



Worldliness

We 20th Century Americans have developed finely-tuned skills for creating new gods. I am not referring to the rise of new age religion, the resurgence of paganism and the occult, or the proliferation of non-Christian cults. For the most part, these all worship gods that are very old.

This “god-making” skill is one that Christians demonstrate as much as anyone else. We have found a way to turn almost anything that we enjoy in this world, or almost everything that we enjoy in this world, into our god.

Just what is a god? A god demands certain things of its worshipers: attention, time, money, witness. Think of the things in your life to which that might apply. What sorts of things occupy your thoughts, and dominate your schedule? For what sorts of things do you pinch your pennies to purchase? Where do your conversations always tend to lead?

A god also makes certain promises to its worshipers: help, satisfaction, fulfillment, a cause. Where do we turn in trouble? What makes us feel satisfied and content (or what do we believe will make us feel that way)? What have we discovered, or what do we enjoy so much in our lives, that we feel compelled to go out and make converts?

Might I suggest a few potential false gods we are tempted to overlook? How about our children? The responsibility of raising them certainly requires a great deal of time, effort, and money on our part. God himself wants us to work hard at parenting.

But children, like so many things, are still just one of the gifts which the Lord has loaned to us for a while. We can center our lives on them in a way which becomes idolatry. If God tested us in this regard, like he tested Abraham in regard to Isaac (“Take your son, your only son Isaac, whom you love, and go to the region of Moriah. Sacrifice him there...” Gen. 22), would we pass the test?

So many other things which are good gifts of God can mutate into rival gods: a marriage, success in one’s career, technology (some Macintosh computer users refer to themselves as Mac evangelists), higher education, sports (why did it hurt so much when my team didn’t make it to the championship this year?), family peace, as well as the many objects upon which we materialistic Americans set our hearts.



Jesus confronted such worldliness in Peter, who was undeniably a Christian, when Peter valued his own dreams of glory more than the Gospel. “If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for me and the gospel will save it” (Mark 8:34-35).

The reason Jesus came was not so that we might have more of this world that God has made. He didn’t come to give us happier lives all wrapped up in a richer enjoyment of God’s creation. God’s creation is something we Christians continue to use and enjoy, this is true.

But the reason that Jesus came was so that we might stop centering our lives around this world which stopped being Paradise so many, many years ago, and find a real life of faith and love in the love which Jesus has for us--love so boundless that he gave up everything, even life, to make us his very own.

His forgiving love truly has no rivals!

In Christ, Pastor Vieths