

“Idols, Robes and Keep On Keepin On”

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Providence Kemptown U.M. Church
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The Old Testament lesson is Exodus, chapter 32, verses 1 - 4. The people saw that Moses was taking a long time to come down from the mountain. They gathered around Aaron and said to him, “Come on! Make us gods who can lead us. As for this man Moses who brought us up out of the land of Egypt, we don’t have a clue what has happened to him.”

Aaron said to them, “All right, take out the gold rings from the ears of your wives, your sons, and your daughters, and bring them to me.” So all the people took out the gold rings from their ears and brought them to Aaron. He collected them and tied them up in a cloth. Then he made a metal image of a bull calf, and the people declared, “These are your gods, Israel, who brought you up out of the land of Egypt!”

The epistle lesson is from Philippians, chapter 4, verse 9. “*Keep on doing* the things that you have learned and received and heard and seen in me, and the God of peace will be with you.”

The gospel lesson is from Matthew, chapter 22, verses 1 - 14. Jesus responded by speaking again in parables: “The kingdom of heaven is like a king who prepared a wedding party for his son. He sent his servants to call those invited

to the wedding party. But they didn't want to come. Again he sent other servants and said to them, 'Tell those who have been invited, "Look, the meal is all prepared. I've butchered the oxen and the fattened cattle. Now everything's ready. Come to the wedding party!"'

But they paid no attention and went away—some to their fields, others to their businesses. The rest of them grabbed his servants, abused them, and killed them. "The king was angry. He sent his soldiers to destroy those murderers and set their city on fire. Then he said to his servants, 'The wedding party is prepared, but those who were invited weren't worthy. Therefore, go to the roads on the edge of town and invite everyone you find to the wedding party.'

"Then those servants went to the roads and gathered everyone they found, both evil and good. The wedding party was full of guests. Now when the king came in and saw the guests, he spotted a man who wasn't wearing wedding clothes. He said to him, 'Friend, how did you get in here without wedding clothes?' But he was speechless.

Then the king said to his servants, 'Tie his hands and feet and throw him out into the farthest darkness. People there will be weeping and grinding their teeth.' "Many people are invited, but few people are chosen." This is God's word for God's people. God bless the reading, hearing, understanding, and doing of your word. Open hearts and minds as we turn them to you in trust. Amen.

We've been journeying through the book of Exodus. I hope you've enjoyed it as much as I have. We've seen Israel liberated from slavery in Egypt and called out into the wilderness. We've seen God's people thirsty and hungry, and how God provided water and bread from heaven in the wilderness.

Last Sunday God reminded the Israelites that they're no longer slaves and should have no other gods before him. We talked about how idols can be many things—a vice, a concept or an opinion that takes precedence over God; it can be anything that hinders our spiritual growth.

Every step thru the wilderness the Israelites were struggling to take God seriously; they're not trusting him. Moses is on the mountaintop with God, and at the bottom of the mountain the people are impatient saying, "What is Moses doing? Where is he?" When things don't happen in the order they expect and in the moment they want they think God has left them.

So they doubt, complain, and wonder why things can't be the way they always were. They feel abandoned, so they make an idol right after God said don't do that. They make a golden calf not wanting to trust Moses or God; it's hard work to trust. They want things to go back the way they were. And maybe most of all, they don't want to change their hearts and lives. God is angry with them, but Moses prays and God turns his anger away from them.

Praise God God never changes. God is loving and faithful, and in a time of trial we may be tempted to forget God and go our own way. We get impatient. Our lack of trust urges us to do something! Maybe it's nothing more than a diversion from reality, but still, it's not a good way to respond as a follower of Christ.

The parable in Matthew 22 is muddled. The king gives a wedding banquet for his son, and the first group of invited guests don't care to attend. So, the response of the king is to do away with those who didn't accept the invitation. The second group is filled with all kinds of guests, good and bad—anyone who accepted. But there's one who wasn't prepared. He didn't take the invitation seriously. Maybe he just wanted a meal. Very similar to the Israelites worshipping the golden calf—they had little respect for God's presence among them.

So there you have it. In Exodus, the Israelites made an idol refusing to wait on Moses patiently to come down the mountain. In Matthew, the guest who wasn't prepared was kicked out. Now in the Philippian passage, Paul provides some thoughts on how to worship God and prepare yourself.

Philippians 4 verse 9 says this. Keep on keepin on and worship God doing what you know to do. Learn to trust him and respond to life's situations with prayer. Everyone's response will be different, but the bottom line is this. Learn to trust what God teaches. God has gifted each of us to be in relationship with him.

Don't throw that away. Care about it and know that God hasn't brought us this far to only bring us this far. Continue to go God's way.

Ask God to help you destroy the idols that hinder your spiritual growth and look upward and inward and rejoice in the Lord always! Don't worry. Do what God instructs you to do and do it the best you can. Become who God has created you to become and keep on doing the things you've learned and received.

Let's pray. God who embraces us in love and patience, who urges us to allow him to have the control in our lives, no matter what our circumstances here this morning, no matter how we've responded to you in the past, help us to respond to you *now* . . . personally. Encourage us to let go of selfish behavior and doing life our way. Help us God to keep on keepin on...doing what you've taught us to do.
Amen.