

**Sermon: This Little Light of Mine - N. Hann (Baker Center)
God or god? - J. Shadle (Sanctuary)**

March 15, 2020

Texts: Philippians 2 & Acts 19

Discussion Questions:

Last Sunday, we took a closer look at God's immediate and final judgment on King Belshazzar—the last of the Babylonian kings. We saw how Belshazzar, in his pride and rebellion, used the golden chalices and serving bowls, taken from the Temple in Jerusalem, in a completely sacrilegious manner. We read in Daniel 5:3-4:

*"So they brought in the gold goblets that had been taken from the temple of God in Jerusalem, and the king and his nobles, his wives and his concubines drank from them. As they drank the wine, **they praised the gods of gold and silver, of bronze, iron, wood and stone.**"*

Idolatry has plagued the human race since the day that Adam and Eve took their eyes off of God, and ate the fruit from the forbidden tree. In fact, it is this very issue that God addresses in the first two of the Ten Commandments (Exodus 20:3-6):

"You shall have no other gods before me.

"You shall not make for yourself an image in the form of anything in heaven above or on the earth beneath or in the waters below. You shall not bow down to them or worship them; for I, the Lord your God, am a jealous God."

An idol is anything that replaces the one, true God—and it includes far more than the worship of statues and images. Our modern idols are many and varied. Even for those who do not bow physically before a statue, idolatry is a matter of the heart—pride, self-centeredness, greed, lust, a love for possessions and ultimately rebellion against God.

- Why do you think idolatry is such a powerful temptation for the human race?
- Why are we so prone to worship things other than God?
- Why do you think God renounces idolatry as strongly as He does? Why is it such a "big deal" for God?
- Think about idolatry from the standpoint of control. When we chose to worship inanimate objects such as gold, or statues, or images on a computer screen—who is in control at that moment? Does it require humility to worship false gods?
- Now turn it around—does it require humility to worship the One True Living God? Who is in control when we are genuinely worshipping God?
- How might genuine worship of God lead to obedience? To put this another way—How does seeing God for who He truly is impact our desire to go off on our own and do whatever we want to do (thinking that we're in control & God can't see us)?

God promises to be more than a "power" or a "force" that is far away from us. He is not an unknown and unknowable "being" on a throne somewhere "up there." In fact—quite the opposite is true. God is "Immanuel," which means "God with us."

- Describe your own experience with God. Do you know Him as someone close to you—or are you yet to experience an intimacy and closeness with God?
- In what ways are you aware of the fact that, as a child of God, God is "in you"?

Examination:

- Read **Acts 19:11-22**
 - The Apostle Paul is ministering in the ancient city of Ephesus—and things are going well. We see in vv. 11-12 that God is doing remarkable and extraordinary miracles through Paul. From a spiritual standpoint, the Light of Christ is pushing back the darkness of Satan’s domain. How do you think Satan might respond?
 - The work of God increases even more in vv. 17-20. The name of Jesus is being held in “high honor.” What other outcomes and responses do we see in this passage when God is at work in a powerful way?
- Read **Acts 19:22-41**
 - The turning point comes in verse 23. We see that “there arose a great disturbance about the Way.” In other words—Satan isn’t going to take things lying down. It’s like watching a movie, and things are just going too smoothly. The mood of the music changes to the minor key. How can we see this as a good thing?
 - Why do you think Demetrius’ business of making little silver idols of the goddess Artemis took such a financial hit as the work of God increased in Ephesus?
 - Why was it “not-politically-correct” for Paul to say in verse 26 that “gods made by human hands are no gods at all”? Can you think of any equivalents to this in our current culture? What might you say that would go against the grain of our current American culture in a way that could get you into some real hot water?
 - If Paul can “rob” Artemis of “her divine majesty” (v. 27)—what does this tell you about her “divinity”?
 - The situation quickly degenerates into a “mob” scene. Thousands of people joined in—many of whom, we are told, didn’t even know why they were there or what they were actually chanting for. Have you ever seen this happen?
 - What is the solution to all of this? What should our response, as Christians, be to all of this mayhem? Does knowing that Satan is behind it help our perspective?
- Read **Philippians 2:12-18**
 - Paul uses a very important word in verse 12—“obeyed.” He is saying that just as the Philippian believers “obeyed” God while Paul was with them, they are to continue “obeying” God now that he is away from them. What does this look like?
 - What does “working out our salvation with fear and trembling” have to do with obedience?
 - What does it mean for God to “be at work in you to will and to act in order to fulfill His good purposes”? This is a BIG DEAL! What does this say about us?
 - How do verses 14-16 answer the question above: “What should our response be to all of this mayhem”? How are we to live in a warped and crooked generation?
 - What does Paul say, in verse 17, about the ultimate purpose of our lives?

Application:

Each of us are called to shine like stars in this broken and idolatrous world. We do this by holding firmly to the Word of Life (Jesus! The Holy Scriptures!). It means that there might be a significant price to pay. It means we will be taking ground from Satan that he won’t give up easily. It means having to be “politically incorrect” from time to time. It means we need to be blameless and pure—so that God can work IN AND THROUGH us to fulfill His good and eternal purposes in this world.