me to see you. What do you do when you are getting hammered by the dark times, and on top of that ridiculed for clinging to what others see as a foolish faith that is an irrelevant waste of time?

Point number on this morning. Let remember who this is all about. This is not about us. This is all about God. We must give glory to God. V. 1 Not to us o Lord, not to us, but to thy name give Glory. Dark times and ridicule will tempt us to misplace and misspend our glory on things other than God. In the dark times we must become even more focused, there is that word for worship again. Remember focus and attention is worship. We must give glory to God. Give Glory where glory is due. True living is not success at making ourselves look good. True living is when we can live in such a way that God looks good. We must be far more concerned with living to give God a good name, then living so that we will look good. We must refuse to continue robbing God of any glory.

How do we do that? When we act as though our accomplishments and successes are really up to us. Even when we act as though our failures are totally up to us. We rob God of glory when we assert our independence saying, "I don't need anybody. I don't need God. I don't want to be beholden to anyone. We rob God of glory when pride rears its ugly head. "Look at me I'm the greatest. Or how dare they do that to me. My rights have been trampled on. When we cling to bitterness and refuse

to forgive. That's all about pride. We have decided it's all up to us and so we rob God of any possible glory. We may prop ourselves up with our ingenuity. Our hardwork. Our thriftiness. Our Business acumen and ability to make money. It may be our sport ability, tennis golfing fishing football. These all cross the line of healthy entertainment when we begin to idolize them and they consume our focus and rob the glory that is due to God and God alone. These things are not bad in themselves. In fact, they can be quite good. Yet, when they consistently step between you and God. When they consistently bump God out of your priority of focus they become idols. Even the newspaper can become an idol. When I spend more time reading it, looking forward to it then I do God's holy word. It's become an idol. A focused attention with and greater priority than God. This Psalm tells me clearly to those who honor God, putting aside all idols that come between, he will bless them. I want to be blessed by God. So. Not to us O Lord, Not to us but to Thy name give glory. When God seems strangely silent in the face of dark times and ridicule. Remember it's not about us. Life is about God. It is all about Him. Why? Look at the end of verse 1. Because of His lovingkindness. That hewed loyal love. Because of His truth. This assumes we are able to recognize and affirm His acts of lovingkindness. This is not easy to do in the middle of dark times. This also assumes we are able to recognize His truth and have the "want to" to follow God's truth. That's not always an easy thing to do in the middle of dark times. So, we need help sometimes to see these things. That is one reason I love the Psalms. It kindly reminds me of my correct focus that will get me back on track. Because it's not about me it's about God. Remembering God's truth, and practicing it. Remembering God's Kindness will help redirect focus off of us and onto God.

Practically how can we give glory to God? By our obedience. By spending time with him. Reading His Word. Desiring to read and expecting to hear from Him. I challenge you to give God as much glory, (attention) as you do the T.V. or other books or whatever you are in. What you give glory to will greatly affect the way you think and act in life. If you are not acting the way you would like chances are you are glorying in the wrong thing and you don't even know it. I can practically give glory to God by singing praises to God, doesn't even have to sound good. All He

wants to hear is his children are on the true and right track and aren't too embarrassed to publicly affirm His name. We always have time for what we glory in. Look at your schedule it will be easy to see what you glory in, what you idolize, what you worship. Look beyond the necessary work and necessary sleep. What does your schedule say is most important to you?

When life gets dark and evil whispers in your ear. Pssst where is your god now. Remember it's not about us. Its all about God we must give glory to God and remember His truth and loving kindnesses.

Look with me at verse three. Here we read the Psalmists rebuttal to the taunts of the idol worshipping pagans. Here in v. 3 He verbally affirms His trust and faith in God. When the world questions the foolishness of our faith. When the world ridicules our fanaticism. We must verbally affirm God's sovereign control. And that's point number 2 this morning. In dark times when the oppressive heat waves of doubt blow by your mind, Verbally affirm what you know to be true about God. When life gets confusing and dark, it is so tempting to doubt what you know to be true about God. We must not deny in the darkness what God has revealed to us so clearly in the light. Affirm it. Speak it out. Yell it out. Sometimes I go up on a mountain and shout it out. When the Psalm writer hits verse 3 I think his voice was up a decibel or two. But, Our God is... in the heavens. He does whatever He pleases. But, the rebuttal to the accusations. Then the Our. It's personal. "our God" not just a way up there in the sky somewhere kind of god. He is not distant. He is not irrelevant and unable to communicate and relate with us. He is not one who hasn't a clue what we our struggling with. He is personal. He is our God. In fact the very next word God indicates His power. God is power. He can do whatever he pleases. He is not confined to the earth, He is strategically located in the heavens to be able to act and move and watch on our behalf. He is sovereign and he is God. Powerful preeminent and yet personal. Our...God....is...The word is tells me our God is present. He is. Not just a God of the past sometime way back when He used to do a lot of great stuff. NO. Our God is. present right now, practical and relevant. He can soothe my aching heart right now. Not just a sometime in the future God. He is. He is present.

When you are down in dark times. When whispered of ridicule and doubt blow past your mind. Verbally affirm what you know to be true about God. God is personal, powerful, preeminent, and present. Just remember all those p words and shout them out to God. That is giving glory to God. That is remembering His Lovingkindness. That is affirming His truth. That will help us make the transformation of glory, worship, focus, attention. off our ourselves and back to where it should be. Back to God and God alone. We learn this helpful tip from the Psalmist. He wrote out what he knew to be true all mixed in with His frustrations and doubts and fears. God can handle that. He will reward those who take the steps to give Him the proper glory due His name.

In v. 4 he begins to dish it back out to the pagan's who worship idols and are taunting him about God's apparent silent in the middle of his pain. He says, Look at your idols. You made them with your own hands. Those sculpted mouths looks great, but they can't speak. What good is a mouth that cannot speak. Eyes but can't see. Noses but can't smell, Hand's but can't feel. Feet but can't walk. He is really rubbing it in here. What good is a throat if it can't even gurgle. You idol can't even burp.

You will become like those idols. You will become like that which you worship. End of v. 8 whatever you put your trust in you will become like them. That word become tells me it is a process of becoming. And the process of becoming like something one has created themselves, a dead lifeless, idol. The process of becoming is becoming dead and lifeless. Idol worship is a deadening process. Those idols, most of which we create by our own doing. Those things we think will make us happy and satisfy our deepest longings will actually turn our to send us on a road to becoming dead. We will become as dead and lifeless and unsatisfying as the idol we choose to follow, to give glory to, to worship. We will eventually become what we worship. Does that mean if we worship money we will start turning green and begin to grow white bushing hair and ruffled shirts like George Washington. No. It means we will no longer be controlling our money but our money will be controlling us. When we look to money for security, it will drive all our decisions. We will hold on to money that God says give away, because we fear insecurity. We will spend money on

things that are not right because think stuff with satisfy our deepest longings.

What is honored. What is loved. What receives your most attention is what will be fostered and grown in your life. If in your home you honor reading. Reading will be nurtured there. The Indian author, Salmon Rushdie, recalls that growing up in his home there was a rule that if anyone dropped a book, it must be immediately picked up and kissed. It didn't matter if it was a novel, the dictionary, the phone book or a comic book. He remembers kissing a lot of books. Books were honored in his home and it is no wonder that he and two of his brothers are now authors of books. Academics and sports and Bible memory were honored in my home. All 5 of us kids have college degrees, three have graduate degrees. Three others went to college on sport scholarship. All five kids are active in church ministry and three kids in vocational ministry. What is honored, what is given glory, what is given attention and worship will be fostered.

In v. 4-8 the Psalmist dishes back plenty of ridicule to the pagan idol worshippers. You want to talk about powerless go nowhere worship. From head to toe. Your idols are dead and lifeless, All human senses are unable to respond or interact. They can't even belch. They are dead. They are unable to respond spiritually. They are dead and all who follow them will be dead as well.

Look at Roman 1:21 READ. They become dead and degraded because they refused to give God Almighty the glory He deserved. They decided to make up a designer God in their own image that fits their style and comfort and contours conveniently around their pet sins. They call it faith, but their faith is idolatry. Folks, be very careful on which you base your faith. If it is some mystic alacarte designer religion that you have picked and chosen from various groups. Beware. Crafting God into your own image is idolatrous. It is dead and you will become spiritually dead as well. Do not worship the creation in exchange for the creator. For you will be become what you worship.

Final point this morning, is the encouragement the Psalmist ends with. Trust in the Lord and you will be blessed for doing it. Read all the trust in the lord statements. Put your confidence in the Lord. Even when life seems dark and confusing count on God coming through. For all who

have tried and tested the Lord have proved him over and over to be incredibly trustworthy. For those who are still in the darkness and confusion, the swirling waters of doubt and place your reliance on God and the integrity of Him. Trust in the Lord and he will be a help and shield. He will be your assistance in trouble. He will be your protector from attacks.

Who needs to remember this? V. 10 The house of Aaron, the priest clan. The spiritual leaders, the pastors and teachers. I need to trust in God. Because the spiritual leaders see and experience three times the disappointment watching the flock fall. They need to remember that God is still there even in the face of dark and confusing times. They need to remember not to trust in the idol of talent and charisma, money and number and speaking ability. They need to glory in God and God alone.

Who else needs to trust in God. All the rest. v. 13 the small and great. Isn't it amazing that God is even mindful of us. v.12. He knows us. see us. hears us. responds to us. He is not a stone cold God. He is a God that is powerful, personal, present and preeminent. So as far as it's up to me, I will praise the Lord. V.17 the Psalmist speaks truth when he says the dead men don't praise God. Those who have been buried under the ground are no longer able to sing and shout and yell praise to God. But we here are still mostly alive. We can praise God. We can give glory to God Almighty and God alone. Even in the face of dark and confusing times. Giving Glory to God will set our course on the right and righteous way. We who follow God's way will be blessed.

Author Marshall Shelly reflected on the two terrible deaths of his children in a recent leadership article. He said, Even as a child I loved to read and he quickly learned that he would likely confused during the opening chapters of a novel. New Characters were introduced. Random events seemed to be taking place. It was hard to follow. The subplots seems complicated making little connection to the main plot. But, he learned to keep on reading. Why? Because you know the author is a good author and will eventually weave them all together by the end of the book. Eventually each event will become meaningful. The dark and confusing times as well as the happy and good times.

There will be times in our life when faith is a conscious choice. When we can't explain a terrible death of a child or illness or pain or

financial loss or business failure. When we can't explain a close friend moving away. A brain tumor. We must trust that before the book closes, the Author will make things clear. For Our....God....Is.... Personal Powerful, and present. In God we trust.