

Series Title: Awake My Soul

Sermon Title: Week 5: Letting go of our idols

Date: 08-25-19

✠ Not to us

- ***It is 1833. One of the great heroes of Christianity in England, William Wilberforce, had fought for 46 years to see slavery abolished in the British Empire. As a member of parliament, he had achieved a partial victory in 1807 with the passage of the slave trade act, but slavery itself remained legal. Then, fully 30 years before America's emancipation proclamation, On August 28, Parliament passed the Slavery Abolition act of 1833. Now retired, On July 26 1833, receiving assurance that the act would pass, Wilberforce went to his room, opened his Bible to Psalm 115, and meditated on the opening statement... (read)... he passed away 3 days later.***

Psalm 115:1 *Not to us, LORD, not to us / but to your name be the glory / because of your love and faithfulness.*

- ***TODAY continuing in our study of the Psalms...***
- ***Psalm 115 was written during a time of national distress for the people of Israel. We aren't sure, but this was likely in the early days of Israel's return from slavery in Babylon, where they had been for over 50 years. It's around 530 BC, and returning home, Jerusalem was in ruins, and the Israelites found themselves weak, fearful, and surrounded by enemies.***
- ***In that place, their prayer was "NOT TO US- BUT TO YOUR NAME BE GLORY- BECAUSE OF YOUR LOVE AND FAITHFULNESS/TRUTH"***
- ***At first glance, we might think like athlete in endzone, giving God glory in their own moment of triumph. But the reality is even more amazing. In a place of extreme vulnerability, surrounding by mockers, the Israelites prayer was "Lord, MORE IMPORTANT THAN US- than our situation- is YOUR GLORY. Lord, of course we have many needs, but the greatest need is that YOUR NAME BE HELD IN HONOR- that your LOVE, FAITHFULNESS, TRUTH be KNOWN.***
- ***RIGHT OUT OF THE BOX, huge question for us. When we are faced with challenged (unmet desires), what is our greatest concern? What we want God to do for us, or how we live now in our situation brings Glory to God?***
- ***For the Israelites, their situation was their enemies all mocking them, saying "You are supposedly God's people..."***

✠ Where is your god?

- ***Key! The people surrounding the Israelites were challenging, trying to undermine their FAITH in God's goodness, even his existence. Psalm 115 is a reminder to Israel that no matter what the circumstance, NOT TO BE TEMPTED by lesser things. Considering the temptation to turn away from God to idols, the writer of the psalm asks "WHY WOULD YOU DO THAT?"***

Psalm 115:2-4 *Why do the nations say, "Where is their God?"*

- ***During their 50 years in Babylon, the Hebrews had seen idol worship all around them- they had come to see, first hand, that these idols were beautiful, made of precious materials, and absolutely powerless. IN CONTRAST, their God was seen by evidence of what he had DONE, by their faith in what he WOULD DO.***

³ *Our God is in heaven / he does whatever pleases him.*

- **God is SOVERIEGN. He is in charge, bigger than our plans, bigger than our understanding- IN CONTRAST**

⁴ *But their idols are silver and gold, made by human hands.*

- **First attribute of Idols- Rather than God being the creator, WE are the creator, meaning Idols serve us, and we are able to control them. You can just feel the psalmist asking “Who would ever worship something they created themselves?”**
- **And then, to drive the point home, we see one of the clearest indictments of idols anywhere in scripture...**

✠ **Here is your idol**

Psalm 115:5-7

They have mouths, but cannot speak | eyes, but cannot see.

⁶ *They have ears, but cannot hear | noses, but cannot smell.*

⁷ *They have hands, but cannot feel | feet, but cannot walk, nor can they utter a sound with their throats.*

- **Point is straightforward. When people make idols, we make them to look like they have power, but they don't. By their nature, idols are counterfeit.**
- **The writer describes an idol as having all the body parts of a person, but lacking any ability to use those body parts- cant even utter a sound- NO LIFE.**
- **This gets to the heart of why idols are so tempting- They are an attempt to fulfill the inherent human desire to find a source of meaning, identity...and they never ask anything OF US. We control them.**
- **Again, the psalmist's question is implicit- “why would any thinking person worship an idol?” And yet even today, we know that we do.**
- **SO What is an idol? Anything we look to for identity, WHOLENESS, LIFE... other than God, his Truth.**
- **An idol is something to which we say “For me to be complete, well, at peace, meaning... I must have THIS. I can't live, be happy, without THIS. There's your idol. This is what we worship.**
- **We make idols of our many things- often fine in and of themselves, until we look to them for what they can never provide**
- **But just one example... we make idols of our EXPECTATIONS.**
 - **Expectations of ourselves... “For me to be complete, happy... I must do this, accomplish this**
 - **Expectations of others, of our circumstance- An idea, picture, of what life must be for me to be complete, whole. Worship it, base identity in it.**
 - **Expectations of God. God, I'm worshipping you, I'm looking to you, SO THAT YOU WILL DO THIS FOR ME. If you do, then I'll agree that you are God, that you are Good. If you let me down, then I'll turn away....**
- **We could talk all day about our idols, because it's not hard, if we are honest, to identify them, and see them for what they are.**
- **FRIENDS, WHAT ARE YOUR IDOLS? What do we worship- look to for LIFE- that's LESSER?**
- **SOME THINGS fine, just need to be relegated back to proper place- temporary to be enjoyed, but not source of life (Christian culture???)**
- **OTHER THINGS need to be released, let go of, because they are dominating us, holding captive**
- **IT'S CRITICAL THAT WE DO THIS, because the Psalmist gives us a warning...**

✠ **Where idolatry leads**

Psalm 115:8 *Those who make them will be like them,
and so will all who trust in them.*

- **Spiritual principle- we become what we worship.**
 - **Worship our culture, we will take on its values**
 - **Worship expectations, nothing will measure up, leading to jealousy, frustration, depression**
- **BUT.. when we take ourselves out of the center, and begin to look to GOD, we will become like him...**
- **THIS IS WHERE PSALMIST TAKES US...**

✠ **The great alternative**

Psalm 115:9-15

⁹ *All you Israelites, trust in the LORD— he is their help and shield.*

¹⁰ *House of Aaron, trust in the LORD— he is their help and shield.*

¹¹ *You who fear him, trust in the LORD— he is their help and shield.*

- **Help and shield- Remember context. Israelites were helpless, defenseless. What do you do? TRUST IN GOD, for HE- his truth, how HE leads you, HE is the one who will bring you life, protect you. FOLLOW HIM. Be obedience to HIM, he will help and defend...**
- **IMPORTANT PROGRESSION...**
 - **People Israel- entire nation/large context**
 - **House of Aaron... smaller group- priests**
 - **YOU who fear him... you personally...**
- **THE LORD is our help, our protection... he is also our source of ALL GOOD THINGS... 'Bless'**

¹² *The LORD remembers us and will bless us:*

- **Idol- things we look to for goodness, joy, other than God. HE IS OUR SOURCE... when we obey him, love him, love one another, live as he guides...BLESSED**
- **Same pattern...**

*He will bless his people Israel,
he will bless the house of Aaron,
¹³ he will bless those who fear the LORD— **small** and great alike.*

- **Psalmist drives it home. Even though you are helpless- trust the Lord, follow Him, worship HIM- because UNLIKE ANY IDOL... FLOURISH**

¹⁴ *May the LORD cause you to flourish, both you and your children.*

¹⁵ *May you be blessed by the LORD, the Maker of heaven and earth.*

- **HE IS THE MAKER! NOT US! HE IS THE CENTER! NOT US! HE IS THE LORD!**
- **THIS IS ALL TRUE- right here, right now.**

✠ **Right here, right now**

Psalm 115:16-18a

¹⁶ *The highest heavens belong to the LORD,
but the earth he has given to mankind.*

- **God is above everything... We know him HERE. This life matters. God will work through us HERE.**

- **What is our 'earth'? Our context. Where we are now. Family. Community... He is present HERE.**

¹⁷ *It is not the dead who praise the LORD,
those who go down to the place of silence;*

- **A bit subtle at first... We are to praise God NOW! While we are alive!**
- **As NC believers, we know that we WILL praise God for all eternity. BUT the emphasis here is a good corrective for us... our worship of God, love of him, amazement of him... OBEDIENCE TO HIM... starts NOW! Psalmist... Don't just wait around to die, thinking that things will be better then, LOOK TO GOD NOW!**

¹⁸ *it is we who extol the LORD, both now and forevermore.*

- **IT IS WE WHO ARE ALIVE that 'Extol'- worship- TELL ABOUT- the goodness of God!**
- **We do this NOW... and with hope that...forevermore**

– **PSALMIST ENDS... PRAISE THE LORD.**

- **Hebrew two words... Hallelu... 'Hallel psalms' Psalms of PRAISE**
- **TO WHAT DO WE SAY "HALLELU"**
- **Answer of believer... YAH... "LORD" May we say...**
- **HALLELUYAH!**

✠ **Hallelujah!**

Psalm 115:18b

Praise the LORD!

- **COMMUNION**
- **STARTED with story of William Wilberforce...**
- **1800 years earlier, another man meditated on Psalm 115, but this time it was sung. This man as well knew his death was imminent, and he too had dedicated his life to bringing freedom to those in slavery. Being Jewish, he was gathered with his friends for the Passover meal. Both Matthew and Mark record for us what happened near the end of that evening...**

Mark 14:22... *While they were eating, Jesus took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and gave it to his disciples, saying, "Take it; this is my body." Then he took a cup, and when he had given thanks, he gave it to them, and they all drank from it.*

"This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many," he said to them. ²⁵ "Truly I tell you, I will not drink again from the fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new in the kingdom of God." When they had sung a hymn, they went out to the Mount of Olives.

- **The Hymn they sang, according to their tradition, was comprised of three psalms, known as "Hallel" psalms, the first of which was Psalm 115.**
- **THINK OF IT. Having just proclaimed his own death, by which all men and women may be set free, Jesus joined in song with his friends, singing...**

Psalm 115:1 *Not to us, LORD, not to us | but to your name be the glory | because of your love and faithfulness*