Dear Reader,

I am new to producing reading sermons. So, if you have any suggestions as to how I might improve my format or what I include – please email me at cdanielwilson@gmail.com. **I will warn you, that I do not use short sentences**. I will endeavor to work on this over time, but I don’t naturally write that way. However, you can easily break most of my longer sentences into 2 or 3 smaller ones where I have “…” or “–“ or commas. If you do the work on making it into smaller sentences – feel free to email it to me, and I am happy to share your work with others. I do have some of these available which people have sent me. I will eventually make them available as part of the normal manuscripts.

I have left my sermon manuscript formatted the way I normally write and read my sermons. They are colourful and written in conversational English. If you are a grammar nazi – then you will be frustrated with my punctuation and phrasing. However, once you read it out loud, you will normally be able to tell what I meant to say. SERIOUSLY, READ IT OUTLOUD. You will also see that I use a good bit of bold, italics, underlining and different colours to signal what are the most important things to say, and also to make it easier for my eye to pick up my place in the middle of paragraphs. I would recommend that you keep as many of those things as possible to help you keep your place. However, you will probably want to increase the spacing between lines. I highly encourage you to commit as much of the introduction or children’s illustrations to memory as you can, so that these can be delivered to the congregation with maximum eye contact.

**Where possible, I highly recommend that you listen to the sermon as I preached it at either the Nelson website or the website of North Shore.** I recommend that because that will also help hear the places where I added or skipped over material in the manuscript, and the places where I clarified my meaning. I have edited bits and pieces which I thought most important, but I have not sought to include all the additional material that comes to me while in the pulpit. I would practically have to use a transcription service for that. However, I hope and pray that this sermon will be a blessing to you and to your congregation. To God be the Glory!

Blessings in our Lord, Pastor Daniel Wilson

**My Suggestions for the Order of Service**

Song before the service: #67

Bro & Sis: ***Our only Hope is found in the Lord our God, the Creator & Sustainer of all Things & Savior of those who trust in Him!*** Grace be yours in abundance, with Mercy and Peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. ***Amen.***

We will sing: Ps. **#144 “All Praise to the Lord”**

***We will profess our faith using Apostles Creed*** *pg. 6 Please be seated*

***NOW FLIP OVER TO PAGE 839 as we Read Heidelberg Lord’s Day 35 (****not 33****)***

We come now to our time of Congregational Prayer.

**Song of dedication: 57 vs.1-7: Have Mercy on me Lord…** ***vs.1-7*** *a prayer to God for his help*

***SCRIPTURE READING – Isaiah 44:6-23***

**God has given us such a great salvation - so** let us respond to His grace, by generously giving to support God’s kingdom work through His tithes and our additional Free-will offerings! ***( Deacons)***

*Let’s cont. to worship as we* **Sing Psalm #106 "Praise the Lord Extol his Goodness" vs.1,3,8, 11,18**

***Sermon Text:* Ex. 20:1-6 *Sermon Title: No Reformed Idols***

***Let us now sing a* song of Response*–*#471 “O For a closer walk with God”**

***May God the Father*** *bless you & keep you,* ***May God the Son*** *turn His face toward you & be gracious to you,* ***May the Holy Spirit*** *lift up his countenance upon you & give you peace!* ***Amen***

***Doxology*: Psalm #146 *vs.4***

# **Morning Sermon: “No Reformed Idols”**

Text: Exodus 20:1-6 Reading: Exodus 32:1-9 (god ~~s~~ ) & LD35 Isaiah 44:6-23

**Introduction:** I have a question for all of you this evening… ***WHO thinks that you know what* God the Father looks like?** Perhaps you have seen a photo of the Sistine chapel? **And who knows what *Jesus looks like?*** Would you recognize an actual picture of Jesus if you saw one… AND Finally, Who knows what the Holy Spirit looks like? Perhaps you think of a flame of fire or a dove, because those are symbols related to Him.

It is helpful for you to think about that, because As we look at the second commandment this evening we will explore ***How we should view God – visually, physically, spiritually or otherwise!***

**Tonight**, we continue our series on the 10 commandments. ***Last week, we saw that God prohibits worshipping a False god, and all forms of idolatry.*** When you put anything as first in your life in place of God, you are guilty of idolatry.**Since we worship our way into idolatry, we must worship our way out… *By believing, trusting and worshipping ONLY the Lord God of the Bible!***

***And Here in the 2nd Commandment, God regulates HOW we are to Worship Him:***

***Thesis: You shall not use idols/images of God in worship* AT ALL*, because God is Jealous, Just and Merciful.***

*We will examine this commandment under two headings in two sermons: the two headings are:*

1. **The Regulation of God’s Worship** *(this evening we will only cover… so essentially the pts this tonight are:)*
	1. **False Worship is Prohibited**
	2. **True Worship is Commanded**
2. **Three Reasons to Comply** (*For Children: comply means obey*)

***First, Let’s look at****:*

# **The Regulation of God’s Worship**

*In the 2nd Commandment:*

* 1. **False Worship is Prohibited** (*we see right off the bat that…*) (REPEAT)

*You shall not make for yourself an idol (image) or any likeness of what is in Heaven Above or on the Earth beneath or in the waters under the Earth. You shall not worship them or serve them...*

*Here we see that God:*

* + 1. ***Prohibits all MAKING OF Idols/Images***

The first words of the commandment prohibit making idols or images in the sense of paintings or sculptures for a shrine or for worship. **God is very clearly condemning the practice of making physical objects thru which you presume to worship a God.** One of the classic texts for how God feels about idols is Isaiah 44:6-23. There God mocks the idiocy, the lunacy of thinking that the same log which gave fuel for the fire could be worshipped as a god!?! IT is an insane thought, and yet – that is what happened for thousands of years and continues to happen in some places!

 God seeks to protect correct worship and prohibit idolatry by preventing the creation of such abominations! But does that mean that we can’t have any photos, pictures or sculptures of stuff? ***NO!***

Two things make it clear that God is not prohibiting all sculpture and pictures: 1) the words for idol or image are worship words, not normal words for pictures or art; 2) That phrase “*You shall not bow down to them or worship them*” confirms that God and worship is in view, not art. You cannot make an image or figure that might be used in worship (intentionally or unintentionally), but you can make other pictures and sculptures that are NOT worship related! That is further proven by the fact that God later commanded Moses to make carvings and sculptures of fruit, bulls and angels in the tabernacle! *We tend to keep our sanctuary or worship halls very spartan when it comes to images or decoration, so that we avoid distraction for children or those who are easily bored.*

*The creation of the Idol is not the worst part though… the bigger problem is using an image or icon or sculpture of any kind in Worship…*

1. ***This Commandment prohibits any Worship by the means of Images or idols***

You see, God goes on to explain in multiple places in His Word, that we can’t even use such things to worship Him! We see that in God’s reaction to the golden calf in ***Exodus 34.* There** Aaron made a golden calf and told the people that this was Jehovah Elohim – the God who brought them out of Egypt. That was both making and worshiping an idol as a representation of God, AND was a direct violation of this Commandment.

Thankfully, no one tries to worship God through images of bulls in our day (that I know of)… but some churches do aim for there to be icons, or shrines to God the Father or Jesus Christ or the Holy Spirit, and they encourage people to burn incense, to kiss the shrine or icon and so forth. Those versions of Christianity are breaking the second commandment restriction about using images to worship God. **The Roman Catholics** claim that these images/icons help us to exalt God. *They claim they don’t worship the image itself, but they worship God by bowing/kissing/reverencing His image*, **but God is always present everywhere**, to use an image for worshipping God is like kissing a picture of your wife when she is standing right next to you – Why stoop/settle for the image when the real deal is there?! **It’s disrespectful and Absurd!**

*Now this led our forefathers in the faith to go so far as to remove ALL images of God whatsoever – even images of Jesus!*

1. ***And this is the current debatable topic about this commandment: Are images of God okay?!***

***First off:* Children, What is God?** God is a Spirit and does not have a body like men! **Therefore,** all representations or art depicting God the Father do not show what God looks like, NOR do they Please Him! ***As Thomas Watson says, To make an image/representation of God is to DEBASE Him!*** If you were to make a political cartoon depicting our Prime Minister, Jacinda Ardern as a snake or a spider – She would rightly be insulted! It is disrespectful because spiders/snakes are so far below her! **Therefore, What greater Insult could you give to God than to represent the Infinite God by something finite. The Living God cannot be shown by a non-living image, nor the Creator of all by something that is created by man.** *To even Try is an insult of Infinite Proportions!*

 **But what about images of Christ?** Surely those are acceptable because He was truly human right?

Well, that is the debate! There are a few things going on here:

1) Any image of God the Father or God the Holy Spirit which is actually supposed to BE GOD… are wrong. A symbol representing God like a dove for the Holy Spirit is fine, but any actual image to represent the Father/Spirit is wrong. No real debate there – although modern evangelicals and Catholics sometimes paint pictures of God the Father as a man – think Sistine Chapel – those are not debated by Reformed Christians: they are wrong!

2) Any image of Jesus or God used in worship is 100% ungodly. If we put up a huge image of Jesus and say, “Let’s pray to the Lord Jesus.” That is idolatrous in a 2nd commandment sense. The Reformers took that same approach to all images because the only images or sculptures of their day were public ones in CHURCHES used alongside worship as aids to teaching and worship! They never had to face the situation of children’s Bibles kept at home, or Sunday school materials used privately and not in a worship setting.

So, that is the 3) issue… Can we have pictures of Jesus (in his humanity) in a private or personal setting which are NOT used for worship or prayer?! **Some Reformed Christians say yes, others no**. I personally am convicted that all images of Jesus are wrong. I think that way, in part, because we have NO idea what Jesus looked like! The Scriptures describe him as someone who had no stately form that we should look at him (Isaiah 53) – meaning He wasn’t good looking. *But most pictures of Jesus make a nice looking white man in a strikingly white robe – it is just inaccurate and misleading!*

 However, I am not an iconoclast that wants to go on a book-burning hunt to destroy all the images of Christ. Rather, I want my children to know what the Bible really teaches about Jesus. Every time I see a “picture” of Jesus with my children – I explain what the Bible tells us and what in the image is probably wrong. I do that, so that they do not think of such images when trying to pray or worship the Lord! **We could say so much more… but there is much more that is taught here than just the debate about images of Jesus.**

*THIS commandment does not merely tell us to avoid making and worshipping images of God; God is revealing how we* **should** *worship Him! – not only is False Worship prohibited****, but:***

* 1. **True Worship is Promoted (REPEAT)**

The positive injunction implied in this commandment is to Worship God only as He requires – We call this the Regulative Principle. ***Now I know that some of you may be thinking – What does that have to do with the second commandment again?*** Simply this, if worship through images is prohibited, then worship without images is commanded – and that is explained best by Jesus’ teaching in John 4 and *The Regulative Principle* – The 2nd commandment clearly teaches that man is not to ***worship or view*** God in a way that comes natural to him - visually. Instead, You *must* **worship/view** God as He reveals Himself in His Word!

* + 1. ***Specifically: We are to Worship Him in Spirit and in Truth***

In **John 4:23-24,** Jesus taught that since God is spirit, those who worship Him must worship Him in Spirit and in Truth. Jesus was explaining what it would be like during the Christian era, in which we now live. We don’t have to go to a specific location to worship God, **we can gather for worship** *in a church building, a home or a warehouse anywhere in the world – and there God is with us!* **We worship in Spirit when we worship God as a Spirit from our Spirits/hearts.**

That means you don’t worship through an image, nor do you picture God in your mind. When you pray to Jesus, you don’t think of a picture of Him – you simply speak to Him in Spirit.

* ***Perhaps more appropriate for us, worshipping in Spirit means*** *that we DON’T*just sing the song while thinking of other things. Rather, it means you sing TO GOD from your heart (which means your emotions, body language and thoughts need to agree with what you are singing!)
* **Worshipping in Spirit means** you pray as if were literally in God’s presence – because you are!
* **It means** you give attention to the reading/preaching of God’s Word as if your very life depended upon it… because in a way, it does!

**We worship in Truth when we worship according to Scripture.** That means we don’t do what we want in worship, rather we are careful to do what God wants in worship. We don’t aim for entertainment (of ourselves or God), no rather we aim to humble ourselves as we exalt God in the elements of worship prescribed in His Word: By singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, By praying with joy in our hearts, By confessing/repenting of our sin, By giving tithes and offerings, and By listening to the reading and preaching of God’s Word. ***Now some object*** that lights and microphones are not mentioned in the Bible so WHY DO WE USE THEM?! ***…but those are not elements of worship,*** they are merely circumstances. We may use things like lights, amplification, and an instrument in worship to assist us in the commanded elements of worship. They are appropriate so long as they assist and do not become separate elements themselves. For example: a light show, or musical concert in worship would not assist in the commanded elements!

*Now that is How we are to Worship, but if ALL images of God are prohibited:*

* + 1. ***How are we to view/think of God?***

Most pagans simply view God as the “old man in the sky” But as we already discussed, to think of God as being in the form of a man is a HUGE insult to Him. He is the Creator and We are the Creation. **So, practically how do you view God?** In his book on the 10 Commandments, Thomas Watson addressed this issue. If you can’t think of God visually, you must think of Him Spiritually: **We do that** ***(1) Through His Attributes:*** *WE think about**His Holiness, Justice, and goodness – for that is how we truly accurately know Him!* ***(2) We also, must think of God as He is revealed in Christ.*** Christ is the “image of the invisible God” – We don’t try to picture Christ physically in order to see God. RATHER, we look at what God has done **for us** in Christ – for that tells us everything we need to know to be saved!

**In Christ’s death on the cross we see God’s Justice** – For He could not allow sin to go unpunished. So, Christ took the sin of God’s chosen people and endured the full penalty for that sin – the infinite wrath of God. *God made Him who knew no sin, to BE SIN for US, that we might be the righteousness of God!* Christ suffered Hell for all those who put their faith in Him. **No picture** of an emaciated white man on a cross can depict that sacrificial love – for such pictures can never depict the worst part of that death – *the separation from His Father – the infinite wrath of God poured out against sin!*

The Cross shows the Love and Mercy of the Almighty God! No picture of a half-naked man in the Sistine chapel can ***begin*** to depict such a God! In Christ we have been given everything for life and godliness, and in Him we have the hope of the resurrection. And all of this is secure in Christ, because He is risen and reigning now at the right hand of God the Father! There is so much revealed about God’s Providential Plan, His Justice, His Holiness, His Mercy and His love…

***That description in God’s Word is like a high definition 4k video image, and the various pictures and ideas that people come up with in their own minds* or in art *are nothing more than single color blobs of ink – no definition, no real scale or majesty to who God truly is!*** THAT is why we need to focus on the Bible’s description of God alone!

**So Practically, How do we apply the 2nd Commandment to our lives?**

*Do we go to all the Christian stores in the area and burn the pictures of Jesus?* ***No!*** *that might be kinda fun, but No…* Do we throw away all the children’s books with images of Jesus – some of you might… **but FAR more importantly:** you need to seriously speak to your children about images of Jesus. You need to explain that we don’t know what He looks like. *That such pictures* are pictures of how people dressed in Jesus’ day, but they are by no means images or pictures ***of HIM***. You don’t want your child thinking that every picture of a bearded man in a bathrobe is Jesus – that doesn’t help them know Him.

Instead, if your children want to know what Jesus looks like, read the two greatest descriptions of Him that we have – from Isaiah 53 and Revelation 19! Isaiah 53 describes him as the suffering servant and lamb of God who gave His life for your sins and mine… And *the Apostle John gave us an even greater image of the risen and glorified Christ!*

**Revelation 19:11-16**  11 ¶ I saw heaven standing open and there before me was a white horse, whose rider is called Faithful and True. With justice he judges and makes war. 12 His eyes are like blazing fire, and on his head are many crowns. He has a name written on him that no one knows but he himself. 13 He is dressed in a robe dipped in blood, and his name is the Word of God. 14 *The armies of heaven were following him, riding on white horses and dressed in fine linen, white and clean*. 15 Out of his mouth comes a sharp sword with which to strike down the nations. "He will rule them with an iron scepter." He treads the winepress *of the fury* of the wrath ***of God Almighty***. 16 On his robe and on his thigh he has this name written: KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS.

No image or painting can do that justice – in fact, a picture would ruin the effect! You see, it is the emotional and mental impact of those words which give us the power and comfort of our savior! Far better than any piece of art!

Look to Scripture to define who God is and look forward to the day when we will see and spend eternity with Him in Heaven! ***AMEN.***