

SERMON: “Q&A/God: What is sin and idolatry?”

Rev. Geoff Ross Sun., Feb., 10, 2019 St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church, Brampton

[From looking at the nature of God we shifted over to a look what it means to live obediently/faithfully in/through/following God's Laws. Last week we combined 8 questions into 1/“What does the law of God require?” The answer, we heard, was simple: God requires all that we are/have – a personal/perfect/perpetual/obedient relationship in which we love God with all our heart/soul/mind/strength, and our neighbor as ourselves. Today we look at the elephant in the room – the fatal flaw that separates us from God: sin/idolatry. 2 Q: Insert]

Q: What is sin? A: Sin is rejecting or ignoring God in the world he created, rebelling against him by living without reference to him, not being or doing what he requires in his law—resulting in our death and the disintegration of all creation.

Q: What is idolatry? A: Idolatry is trusting in created things rather than the Creator for our hope and happiness, significance and security.]

So far in our Q&A/God series we've heard how the Bible is the story of God's love and grace revealed in all of creation and then in-through Jesus Christ. But it is also our origin story – our creation, in God's image/full of promise/potential – and it's the story of our fall: it's the origin story of sin. Now, if sin is the “*rejecting/ignoring God/rebelling against God/living without reference to Him*” – a habit/practice we humans have been carrying out since the fall from Eden – that results “*in our death/the disintegration of all creation:*” the question is why do we continue to “*go astray after false gods?*” (Ps. 40:3); “*like sheep gone astray, we have all turned to our own way.*” (Isaiah 53:6)

[Sheep/bad rap: not built to look up. Head down/following the good grass/not heading/hearing the shepherd – lose track of where they are. But we willfully disobey. Disobedience: willfully choosing not/“refusing” to obey/follow/do. We know better...Wallpaper/compounding the sins of our forefathers!]

Sin's that simple: it's in the choices – not in the BIG decisions but in the multitude of small compromises that we make, for ourselves/to others; sin fools us into thinking that it's a ‘one off’/free lunch/no-strings-attached, can't-miss-offer. Sin is the siren's call that beguiles us first into choosing to alter course, and makes the countless others easier as they only compound the damage. (Accretion: adding insult to injury, turning bad/worse.) From little white lies through a gradient field increasingly dubious moral choices, ending up somewhere unrecognizable (landscape and ourselves). Sin begets sin – it's a slippery slope as lies covers up the action and down you go....

[LW:Movie/TC/Cecil B. DeMille/Charlton Heston/Yul Brynner – Exodus story/God-Moses/TC – 2Tablets – Arron/People disobey/distrust God's promises/Golden Idol = disobedience/disbelief....]

Sin takes different forms: The Old Testament account of the Exodus reveals the stubborn/entrenched nature/quality of sin; once rooted it never lets go. Like a malignant virus/evil, sin replaces trust with doubt, faith/fear, hope/despondency: it's the whispered

rumour that God's promises aren't true/to be trusted, that this is all there is/we're on our own. It also reveals itself as pride – an arrogance/smugness/conceit that runs counter to the humility needed to submit our will to God's. If we're honest, we sin in thought/word/deed through sins of omission/commission. (TC:the sin is in the details.) Yes, we choose to go against God/keeping God's Law in all its prohibitions/prescriptions; and like ignoring our doctor's advice/taking our medicine as/when needed, we end up paying the consequences.

[Bibles:Numbers 14:11/p.113]

Our reading tells us that by sinning we “*don't know Christ.*” But it also means that Jesus doesn't know us! Sin leads to death: Paul writes that “*the wages of sin is death*” (Rom. 6:23) – not just for us, but for the whole of creation. *[Disintegration/Avengers movie:Thanos disintegrates half/all life – people disintegrating/turning into ash/blowing away. Graphic/shocking/challenging:just a comic movie. God's Law says our sin will result “in our death and the disintegration of all creation.” OUR death/ALL of creation:no escape from sin.]*

The People of Israel hadn't learned their lesson over their golden idol and now, at the edge of the Promised Land, they compound their sin by disbelieving in God's promises/plan/purpose/power to fulfill His will for them. In this verse God makes it clear that our disbelief leads to our fall – our lack of faith/trust/dependence in/upon God tips the scale and it leads to our ignoring/rejecting God. Sin is living without reference/deference to/trust in God – by looking at/out for ourselves not God/others, at our own skills/abilities/resources not to God but away from God. This refusal to entrust ourselves/future to God leads to idolatry – as self-appointed imitations/ourselves/own gods/morality/abilities, entrusting ourselves to ourselves rather than in/to our Creator/Triune God in/through whom all life is made/given – and to death, lost to the wilderness. To this God says; “*Children, don't be fooled.*” Nothing – not us/wealth/power/idols – will change this fact. Only God's grace can.

Friends, this is the Gospel/Good News: that by God's grace in/through Jesus Christ, who lived to die as one with/of/for us – to experience/conquer death/disintegration, to pay our penalty/wages – so we would/might be free/saved. Do right: believe in Him/entrust yourself to Him and receive eternal life. Amen.