

Idols of the Heart

Amen. Praise the Lord. There we go. Amen. All praise God. Well, God is so good, isn't he? Our God is, again, worthy of worship, and we're really thankful to be here this morning. And I appreciate, again, our hymn singing this morning. I appreciate, again, so much the even at last hymn that we sang, because that's a great prayer, isn't it? That God would give us eyes to see, God would give us a heart that would be able to comprehend. And this is an amazing text of scripture.

I found it, again, so far, again, to be so encouraging. Until we get to this part about Demetrius, we realize that the gospel has gone out in Ephesus. It's been so successful. I mean, people have laid down their lives. They've laid down their idols. They've come to the Lord Jesus Christ. They've really done a 180 as far as their lives, as far as, again, their hearts. And you can see this. They're no longer buying these silver shrines. They're no longer going to the Temple of Artemis, again, and worshipping her. And they're also, again, taking these books, these witchcraft, and they're burning them.

And here's the amazing thing. Their lives have been changed. You know, the kingdom of darkness has been invaded by the kingdom of light. But here's the thing about the kingdom of darkness. It will not go quietly. And so we see in this text that Demetrius, which happens to be, again, he seems to be the head over this guild of silversmiths, all of a sudden comes to the forefront. And we read in verse number 25, it says, and he gathered together with his workmen in similar trades and said to them, Men, you know that from this business we have our wealth. And we have this speech that happens to be from Demetrius.

And this is really uncommon. And the reason why it's so uncommon is because he's a non-believer. You know, usually we have those, again, who happen to be of faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. But we very seldom have any words that happen, especially an elongated speech, from those who happen to be, again, outside of the Lord Jesus Christ. But we do realize this.

Everything that is written in scripture is written for our edification, for our knowledge, again, about our great God. And one of the things that we see here about idolatry, one of the things we see here about Artemis, it all really revolves around this, the idolatry of money. You know, we realize the selling of these silver shrines brought much, again, wealth to these individuals. And it's amazing to look at that, because when you look at wealth, the reason why wealth is so intoxicating is because it promises the same things as the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ.

It promises security. It promises joy. It promises, again, peace in our hearts. It promises, again, problems disappear. But here's one of the things it promises. It promises a standing. You know, there's a way where what we have, what we buy, what we purchase, we can measure by other people that happen to begin around us. And it gives us standing. It gives some sort of meaning of success that we have arrived, that we have some sort of righteousness that happens to begin in this world.

And here's the thing about the God of wealth. The God of wealth is so hard to spot. You know why it's so hard to spot? Not only are we spiritually blind to it, But there's always somebody else who's more addicted to buying. There's always somebody else that's more addicted to wealth. But we realize that it really has control. It really can take control of our hearts.

That's why when you look at the vast majority of parables that were taught by our Lord Jesus Christ, almost all of them deal with money or money-related issues. Why? Jesus understood how this can control our hearts. He even said on the Sermon on the Mount in Matthew, chapter 6, in verse number 24, he says, And then he says this, and money, there's an impossibility, right?

You're going to hate one, you're going to love the other. So if you love money, if you love what money can bring you, if you love, again, the whole idea of the feeling it brings you, let me say again, it will cause you to hate God. I wonder, how much of the love of money, how much of the idolatry of money has entered our hearts? You know, because it'll keep us away from God, right? It'll cause us to hate God. Let me ask you this question.

You know, how content are you with what you have in life right now? You know, it's easy to say, well, I'm really content. But if you ask most people how much money they need in this world, you know what they always say? Just a little bit more. Just a little bit more. You know what contentment says? Jesus is enough. I have everything that I have, because guess what? I have Jesus.

And yet, again, how content are we in life? Because we can open up the closet, maybe even open up a closet to go to church this morning, and we say this, even though it's stuffed full of clothes, I have nothing to wear. You know, have you ever done something like that? You know, and we want the latest electronics that happen to begin out there. We want, again, all these things. And it's incredible, again, because it's just a little bit more. It's just a little bit more. It's just a little bit more. But it never comes to an end.

And it is incredible, because we can say right here, we can say, again, in this context, that we're content. I have everything that I need as far as the Lord Jesus Christ. But you know what contentment does? Contentment does an action. And you know what it is? I'm so content. I have everything that I need in the Lord Jesus Christ. This is what contentment does. It gives away. Isn't it amazing? It gives away what it has. And here's the amazing thing, and I don't know what anybody gives here at Emanuel Baptist Church. I'm not privy again to, you know, this individual gives or that individual gives.

But in any Bible-believing church, the stats that happen to begin out there is 20% of the people give. and they give again regularly. So think about it. 20% of the people that happen to be here this morning are responsible for the lights being on. 20% of the people that happen to be again here this morning are responsible for the heat coming in. They're responsible for the salaries being paid. They're responsible for all the bills that happen to be paid. They're responsible, again, for all the missionaries that happen to be supported through this church. 20% of the people.

And so often we look at the idolatry of money and we say, that's not my problem. You know, it really hasn't grasped my heart. But let me ask you again, how content are you with what you have? Are you so content? Are you so thrilled that I don't need? I have enough. I have Jesus. He is more than enough. So much so that contentment again causes you to invest in the kingdom of God. Contentment causes you to give again. what you have that happens to be again around you.

And even as was pointed out this morning, the number one idol that's condemned more in the word of God than any other idol is idolatry. It's incredible, out of every other sin that happens to begin out there. And I realize it's the only sin or the only idolatry that happens to begin out there is not money.

In fact, John Calvin, again, his famous statement was that our hearts are an idol factory. And what he means is that once we're done with this idol, we make another idol, we make another idol, we make another idol. We fashion these things that happen to begin in our heart. And certainly as money is a big one, sex is a big one, reputation again is another one, you know, looks as far as our house, physical beauty.

It's basically anything that happens to begin in creation. But I think the things that we struggle with more as far as idolatry are the good things. You know, the good things. And we can see that we struggle with good things because a good thing becomes a bad thing when it becomes what? when it becomes a ruling thing in our hearts and in our lives.

We realize that right by how we respond. So when I think of when we look at these passages on idolatry, they're very edifying to us. They're very good that the Lord has given us because what did they do? They do a couple of things. One of the things that they do is they expose the idolatry that happens to be in our hearts and our lives. Think about it.

If we don't see the idol, guess what we're never going to do? We're never going to slay it from our life, are we? Think about it, change never comes in your life unless you see where change needs to come in your life. I mean, that's an easy principle. You know, if I fold my arms and I say, I don't care what the word of God says, I don't care what other people say, I don't have this idol that happens to be in my life. Guess what you're never gonna do? You're never gonna change. And this is why these passages are so beneficial for us. They're so beneficial because they expose that idolatry that happens to begin in our life, so much so that we can fight those things. And they also show us where these idols come from. Because these idols don't come from externally. These idols come from the heart.

And here's the amazing thing, and it's already been stated this morning, there's so much joy, there's so much forgiveness, there's so much identity, there's so much purpose, there's so much satisfaction in recognizing the one true God, recognizing our salvation, our forever Jesus in our life.

And so what I want us to do this morning is I want us to realize where idols are created and really see that this morning. I also want us to see that whatever you trust outside of the Lord Jesus Christ, I want you to see this, whatever you trust in outside of the Lord Jesus Christ, I can guarantee you beyond a shadow of a doubt will fail in your life. You know, all idols, even as we read this morning, are absolutely futile.

They cannot give you what you hope they give you in your life. So first of all, again, I want us to see the construction of idols. Look at verse number 26 here in our passage. This is Demetrius speaking, and he says, right here in verse number 26, and he says, and you see and hear that not only in Ephesus, but in almost all of Asia, this Paul has persuaded and turned away a great many people, saying that God's made with hands are not. You know, it's incredible, again, and I think we know this, you know, if you've been around Christianity long enough, you know this, that idols that happen to begin in your life cannot deliver.

They truly cannot satisfy. We realize, again, they might give us short-term buzz, they might give us short-term joy and satisfaction, but in the end, they demand more and more of us. Don't, here it is, all of a sudden we start lusting, we start lusting inside of us, and those again who went down that road of lust never imagined that their life would be controlled by that. They never imagined again that they would one day be hooked maybe to pornography that happens to begin online. They never imagined again through all of this, all of the shame, all of the guilt that comes upon them because again, they're shackled to this. You know, many homes, we start out with these ideas of what home in life is going to be like, what marriage is going to be like, and all of a sudden it becomes chaotic.

All of a sudden it becomes one argument after another argument. And many times these arguments are just about peace, just about quiet. And all of a sudden there's peace and quiet in the house, but there's that guilt, there's that shame of how it

came about. You know, and here's an amazing thing, because we think the problem's outside of us. And here's where the problem is. The problem is with the construction of the idols that happen to be in us. And you can see this in this passage of scripture. And in fact, idols are not hard to identify in our lives. I think, again, a lot of times we're surprised when we see the idols that happen to be in our lives. But they're not really that hard to identify.

In fact, if you spend enough time with an individual, you'll see what they truly worship, you'll see who they truly worship, and why? Because here's the thing, the idol has so captivated the heart, so captivated the inner man, that that person wants to talk about it. That person, again, wants you to know about their idol, about, again, where their joy is. And here's what also you'll realize, how futile that idol is to deliver what that person thinks it can deliver. And think about it, because you really see this in this text of Scripture. And I want us to see it, because let me just read it once more. These are the words of Demetrius. This is the warning he's bringing, again, to the people.

And he says, you see and hear that not only in Ephesus, but in all Asia, Paul has persuaded and turned away a great many people, saying that gods made with hands are not gods. And let me just point out three things that happen to begin about this. And the first thing I want to point out is Demetrius is wrong. Paul didn't turn anyone to God. You know, all Paul was was a vehicle, you know, that announced the great God, the great Savior, the great Lord, the one who was coming to forgive sins, the one who was alive forevermore. He was just a vehicle.

But the one, again, who persuaded, the one, again, who turned the hearts of the people, happened to be, again, the Spirit of God, turning the hearts towards the Lord Jesus Christ. And that's the excitement, again, about being here this morning. The excitement, again, about being here this morning, it's not that we got our whole lives together, we got our acts together, we're not struggling with various different idols. No, the incredible thing is the reason why we're here, the reason why we're singing these hymns, the reason why we're just amazed and enthralled at this God is because of the Spirit of God. working in the hearts, again, of his people. It's incredible how he causes us to love the Lord Jesus Christ.

And that's one thing that happened to begin right here. The other thing is Demetrius does get this right, that people's hearts, people's lives have been turned around. You know, you can think about this. You know, all their lives they lived in these books, again, of witchcrafts, these various different incantations in order to get things to heaven, to begin of life. And all of a sudden, here it is, Jesus is more than enough. Jesus is my everything, my contentment, my all is found in him. And they take, again, these valuable books, and they throw them in the fire.

I don't need them anymore. I don't want them anymore. My trust is in this Lord. You can imagine how they're passing by the market. They're not stopping to get one of these little statuettes to bring it to the temple and offer it to Artemis. Why? Because this is nothing anymore.

And it changed the whole fabric of their lives. It began to change the whole fabric, again, of that society. And that's the problem there, right? The problem is that this change was taking place. And let me just say this. And I think we know this. You know, no true Christianity takes place that does not bring change in our life. It's more than a standing, folks. It changes our lives, changes our direction, changes our passions, changes, again, our whole lives. You know, and you see this in the passage of Scripture. The third thing, again, that Demetrius mentions right here, and he doesn't even know he mentions it, and it's basically this, the utter futility of idols. Did you hear it? Because it was right in the text.

It was towards the end of that verse where he says, Paul has persuaded and turned away a great many people saying that God's made with hands are not God's. Think about what an idol is. An idol, again, is made with human hands. And then the idolater bows down and worship it. And Demetrius is not saying this. He's not saying that these gods were not made by human hands. He is saying they are made by human hands. And think of it, because it's absolutely ludicrous. We read that this morning, didn't we?

It was absolutely ludicrous because here's this thing, here's this worshiper and he comes and he fashions this idol. When you look at the worshiper, he lacks wisdom, he lacks power, he lacks strength, he lacks again the ability to bring about what he wants to bring about. All of a sudden, he fashions this thing and all of a sudden he bows down before it and he asks this idol to give him wisdom, to give him power, to give him strength, to give him the ability to do what he cannot do.

You know, and here it is. The thing created is asking this to be the creator. I mean, it's absolutely ludicrous. It's absolutely illogical. In fact, there's another passage that happens to begin over at Jeremiah that talks about the futility, again, of idol-making, crafting these idols. And listen to what it says. This is in Jeremiah 10, beginning at verse number 3. It says, for the customs of the people are vanity.

In other words, they're empty. They're useless. There is no, again, substance that happens to be behind us. And you can see that. It says, a tree from the forest is cut down and worked with an ax by the hands of a craftsman. They decorate it with silver and gold. They fasten it with a hammer and nails so they cannot move. Their idols are like scarecrows in a cucumber field. And they cannot speak. They have to be carried. They cannot walk. But do not be afraid of them. Why? For they cannot do evil, neither is it in them to do good.

So can you imagine it? Can you imagine again a man going into the forest and here's a big piece, again here's a big piece of lumber, here's a big tree, and cutting it down? taking it home, carving the bark off it, you know, taking a chisel and all of a sudden again making something again of the appearance that happens to begin of creation. Then taking it, maybe painting it, and then all of a sudden dressing it in the finest linens that happen to begin out there. then taking these valuable jewels and somehow attaching it to them and then bowing down? You know, if you looked at that, would you say that's absolute vanity, that's absolute uselessness? Would you say bowing down to that idol could give that worshiper anything?

And the answer is absolutely no. It's absolutely vain. And why? Because it's no better than the scarecrow that happens to be in the cucumber field. And we know that. But here's the question. How often do we construct idols? How often do we construct, again, those that really cannot deliver? Those that happen to begin no better than a scarecrow that happen to be in a cucumber field. I mean, have you ever thought about it? Have you ever thought about the idolatry of money? Have you ever thought about the idolatry of spending? You know, why do we spend? We spend because we like something.

And let me just say this, there's nothing wrong with money. But money can never give you this. Money can never give you contentment. Money can never love you back. You can love money, but it can never return that. Money can never give you wisdom. Money can never give you patience.

And why? Because it's a non-personality, isn't it? Why, when you buy a new blouse or a new shirt or, I don't know, a new phone or a new car and all of that, and you're so enticed by it, I mean, look at what I bought. You gotta look out the window. You gotta see this. We gotta share it again. And there's nothing wrong with

being excited about that, but there's everything wrong with worshipping that.

And why, after two or three years, are you no longer looking out the window and saying, look at what I got? And the reason why is because that car, that sweater, that vehicle, that electronic can never love you. You see the futility? What have you done?

You've gone into the

forest, you've cut down a tree, and you've bowed down to worship, and you said, give me life. Give me security. Give me joy. Give me life. It can't give you life. Let me give you another illustration, because this is really popular today. We live in a very lonely society. You know, people many times talk about the lack of friendship, the lack of connection with other people.

So now, again, the whole problem's been solved, and it's been solved. Here's the amazing thing by AI. You can go on and you can program, again, what's called a virtual friend. You can put various different characteristics. You can have them tell a joke or maybe a wise saying every day.

You can have them again listen and empathize with you and tell you, oh, that's not fair. I feel sorry for you. And all these things. And we'll talk back. We'll have a conversation with you. Here's the only thing. It's a virtual friend. It's a non-entity. It has no personality.

What I've done is I've taken this construct, because this is where idols happen. There are constructions in our human heart, in our human mind, and that's what I've done. I've constructed something that truly cannot love me, that truly cannot give me identity, that truly cannot give me security. I've done that, again, in the human heart. What is it? It's a scarecrow in a cucumber field. That's all it is.

And think about it, because a lot of young men you know, it's incredible because I think in this day and age, in the coming generation, we are going to lack a lot of godly men, and a lot of godly men to be leaders in the Church of the Lord Jesus Christ because of this.

They get addicted to video games. and they have something that happens to begin on them. Please, if I get this wrong, throw a tomato or laugh at me. But they have in video games what's called avatars. You know what an avatar is? It's becoming somebody else. So you take on this persona, maybe you're in a battle, maybe you're in a war, maybe you're in this other world, again, exploring this or whatever it happened to be. But all of a sudden, this avatar has strength, it has ability, it has might, and you become part of that.

And let me just say this again, there's nothing wrong with money, there's nothing wrong with the internet in and of itself, there's nothing wrong with video games. The problem because they become controlling my life. I did spend so many hours, so many hours, so many hours, hour after hour after hour, day after day after day, week after week, week after week, playing this, wanting to be this individual.

There's only one problem, I'm not that avatar. You know, all it is is a scarecrow in a cucumber field. You know, and maybe we can look at all those examples and we can say that is not anything that I have ever done. My life is free from idolatry. I think, again, the idols that we struggle with many times are the subtle ones.

May I say this, the good ones that happen to begin in our lives. There's nothing wrong with wanting a godly marriage. There's nothing wrong with wanting, again, good communication as a couple where the marriage is absolutely pleasant. There's nothing wrong with having obedient children that respect you. There's nothing wrong with that.

You know, but here's what happens so often, and we know this. Here's some good desires, the good godly desires. These desires honor God. They glorify the Lord Jesus Christ. But the more I think about them, the more that they interact with my heart, the more that they interact with my human mind and all of this. All of a sudden they become, not a desire anymore, but they morph into something. And what they morph in is a need.

I have to have this. I have to have this love from my husband. I have to have this respect from my wife. I have to have my children to fall into line. And all of a sudden it becomes need. And when it becomes a need, again, it morphs one more time and it becomes a demand. I demand this. I cannot be all that I am meant to be unless I have this. And think about it, right? My all is not Christ. My all is, again, not my sufficiency that happens to be again in Him.

It's something in creation that I want to be my Savior, that I want to be my Lord, that I say that this is what I need. In other words, Jesus and what He has done on the cross, living out that gospel example with patience, with forgiveness, with long-suffering, with long love that the Savior loves me, all of a sudden has been replaced. And remember what we said at the beginning, a good thing becomes a bad thing, here it is, when it becomes a ruling thing in our life.

And I think, again, these passages of scripture are so good for us. And the reason why they're so good for us is because they expose the idolatry that happens to begin in our life, the things that we really crave, the things that my foolish heart wants to go into the woods, cut down this tree, decorate it, and say, this can give me life. This can give me hope. This can give me security.

But in the end, we'll fail. The reason why it fails is not because we weren't meant to worship, but we were meant to find our joy, we were meant to find our awe, we were meant to find our satisfaction in where true joy, satisfaction, security is found, and that is in Jesus.

That's where it's found. It's incredible, isn't it? when we look at that. So when we look at idols, where are they constructed? They're not constructed outside of here. These are just things. These are just objects. These are just people that happen to begin around. But they're constructed in our human hearts.

We ask them to give us what they cannot give, because only the great creator, only the great Lord Jesus Christ can give those things. You know, but I want us to also see the futility of idolatry. And you see the futility, we see that God is a great destroyer of all idols, and we can see that in verse number 27. Look at what it says. Demetrius speaking again, and there's danger not only that this trade of ours may come into disrepute, but also that the temple of the great goddess Artemis may be counted as nothing, and that she may even be disposed from her great magnificent, she whom all Asia and the world worships. What a boast, isn't it? Here's the thing again, and we know this, This is called Christianity 101, or what we call Theology 101.

You know, God will not give his worship to another. God will not give his glory to another. You know, and you can see this in this passage of scripture. It's not, again, that they put God here. It's not that they put Jesus here and Artemis to happen to begin right here.

All of a sudden, again, when God again comes into heart, all of a sudden, when Jesus Christ becomes our Lord and Savior, all of a sudden, when we see the efficacy of what he has done on the cross, and we bow the knee, and we trust in him, this is destroyed that happened to begin over here. And that's the problem. That's the problem, is because when we look at God, he is a destroyer of idols that happen to

begin in our life, in our hearts that happen to begin right here. So you can imagine, the problem is not that the drunkard gives up drinking. The problem is not that the adulterer gives up fornication. The problem is not the materialist stops buying. The problem is this, the problem is this. How does that change when he came to Christ, when she came to Christ? Affects me. That's where the opposition comes in. And why? Because Christianity, right? Can't conserve God, man. Christianity, again, we realize this is about our God, we realize this is about our Lord, we realize that he is worthy of worship, he is worthy of glory, and he will not give his glory to another.

All idols, all these things that many times in our lives, again, are destroyed. The closer we get to Christ, the more our idols are exposed and the more that they are destroyed. And we realize that. If you hold an idol to your heart that's really close, I mean, so many people talk about deconstruction today. I'm deconstructing my faith. I'm no longer believing what my parents believed. I'm no longer believing what the church teaches.

You know, and you hear that language. That language is really popular because it sounds so intellectual and so sophisticated. But when you ask them in their hearts what they truly want, here it is, their idols come out. You know, the reason is not because Christianity doesn't make sense. The reason is is not because the word of God is not the word of God. The reason is is because of these idols. And think about it, if you have an idol in your heart, if you say, I want this more than anything, this will give me life, this will give me peace, this will give me joy, this will give me security to have this beginning in my life, and it's opposed to God, it's really hard to come out to church. It's really hard to be in the presence of God's people. It's really hard to be around Jesus Christ.

I mean, we saw that with the rich young ruler, right? The rich young ruler comes to Jesus and he says, what must I do to inherit eternal life? He says, go and have you kept all the commandments? And he boasts, yes. And then he puts his hand, then he puts his finger on his idol. He says, OK, well, well done. Go sell all that you have. And then he says, come follow me. And guess what you'll have? You'll have eternal life. And listen to the response. The response recorded in Mark chapter 10, verse number 22.

Disheartened by the saying, right, he went away sorrowful, for he had great possessions. Look at what happened. He left. He left Jesus, the fount of life, the fount of satisfaction. And why? Because he wanted his satisfaction in something else. He wanted his satisfaction in the riches, again, of this world. And disheartened again, he left.

Jesus Christ, and the great question is always asked every single day. There's a human drama. This is why I find Christianity in one way so exciting, because there's a drama every single day, right? Whom are you gonna serve? Is Jesus more than enough that happens to begin in your life?

Because here's the thing about Demetrius. Demetrius, and I want you to realize this, Demetrius knows the gospel. He understands it, right? Intellectually, he comprehends it, but this is what he knows. Because he understands the gospel, he realizes he's at a gospel, he's gotta go.

Our Artemis has to go. And what we love, what we cherish, what we want is this lifestyle that the worship of this goddess, this false idol that he knows is false. I want this more than I want Christ. And he realizes the danger, both of them cannot exist. I mean, look at what he says here again.

He says, and there is danger, not only that this trade of ours may come into disrepute, but also that the temple of the great goddess Artemis may be counted as

nothing. and that she may even be disposed from her magnificent, she whom all Asia and the world worship." Now, notice, again, Artemis plays upon their idolatrous hearts, and he talks about, again, danger, and he names two dangers, and one of the dangers is our our business, how we make money, how we make a livelihood might come into disrepute.

The thing that Artemis never argues about is whether the gospel is true or whether the gospel is false. He never argues about the validity of that. He never says, man, we need to examine ourself and see if we are truly serving the right deity. He never argues about that.

He argues about his craft. He argues about his wealth. He argues about his livelihood. And he says, again, if this gospel keeps preaching, we're going to lose our occupation. We're going to lose our wealth that happens to be again in our life. And let me tell you, it is incredible many times when you listen to people, what they're willing to give up, who they're willing to give up in order to gain something in the world. And here's what Jesus says about this in Mark chapter eight.

He says this, for what does it profit a man to gain the whole world and forfeit his soul? For what can a man give? in return for a soul, and we've all known people who say, no, no, no, no, no, no, I want this relationship over here, no, no, no, no, no, I want this kind of life that happens to be over here, no, no, no, no, I want this thing that happens to be, yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah, I know what the word of God says. And what shall you give? What shall you sacrifice, again, in your life in order to have something in the world?

I mean, Judas sacrificed his soul for 30 pieces of silver. And so we see this danger, again, that this whole, again, lifestyle, this whole life will come into disrepute. You know, the second danger happens to be, again, that people, when they come to Christ, they will say this. They will say this. Artemis is nothing. Artemis is a scarecrow. Artemis, again, is that chunk of wood. Artemis is that piece of silver that cannot give life. And think of who Artemis was, because she was an important goddess. She was an important, again, part of that polytheistic system that happened to begin right there.

And she was known as a daughter of Zeus and she was known as a daughter of fertility and childbearing. In other words, it was really precarious in the ancient world to have a baby. So it was precarious and very dangerous for the woman. It was very dangerous for the child. So if you wanted a safe childbirth, if you wanted a healthy baby, if you wanted to protect the mother, what you would go is you would travel to Ephesus and you would bring an offering to this goddess and she would protect your child.

She would protect again the mom. So you can imagine how this is an economic engine. It's bringing in all this money, all this money, all this wealth. And he can imagine if people start turning to Christ and saying, well, this is just a scarecrow. This is just nothing. This is just a hunk of wood. This is just a hunk, again, of silver. This has no power to deliver. You know, all of a sudden, it's brought it. Artemis becomes nothing. And Demetrius understands it.

And I want to just say, I'm really surprised when you read through the Book of Acts how there's never any theological debate among the religious leaders about the truthfulness of Christianity. You know, there's never any theological debate that Jesus is not the Christ, right? It's not there. When you look at these texts, I'm going to begin right here.

There's never any philosophical argument that if all of a sudden people start worshiping Jesus Christ, that we're gonna have all this offspring, all of these

babies, all of these stillbirths, all of these deaths that happen to be there. There's no argument, again, about that.

And the reason why is people many times realize the truth, but we also realize the idols that happen to begin in their heart, and they're just not willing to give them up. And because why? Because whatever controls your heart, controls your actions. I mean, they come out, don't they? I mean, think about it. They're right here, a livelihood, money. Don't care if this is right. Don't care if this is wrong. We've got this livelihood. We've got this way. We've got this functionality in our life. And now they're primed for riots. Now they're primed for murder. Now they're primed to do whatever they can do in order to protect what is in their hearts.

Think about it. Think about the futility of this. They've constructed something in their hearts, they've constructed something in their lives, they've constructed something that's given them some sort of standing, some sort of security that cannot give them in the end the standing and the security that they need that happens to be in their life.

Realize this. realize that the idols that we struggle with many times are subtle idols. They're idols again of not, here it is, you drive by somebody's home and they have a statue again of Mary, you drive by another home and there's a statue again of Buddha that happens to be again out there. This is not what we're talking about. The idols that we struggle with many times are more subtle.

Can we even say this, more acceptable to happen to be in our life? Let me just say, and I hope I made this clear, Money is not moral. Money is called, and it begins with an A, amoral. It's not immoral or moral. Why? Because money is just money. It's like a tree, isn't it? You can look at that tree, and you can worship that tree, or you can say, look at what my God has made.

And there's not even anything wrong with desiring more money. We can do a lot of good, can't we? We can invest more in God's kingdom. We can give more away from those who are suffering that happens to be around us. There's nothing wrong with wanting more money. But there's everything wrong with loving money. There's everything wrong with wanting that relationship with what money cannot give you. The love of money, the love of money, the love of money is the root of all kinds of evil.

There's nothing wrong. with wanting a good marriage. There's nothing wrong with wanting, again, to have a beneficial relationship where the husband, again, is really echoing forth the glories of the Lord Jesus Christ, where the wife is echoing forth the glories of the church and her devotion and her love to Jesus Christ. There's nothing wrong with that.

There's everything wrong. When things go wrong in our life, and they will go wrong in our life, there's everything wrong. and demanding it. Think about it. If you've had an argument this week with your spouse, if you've gotten spat again with your kids, if you raised your voice, if you slammed a door, if you stomped your foot, if you stopped speaking to somebody again who happens to be again around you that you should be speaking to, what's the problem? And here's what we say the problem is. You know what the problem is? I've cut down a piece of wood in my heart. And I say, this is what I need for life. This is what I need for security. Isn't it true? I mean, James says it.

James chapter 4, verse number 1, he says, what causes quarrels and fights among you? We want to point outward. We want to point to a circumstance. We want to point to the unloving disposition of others or whatever it has not. But listen what James says.

He says, is it not this, that your passions, you want something, you desire something? You say, this can give me life. that your passions are at war within you. You desire and do not have, so you murder. You covet and cannot contain, so you fight and quarrel.

You do not have because you do not ask. It has nothing to do with Christ. It has nothing to do with worshiping him, loving him. And he goes on and describes this kind of idolatry, this hard idolatry this way. He says, you adulterous people. You know what adultery is? Right here, it's spiritual idolatry. I've taken the love that I should have for God, and here's idolatry. I've given my love to something else in creation. And I've said again, this is my God.

You adulterous people, do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God? Therefore, whoever wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself. An enemy. You cannot serve God in money. You cannot serve God in your spouse. You cannot serve God and make your children an idol. Makes himself an enemy of God. And think of it, because I really don't think it's that hard to spot the idols that happen to begin in our hearts. I really don't think.

And you know how we locate them? We locate them. This is how, by just looking what's coming out. Don't look at who's right and wrong. Look at what's coming out of your heart. Because we realize the fruit of the Spirit is this. The fruit of the Spirit, again according to Galatians 5, the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control against such. There is no law. I mean, that's it right there. And think of it.

You know, think of how this works, because you're dwelling on Christ, you're dwelling on his goodness, you're dwelling on his grace that happens again in your life, and you're amazed at the patience of God in your life. You're amazed again how many times you mess up in your life. But your God doesn't strike you down. Your God is always with you. There's nothing that will ever separate me from the love of God in Christ Jesus.

And you're amazed at this patience. And here's an amazing thing. Those who recognize how much patience they need in their life, guess what they are? They're patient in their marriages. They're patient in their child rearing. They're patient, again, when people are impatient with us. They're patient when people hurt us. They're forgiving and kind when people sin against us.

You know, there's a whole different disposition. And why is there a different disposition? It's because of this. Because there's a different God that I'm worshiping. There's a different God that I'm trusting. I'm not trusting the scarecrow. I'm not trusting this construction that I've made in my human heart, in my human life, in my human mind. I'm worshiping this Christ.

And here's the amazing thing, again, about this God. This is where life is found. This is where abundance is found. And what we're called to do, that happened to begin right here, is fight this. Think about it. God destroys every idol. Now, think about this, because some of you never even heard of Artemis. Now, here's my question. If you went down to the river waterfront, if it's not pouring rain this afternoon, and you did this, here's a little homework. Try it. Just go down there and ask 10 people, 10 random people, who Artemis is. And you know how many responses you're going to get to that? You're going to get a goose egg.

And why? Because Artemis has been destroyed. There's no temple, there's no worship of her anymore. And think of it, 2,000 years later, we're singing of the marvelous, gracious, wondrous grace of God through Jesus Christ in our life. What does he do? He smashes all the idols.

And here's the thing, is Christ more than enough? And you know what the word of God says, and the more that we stare at him, the more that we look at him, the more that we see who he is in scripture, we realize that he is more than enough for my aching heart. He is more than enough for all my needs, for all my sin, for all my struggles.

You know, we slash and fight idolatry, not by trying to be better people or anything else like that, but by looking at the real, not looking at imitations, looking at the real and living Lord, because He, and He alone, can truly satisfy. Let's bow our hearts. Father, as we look at this text, God, we realize why idolatry is so often condemned in the Word of God. Lord, we realize why some of the strongest warnings that happen to be, again, in your Word is about false worship. God, we can content our hearts many times and think that we've never bowed down to a statue. Lord, we've never burned a candle to some idol. Lord, we've never lit incense. Lord, and asked for some favor again of some piece of stone or some piece again of wood.

But Lord, we realize, even as John Calvin pointed out many years ago, that our hearts are an idol factory. God, when one idol fails us, we'll turn to another idol, we'll turn to another idol, we'll turn to another thing that happens to be in the creation.

God, we realize that that longing for satisfaction, that longing for purpose, that longing for forgiveness, that longing for the relationship that we need is found in Jesus Christ. God, I just pray that we would turn away from the things, we would turn away from our scarecrows. Lord, that we would expose them in our lives. Lord, but not only expose them, but see the true and living words, see Jesus Christ and him crucified, yea, for sinners like us. Just be amazed at Him because we realize, Lord, there is so much to delight in. There's so much to enjoy about our Lord, our Savior, because He can truly satisfy our hearts. Just be with us now. We ask this in Jesus' name. Amen. Brother. Well, thank you so much for that ministry to us this morning, Pastor.