



Grain

“Idols are things we put our trust in. They are not God, but we treat them like they are. They take on a transcendent, magical character. We hold them with a sacred reverence that should only be given to God. We are willing to die for them and kill for them and sacrifice our children for them.”— Shane Claiborne

Field

5For freedom Christ has set us free. Stand firm, therefore, and do not submit again to a yoke of slavery. ¹³For you were called to freedom, brothers and sisters; only do not use your freedom as an opportunity for self-indulgence, but through love become slaves to one another. ¹⁴For the whole law is summed up in a single commandment, “You shall love your neighbor as yourself.” ¹⁵If, however, you bite and devour one another, take care that you are not consumed by one another. ¹⁶Live by the Spirit, I say, and do not gratify the desires of the flesh. ¹⁷For what the flesh desires is opposed to the Spirit, and what the Spirit desires is opposed to the flesh; for these are opposed to each other, to prevent you from doing what you want. ¹⁸But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not subject to the law. ¹⁹Now the works of the flesh are obvious: fornication, impurity, licentiousness, ²⁰idolatry, ... ²²By contrast, the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness... Galatians 5:1, 13-20 and 22

Thoughts by Rev. Adam Arends North Beaver Creek Lutheran Church Ettrick, WI

There are all sorts of ways that I waste my time. When days are difficult and the news is tough, I find myself scrolling and scrolling for longer than is healthy. I sometimes hide from chores in video games, and movies and television. Never has it been easier to find ways to distract ourselves from what needs to be done, and from what we know God would have us do for the fostering of God’s community.

These days we have made all sorts of things into idols. An idol can be defined as anything that we love more than we love God. Sometimes I find myself putting more love and time into my phone than I do my time with God. Recognizing this, I put the device down and vow to do better! Yet, like all humans who fall short, I’ll pick my phone up again.

As Shane Claiborne warns, idols receive a sort of reverence that should only be reserved for God. My current obsession with my phone may be a distraction and damaging to the time I could be putting into relationships, yet in our country we have allowed other things to become idols with serious consequences. This nation’s inaction on common sense gun reform, and our collective concentration on the importance of having more guns, has gone from exercising freedom to deadly obsession. People of color in Buffalo, and fourth-graders in Uvalde are the sacrifices on the altar of this idol. The Apostle Paul warns that idolatry, acting in anger, jealousy and quarrels are human works, and not the work of the Spirit. In other words, allowing violence and the tools of violence to be our gods leads us directly away from the Kingdom, the community, of God.

I pray that we collectively recognize that our idols will not save us, or even keep us much safer. I pray that we crucify our idols of anger, violence, and weapons, and turn with the Spirit towards lives of love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. May we turn from our idols to worship and trust in God alone.

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Many blessings upon you,

Pastor Adam