5 – 1 – 2022 Are You Like What You Worship?

Revelation 5: 1 – 14

 We've all heard the adage, "you are what you eat." Today we will look into being like what you worship.

 When our children are young, we begin to notice how they imitate us, their parents. They play at cooking and feeding their play animals and dolls and doing household chores just the way we cooked, fed them, and did chores.

 Where this can be a good thing, it can also show us, much to our dismay areas in our lives where change for the better is needed.

 This doesn’t stop with small children either.

 Think back to junior high, the herds of adolescents who choose to reflect and resemble their friends and peers.

 Whether it is through polo shirts, jackets, jeans, shoes, back packs, or whatever, there is the tendency and temptation to conform. No one wants to be different, to stand out.

 What we see in children continues into adulthood. We imitate. We reflect; sometimes consciously, sometimes unconsciously. Yes, we all have the tendency to reflect what we are around.

 We reflect things in our culture, society, family, friends, and the list goes on.

 In Genesis 1 we learn why. God created humans to be "Imaging Beings.” Particularly, we are intended to be imaging beings who reflect the Glory of God; however, if we choose not to do that, we will reflect the glory of something else.

 That is a presupposition, God has made humans to reflect Him, but if they do not commit themselves to Him, they will reflect something else. It is not possible to be neutral on this issue: we either reflect the Almighty God or something else.

 Martin Luther’s commentary on the first commandment in Exodus 20: 3 “You shall have no other gods before me”, Martin wrote “whatever your heart clings to and relies upon, that is your god; trust and faith of the heart alone make both god and idol. The idol is whatever claims the loyalty that belongs to God alone.”

 There is a principle in the Old Testament that supports this. People become like the idols that they worship.

 I am not going to give you a lot of Biblical examples of this, but I will show you some that illustrate how the worshipper begins to take on the characteristics of the object or idea worshiped.

 In the Old Testament, we discover that idols are described in a certain way, and those who worship the idols are described in precisely the same manner.

 The worshiper, rather than experiencing an expected life-giving blessing, receives a curse by becoming as spiritually hollow, empty, rebellious, or shameful as the idol is.

 For example, when idols are portrayed with eyes and ears that cannot see or hear; their worshipers are described as having eyes and ears but not seeing or hearing. Isaiah 42:17-20 reads:

 *17 But those who trust in idols, who say, ‘You are our gods,’ will be turned away in shame.*

*18 “Listen, you who are deaf! Look and see, you blind! 19 Who is as blind as my own people, my servant? Who is as deaf as my messenger? Who is as blind as my chosen people, 20 You see and recognize what is right but refuse to act on it. You hear with your ears, but you don’t really listen.”*

 Psalm 135:15-18 emphatically teaches this principle *15 The idols of the nations are merely things of silver and gold, shaped by human hands. 16 They have mouths but cannot speak, and eyes but cannot see. 17 They have ears but cannot hear, and mouths but cannot breathe. 18 And those who make idols are just like them, as are all who trust in them.*

 It is true, we become the image of what we worship.

 But the good news is that the positive inverse is also true. In Isaiah 6, for example, the prophet has an encounter with the living God. In verse 7 God touches Isaiah’s mouth to symbolize that Isaiah has experienced the forgiving and purifying grace of God.

 Isaiah is declared holy by the God who is holy, and Isaiah’s life is lived “imaging” reflecting the glory of God. Isaiah is one who reveres God and therefore, resembles God's Holiness as written in Isaiah 6: 5 – 7. *5 Then I said, “It’s all over! I am doomed, for I am a sinful man. I have filthy lips, and I live among a people with filthy lips. Yet I have seen the King, the LORD of Heaven’s Armies.” 6 Then one of the seraphim flew to me with a burning coal he had taken from the altar with a pair of tongs. 7 He touched my lips with it and said, “See, this coal has touched your lips. Now your guilt is removed, and your sins are forgiven.”*

 When we worship, surrender our loyalty, devotion, and adoration to items that are spiritually numb we become spiritually numb.

 When we give our lives to material things, we become materialistic.

 When we pursue earthly ambitions, we become worldly.

 When we give our lives in devotion to the living and loving God, we become filled with life and love!

 Having said all this, we turn our attention to the Book of the Revelation. You see, The Revelation is all about loyalties and adoration. It is about allegiances and consequences.

 As does the Old Testament, it presupposes that we become like what we worship.

 That’s why John is so hard on the seven churches in Revelation chapters 1-3 by tolerating evil and compromising with the world they become sinful and worldly.

 John stresses that if they will faithfully, completely surrender themselves to Christ Jesus they will become Christlike. This is an underpinning, an assumption that runs throughout the book.

 For example, John has a very common idiom that he uses to describe those who do not follow the Lamb it is “The inhabitants of the earth” or “earth dwellers” he uses it at least ten times and it has a very specific meaning, it refers to unbelievers who have substituted or replaced worship and service to God with something worldly.

 They are seeking and trusting the kingdoms of the earth. This expression is reserved for such people because they cannot look beyond this earth for their security. They trust in some part of the creation instead of the Creator for their ultimate welfare.

 They have become part of the earthly system in which they find security and they become like it.

 They have become earthbound; earth conscious.

They have given themselves over to serving the earthly creation instead of the Creator.

 Consequently, they have come to be identified with the creation instead of the Creator, and so are suitably themselves called “beasts.”

 Thus, the idolater’s identification with their object of worship is not only that they live under the power of the beast and will participate in his destructive destiny, but they also share in his character, devoid of the Spirit and bent on opposing God’s will.

 Contrast this with how John talks of Christians in The Revelation; they are characterized as exiles in a foreign land and are those who have come out of [Babylon] the ungodly earthly system, their home is in the coming new earth and heaven.

 Our scripture passage today Revelation 5: 1 – 14 describes the living God in whom we place our trust and faith and reflect in our lives. *1 Then I saw a scroll in the right hand of the one who was sitting on the throne. There was writing on the inside and the outside of the scroll, and it was sealed with seven seals. 2 And I saw a strong angel, who shouted with a loud voice: “Who is worthy to break the seals on this scroll and open it?”*

 *3 But no one in heaven or on earth or under the earth was able to open the scroll and read it. 4 Then I began to weep bitterly because no one was found worthy to open the scroll and read it.*

 *5 But one of the twenty-four elders said to me, “Stop weeping! Look, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the heir to David’s throne, has won the victory. He is worthy to open the scroll and its seven seals.” 6 Then I saw a Lamb that looked as if it had been slaughtered, but it was now standing between the throne and the four living beings and among the twenty-four elders. He had seven horns and seven eyes, which represent the sevenfold Spirit of God that is sent out into every part of the earth.*

 *7 He stepped forward and took the scroll from the right hand of the one sitting on the throne. 8 And when he took the scroll, the four living beings and the twenty-four elders fell down before the Lamb. Each one had a harp, and they held gold bowls filled with incense, which are the prayers of God’s people.*

 *9 And they sang a new song with these words: “You are worthy to take the scroll and break its seals and open it. For you were slaughtered, and your blood has ransomed people for God from every tribe and language and people and nation. 10 And you have caused them to become a Kingdom of priests for our God. And they will reign on the earth.”*

 *11 Then I looked again, and I heard the voices of thousands and millions of angels around the throne and of the living beings and the elders. 12 And they sang in a mighty chorus: “Worthy is the Lamb who was slaughtered to receive power and riches and wisdom and strength and honor and glory and blessing.”*

 *13 And then I heard every creature in heaven and on earth and under the earth and in the sea. They sang: “Blessing and honor and glory and power belong to the one sitting on the throne and to the Lamb forever and ever.” 14 And the four living beings said, “Amen!” And the twenty-four elders fell down and worshiped the Lamb.*

 Throughout The Revelation, the worshippers of God and the inhabitants of the earth are stamped with the image, character, and name of their object of worship.

 In other words, you can tell who they serve by how they think, what they say, and what they do. This idea begins in chapters 2 and 3 and builds throughout Revelation.

 You see, everyone bears the image and mark of the one they follow and worship.

 Let me close with some observations and questions that you can use for personal inventory and spiritual motivation.

 If Christ Jesus is depicted as a vulnerable and innocent lamb for slaughter, who redeems and liberates humankind by suffering for them (rather than using force and power like the world’s empires do), what will the demeanor of those who worship Him be like? Look at Colossians 3: *12 Since God chose you to be the holy people he loves, you must clothe yourselves with tenderhearted mercy, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience.*

 Are we not called to suffer become a living sacrifice, and “reign through servanthood” in the same manner as He does? As He states in Luke 22: 25-27, *25 Jesus told them, “In this world the kings and great men lord it over their people, yet they are called ‘friends of the people.’ 26 But among you it will be different. Those who are the greatest among you should take the lowest rank, and the leader should be like a servant. 27 Who is more important, the one who sits at the table or the one who serves? The one who sits at the table, of course. But not here! For I am among you as one who serves.*

 If we worship the One whose character and actions define the Kingdom of God, Christ Jesus, does that help us understand why He calls us a Kingdom and how that Kingdom functions. Jesus answers in the Sermon on the Mount in Matthew chapters 5 – 7.

 If we worship the One who is referred to in Scripture as a priest who stands before God on behalf of His people and before man as a representative of God does that help us understand why we are called to such priestly duties? We read in Revelation 5: *10 And you have caused them to become a Kingdom of priests for our God. And they will reign on the earth.”*

 Jesus is not asking us to do anything He has not modeled for us.

Here is what I am really asking you today …

 Is the image of your God stamped on you?

 When people look at you, what do they see as being your God?

 Never, ever forget, what you revere you will resemble, either for ruin or restoration. You will be like your idol, or you will be like Christ Jesus!

He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit is saying to the churches.