

# The Second Word: The Image of the LORD

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[ 0 : 00 ] Please turn with me in your Bibles to Exodus chapter 20. We're going through a series in the book of Exodus, and we're slowing down in Exodus chapter 20 to take 10 weeks to go through the Ten Commandments.

We're on the second commandment today. I am going to preach on verses 4 to 6, because we preached on verses 1 to 3 last week, but I'm going to read from verses 1 to 6. You get the context of the verses.

Let me pray for the reading and preaching of God's Word. Heavenly Father, Your Word is precious to us.

It is more precious to us than refined gold, because in Your Word, You have revealed Yourself to us, because in Your Word, we encounter Jesus, our Savior, who makes us wise for salvation. Because in Your Word, we have life. We find Your truth. So we ask again that You would speak to us this morning.

[ 1 : 22 ] We humble ourselves before You. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen. If you would please stand with me, if you are able, for the reading of God's Word.

Exodus chapter 20, verses 1 through 6. And God spoke all these words, saying, I am the Lord, your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery.

You shall have no other gods before me. You shall not make for yourself a carved image or any likeness of anything that is in heaven above or that is in the earth beneath or that is in the water under the earth.

You shall not bow down to them or serve them, for I, the Lord your God, am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children to the third and the fourth generation of those who hate me, but showing steadfast love to thousands of those who love me and keep my commandments. This is God's holy and authoritative Word. Please be seated. The saying, a picture is worth a thousand words, is said to have emerged in the U.S.

[ 2 : 46 ] sometime in the 20th century in the advertising industry, pointing out the fact that a single image can convey multiple ideas at once. We gravitate toward images, and images tend to leave indelible marks on our minds.

If you read a novel, for example, and then you watch a movie version of it, when you go back to read the novel, you can't help but conjure up those images that you've seen in the movies, no matter how inaccurate they may be and no matter how unfaithful they may be to the actual text. I'm sure many of you can relate to the experience of seeing images that you wish you could unsee, whether it's a graphic image that inflames your lust or a dark, frightening image that gives you nightmares when sleeping.

And because these images are powerful, they can also be very dangerous. They can hijack our imaginations and control our thinking about people and things. Images can be very misleading. Many pictures taken at unfortunate moments out of context have cost people their jobs and reputations. Conversely, many airbrushed and carefully crafted images have shaped perceptions of people that are far from the reality.

[ 4 : 04 ] The second word of the Ten Commandments addresses these concerns about images. It teaches us that rather than making and worshipping images of creatures, we are to worship the word of God, Jesus Christ, who is the image of the invisible God.

So first, we're going to look at the command, the images of creatures, and the motivation to obey this command, the jealousy of God. And third, we're going to see the fulfillment of this command in the image of God, Jesus Christ.

It says in verses 4 to 5, you shall not make for yourself a carved image or any likeness of anything that is in heaven above or that is in the earth beneath or that is in the water under the earth. You shall not bow down to them or serve them. So this is referring to kind of three divisions of the visible created world in Genesis 1. The heavens where the birds rule, the ground where the livestock and the animals rule and the humans ultimately rule and the waters below where the fish rule.

And so he's in this command including all of God's creation, all created beings. You are not to make images of them.

[ 5 : 12 ] However, that doesn't mean that you need to go and burn your painting of the dog, of your dog, or that Michelangelo was an idolater for making his famous sculpture of David.

The second commandment does not bar all painting sculptures in stained glass windows depicting animals and humans. The Bible is not anti-art. In fact, later in Exodus 31, the Lord commissions, he gifts and commissions Bezalel and Oholiab to create art inside the tabernacle, including weaving drawings of the cherubim, the angels, into the curtains and making sculptures of cherubim with their wings spread over the Ark of the Covenant.

Not only that, in Numbers 21, 6-9, when fiery serpents were killing the Israelites due to their rebelling against the Lord, God himself commanded Moses to create a bronze serpent, make it, and to set it on a pole so that people might look upon it and be healed.

So it was a memorial, and it was kept as a memorial for God's people. So it's not that all images are forbidden. The connection is in verse 5, because verse 4 is joined to verse 5.

It says, You shall not bow down to them or serve them. The point is that we must not make any image of anything or anyone for the purpose of worshipping them.

[ 6 : 37 ] That is why later in 2 Kings 18, verse 4, when the Israelites start making offerings to the very bronze serpent that God had commanded Moses to make, King Hezekiah rightly smashes it into pieces to stop the idolatry.

Unfortunately, this has been an all-too-common practice in human history. The heavens and the earth and the waters each have great creatures that have amazed human beings throughout history, and they have been tempted to worship them.

For example, if we were to behold the Andean condor, the largest bird of prey on earth, spreading out its majestic wings up to 10 feet 9 inches long and defying gravity and soaring as high as 18,000 feet in the heavens with the Andean mountains on the backdrop, imagine that awe-inspiring sight. It was so inspiring that the ancient Andean civilizations in South America associated the Andean condor with their sun god and believed that it ruled the upper world.

If we were to behold the African savannah elephant weighing a whopping 24,000 pounds and standing over 13 feet tall and every time it walks, it's shaking the ground and that rumble spreads to four miles away, we would marvel at it.

[ 7 : 59 ] So maybe it's not surprising that many cultures worshipped gods and represented gods as elephants. Hindu cosmology says that the earth is propped up by mythical world elephants and Ganesha, the elephant god, is one of the most popular gods in the Hindu pantheon.

If you were to behold a southern humpback whale, which can weigh nearly 200,000 pounds and stretch nearly 60 feet high or 60 feet in length, and then it could still haul its great body above the water and breach the surface of the Pacific Ocean, you would stand amazed.

Perhaps that's why it's used as a representation of Tangaroa, the sea god that controls the tides and the mythology of the Maori people in New Zealand. Similarly, the foreign gods we encounter in the Old Testament in Egypt and Canaan are often associated with some aspect of creation and worship as some creature, including Anubis, a jackal, Horus, a falcon, Pharaoh, a serpent, Baal, a bull or ram, Dagon, a fish, Asherah, a woman.

That reminds us that human beings are also merely creatures whose images we must not create for worship. We might think that we're no longer susceptible to the worship of creatures, but in truth, we are.

There are people whose rooms are filled with posters, cards, and other images of sports stars, athletes, and they spend hundreds of thousands of dollars to collect memorabilia connected to them.

[ 9 : 37 ] And they pay thousands of dollars to go to all their games, and after they're inducted to the Hall of Fame, they go to Springfield or Cooperstown or Canton, and they literally go pay homage.

That's what they call it. Before the bust or the statue of the athlete. Sometimes star athletes are treated like demigods of Greek mythology like Hercules or Achilles.

I recently saw the trailer of the movie Elvis. Have you guys seen that? I don't know if it's good because I haven't seen it. And he's singing and, you know, prancing around the stage and he is playing guitar and he's singing and the crowds are screaming at the top of their lungs and stretching their arms to try to reach him and women are literally swooning in front of him and falling.

And it's been over 45 years since Elvis' death. But still, to this day, thousands of Elvis fans make what they call the pilgrimage to Graceland every year to pay tribute to him.

They hold a candlelight vigil service at his gravesite, which looks a lot like a worship service. And there's an American music journalist named Robert Christgau who says this about Elvis.

[10:53] He says, I know he invented rock and roll in a manner of speaking, but that's not why he is worshipped as a god today. He is worshipped as a god today because in addition to inventing rock and roll, he was the greatest ballad singer this side of Frank Sinatra because the spiritual translucence and reigned in-gut sexuality of his slow weeper and torchy pop blues still activate the hormones and slavish devotion of millions of female human beings worldwide.

Justin Bieber Why are you guys laughing? Has 114.1 million Twitter followers. That's more number of followers than adherents of Judaism worldwide.

And they call themselves believers. And some of the more extreme believers send death threats to anyone who dares to harm Justin Bieber or criticize him or refuse to give him a Grammy.

Korean pop boy bands and girl bands are literally known as idols. And if you consider BTS' fanatic fan base, I think that's an apt description.

So this kind of extreme celebrity devotion is so widespread today that psychiatrists now actually have an official term for it. Celebrity worship syndrome.

[12:21] CWS. Which is an obsessive addictive disorder where people are overly invested in the details of celebrities' personal and professional life. But no matter how impressive or powerful an animal might be, no matter how accomplished and authoritative and successful or even holy a man or woman might be, the inescapable reality is that they are all mere creatures.

And therefore, it is tragic to worship them. We ought to stand in wonder of and worship the Creator who made them because the marvelous works in creation point to God's eternal power and divine nature.

The God who created nature transcends nature and therefore cannot be reduced to things that are in nature. Romans 1, 21-25 hits the nail right on the head in its description of sinful humanity.

It says, For although they knew God, they did not honor Him as God or give thanks to Him, but they became futile in their thinking and their foolish hearts were darkened. Claiming to be wise, they became fools and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for the images resembling mortal man and birds and animals and creeping things.

Therefore, God gave them up in the lusts of their hearts to impurity, to the dishonoring of their bodies among themselves because they exchanged the truth about God for a lie and worshipped and served the creature rather than the Creator who is blessed forever.

[13:50] Amen. Recall how God created man and woman in Genesis 1-27. So God created man in His own image.

In the image of God, He created him. Male and female, He created them. If you examine Egyptian and Assyrian texts written around the same time as the book of Genesis, they speak of idols and images of gods being placed inside the temples of those gods and they believe that these images were actually inhabited by the deity, indwelt by the deity.

But in Genesis, the Lord, the Eden, is styled as a temple, described as a temple, but He does not create an idol. Instead, He creates image, His image bearers, man and woman, because they are the ones that are to represent God to the rest of creation because they are the ones that are to lead the worship of God.

And so for God's image bearers who are to lead all creation in worship to instead worship the things that are in creation, to bow before the creatures themselves is far below our station.

We are created to worship the creator, not creatures. But this commandment doesn't merely forbid the worship of false gods. It also warns us against worshiping the true God falsely.

[15:10] Later in Exodus 32, during the prolonged absence of Moses, the Israelites hit the panic button because they don't think Moses is coming back and they think that they've lost the mediator between God and them. And so they make a golden calf and worship that idol.

And it's easy for us to think that they were forsaking Yahweh and turning to a false, different God. But if you read the narrative carefully, you can see that they're actually setting up the golden calf as an image or representation of Yahweh.

Here in Exodus 20, verse 2, Yahweh says, I am the Lord your God who brought you out of the land of Egypt. But there in Exodus 32, verse 4, the Israelites say of the golden calf, these are your gods, O Israel, who brought you up out of the land of Egypt.

They're not saying this is a new God that you should worship. They're saying this is the old God, Yahweh, who brought you out of Egypt. And then Aaron builds an altar right before the golden calf and then he proclaims a feast to Yahweh, to the Lord.

So the Israelites are not rewriting history by saying that golden calf and not Yahweh brought them out of Egypt. They're saying that the golden calf represents the Lord. It is the image of Yahweh.

[16:20] So that's a violation of the second commandment. They created the image because they thought that it would keep them connected to the Lord. And when they fear the absence of God due to the absence of Moses, they reduce God into something that they can control, something tangible, something that they can see.

But ironically, the creation of the image is tantamount to idolatry. So to rub that point in, Moses describes the incident in Exodus 32 as if the Israelites were creating multiple gods, even though they're only creating one golden calf.

They say to themselves, these are your gods in the plural. So they're actually resorting to polytheism when they try to create an idol to represent God.

Because an idol cannot rightly represent God. There are several reasons why images of God must not be used in worship, why they cannot rightly stand for God.

And first reason is that they always misrepresent God. In Deuteronomy 4, where Moses reiterates the Ten Commandments, he says, since you saw no form on the day that the Lord spoke to you at Horeb out of the midst of the fire, beware lest you act corruptly by making a carved image for yourselves in the form of any figure.

[17:38] When God spoke to the Israelites at Mount Horeb, he revealed no form or appearance. As 1 Timothy 1.17 says, God is invisible. Why?

Because as John 4.24 says, God is spirit. And those who make images of the invisible God are publishing lies about God because they are representing God in ways that he has not himself revealed.

Habakkuk 2.18 puts it pointedly, What profit is an idol when its maker has shaped it? A metal image, a teacher of lies. Images we make can only be lies that falsely represent God.

The second reason why images are forbidden is that they domesticate God. The nations surrounding Israel could not conceive a deity without the aid of images. So they manufactured idols and held special rituals to attract the presence of the deity to the idol, to the image, at which point the God became accessible to them and controllable.

Idolatry is an attempt to tame God and to confine God. Images we make are deaf and dumb. They cannot speak. But as we observed last week from verse 1, a distinguishing attribute of the true God in contrast with the false gods of the world is that God speaks.

[18:59] It's precisely the point of Deuteronomy 4.12. It says, Then the Lord spoke to you out of the midst of the fire. You heard the sound of words but saw no form. There was only a voice.

God has chosen to reveal himself not through a picture, not through a form, but through his word. A carved idol or a painted image of God's can be carried or carried around and put to the service of our own agendas.

If you walk into Asian restaurants scattered throughout the city, you will find that many of them have mini altars right at the entrance with little images and sometimes with incense burning as sacrifices to them.

They believe that these gods will bring many people to their businesses and prosper them. That's the appeal of these idols. They are tangible and therefore they seem real to people.

They are static. They are fixed in time and space. And because these idols don't speak to us, we're not accountable to them. We don't have to do anything they say. Instead, we can take them around and set them up to endorse anything that we want them to bless.

[20:03] We can wear them around our necks as good luck charms. We can put them on our rear view mirrors. We can put words into the mouths of these idols because they cannot speak.

In contrast, the Lord is a person and not an object. So he speaks to us unlike the idols of this world and he can interrupt our lives and he can intervene in our lives by speaking to us.

You get to know things by looking at them and using them. You get to know a person by listening to what they say. Images are not to be used in the worship of the Lord because to do so would violate God's sovereignty and freedom.

You cannot domesticate God. A domesticated God is no God at all. It's important to note that we can commit idolatry even with good images. For example, an image of a dove to represent the Holy Spirit or even a cross to represent Jesus or crucifix.

If we treat them not as reminders of God but as representations of God. If we start to attach spiritual significance and weight to them as if God were present in them.

[ 21 : 13 ] If we hang them on our wall or view of the mirrors and thinking that they'll protect us from accidents or put them over our beds thinking that they would keep us from nightmares then we're reducing God to an image in violation of the second commandment.

I still remember several years ago when we were still meeting at Kennedy Longfellow School during the Lord's Supper a guest in our church walked up to take communion and then he pulled out this huge cross necklace and then he handed it to me and he said hey, can you bless this for me?

And that's it was really awkward because it was in the middle of communion but it also made me really uncomfortable because it seemed to me like he was treating that pendant like an amulet like a good luck charm.

Let me get this thing blessed by a pastor now I can carry it around and it's going to bring me good luck it's going to bring blessings to my life. And so I told them hey, I will not bless your necklace but I will bless you and I just blessed them personally.

So there are many ways we can and another example of this I can't help but think of the adoration of the or veneration of the saints in some of the denominations.

[ 22 : 21 ] I think that falls under the prohibition of the second commandment. The catechism of the Catholic Church cites Basil and says the honor rendered to an image passes to its prototype and whoever venerates an image venerates the person portrayed in it.

It further distinguishes that the honor paid to sacred images is a respectful veneration not the adoration due to God alone. But I think that's splitting hairs.

I think that's a distinction without a difference. You can say that it's veneration and not worship or adoration all you want but when you prostrate yourself before icons of saints when you pray to these images as if they are the ears of God when you make pilgrimages to admire and seek healing from the relics of saints like the Shroud of Turin or the bones of deceased godly men and women from the past when you parade the icons of saints throughout town for people to venerate as they do every year in East Cambridge at the feast of Saint Cosmes and Damien in Cambridge how is that not a violation of verse 5 you shall not bow down to them or serve them in fact the technical Greek word that Catholics used to refer to the veneration of the saints is *doxologia* which means service and this verse tells us not to serve the images Catholic apologists

Pope Gregory for example who argued for the preservation of images in church buildings even when people were appropriately worshipping them said this those who cannot read may by looking at the walls read what they cannot read in books this is how church icons came to be known as quote books of the laity because much of the laity many of the laity were illiterate at the time however that's misguided because God did not reveal himself to his people in pictures but in words the Lord spoke to you out of the midst of the fire you heard the sound of words but saw no form there was only a voice and I don't think it's an accident that God reveals himself to his people in the midst of fire and clouds of glory because these things smoke cloud and fire they reveal something about God but they also appropriately veil God Deuteronomy 5.22 says these words the Lord God spoke to you to your assembly at the mountain out of the midst of the fire the cloud and the thick darkness with a loud voice and he added no more this veiling of God suggests to us that while no creature is hidden from God's all-knowing eye no creature is hidden from God's sight all are naked and exposed before the eyes of

God however God himself does not lay naked in that way before all men we cannot plumb the depth of God's infinite glory and so we are to teach people to read we are to teach people the word that's how we are to know God so that's the command and what's the motivation verses 5 to 6 it's the jealousy of God you shall not bow down to them or to worship or serve them for I the Lord your God am a jealous God might be shocking to some of you that God is described here as jealous the

Hebrew word behind it is a word that combines zeal or passion with jealousy which is typical of a lover numbers 5 14 use that same word to describe a husband who suspects that his wife has been unfaithful to him the jealousy that comes over and it's the same word that is used here if we commonly in English use the word jealousy and envy interchangeably but if we make a technical distinction jealousy is what we feel for what is rightly ours so when your spouse belongs to you is unfaithful it is right for you to feel jealous in that situation because he or she rightly belongs to you envy is when you desire something that doesn't belong to you that's when you covet that's when you desire something that is someone else's that's envy so

[ 26 : 31 ] God is never jealous of other people what they have but he is jealous for his people he has no envy but he has jealousy for his people because he has redeemed them he has paid the cost to make them his own and he loves them and he is devoted to them and so he wants to keep them for himself to be exclusively devoted to him and it's intense love of God and jealousy of God that drives this God to punish infidelity it says in verses five to six for I the Lord your God am a jealous God visiting the iniquity of the fathers and the children to the third and fourth generation of those who hate me but showing steadfast love to the thousands of those who love me and keep my commandments these verses have troubled people throughout the ages because they appear to suggest that God imputes the sins of guilty fathers on innocent children and punishes them for it but that's not the case for a number of reasons first it doesn't say anywhere that these children are innocent the

Lord speaks of the third and fourth generation of those who hate me when scriptures speak of the iniquity of the fathers it usually couples it with the iniquity of the sons as well and that's because parents and children are organically connected in such a way that sons fill up the sins of their fathers scriptures are very clear in other places that God does not punish innocent children for the sins of their parents for example Deuteronomy 24 16 his father shall not be put to death because of their children nor shall children be put to death because of their fathers each one shall be put to death for his own sin in Ezekiel 18 20 the soul who sins shall die the son shall not suffer for the iniquity of the father nor the father suffer for the iniquity of the son so the punished children in this case are not innocent second the expression the third and fourth generation refers to the maximum number of generations that may be alive at one time for example God's blessing on Joseph is seen in the fact that in

Genesis 50 verse 23 Joseph saw Ephraim's children of the third generation so to Joseph's fourth generation that would be his down to his great grandson similarly Job 42 16 tells us that Job was blessed by God that he lived 140 years and saw his sons and his sons sons four generations so seeing the welfare of your progeny down to the fourth generation is a sign of God's great blessing the welfare of children and grandchildren were particularly important back in the day because children were seen in those times not as economic liabilities but as economic assets because they're the ones that would help you to farm they're the ones who would take care of you when you're old and unable to do manual labor and so when disaster befalls your sons it's also punishment of the father so wicked father in seeing the disaster that comes upon his sons ends his life in despair realizing that he has even brought his progeny to ruin it is the mere opposite of what Joseph and Job experienced as Jewish scholar Jeffrey Teague notes quote this indicates that the suffering of the descendants is intended as a deterrent to and punishment of their ancestors not a transfer of guilt to the descendants in their own right third though out of the intensity of his love and jealousy the unfaithful fathers see the punishment for their own sins even in the welfare of their children to the third and fourth generation this is contrasted with the loyal love that God shows to those who keep his commandments he says showing he shows steadfast love to thousands of those who love me and keep my commandments because of the parallel between those verses I interpret thousands to mean thousands of generations that's why it says in the footnote to the ESV that's how the NIV and CSB translate it so thousands of generations God will remember your iniquity to the third and fourth generation if you are unfaithful to him you break his covenant with him but he will remember your love to him for a thousand generations remember that the third and fourth generations represent the maximum number of generations that a person might live to see so it's really still within your own lifetime it is one lifetime that God remembers and punishes your sin but he will remember long after you are dead and gone your faithfulness your love toward him for a thousand generations we see an example of this in second

Kings 20 when the nation of Judah is besieged by the nation of Assyria because of their sin and they deserved punishment they deserved exile but the Lord says to King Hezekiah who is the great great great great great great great great great great grandson of David this is much more than third and fourth generation this is what he says to him I will deliver you and this city out of the hand of the king of Assyria and I will defend this city for my own sake and for my servant David's sake even though David unfaithful for so many generations God says I still remember David and so I will show you kindness I will show you mercy God's memory of our faithfulness far outlasts his memory of our unfaithfulness and that's what this passage is teaching us it's a testament not of God's vengefulness but of his mercy and grace and the ultimate example of

[ 32 : 14 ] God showing steadfast love to a thousand generations is seen in Jesus because in 2 Samuel 7 16 God had promised the king David that he will rule his house will rule forever but the dynasty humanly speaking ended the nation of Israel and Judah were exiled to foreign countries they were not in the promised land anymore and yet after all those years after hundreds of years after all those generations God brings Jesus from the line of David to be the messianic king who reigns and fulfills that promise to David he remembers his faithfulness to a thousand generations and that brings me to my final point the fulfillment of this commandment in the image of God Jesus fulfills the second commandment and brings it to its intended goal the reason why God forbade the creation of images for worship was because he intended from the beginning to send Jesus the son of God and Jesus is his ultimate image and we ought to worship him

Colossians 3 15 tells us that Jesus is the image of the invisible God John 1 14 says that the word of God became flesh and dwelt among us that's Jesus Jesus is the one divinely sanctioned image of the invisible God so if you want to know what God is like you don't have to look to other things instead of paintings and sculptures the Lord gives us a living and breathing person in Jesus Christ so if you want to know what God is like look to Jesus his life revealed in his word look at his compassion and mercy towards sinners in his life look at the love that Jesus displays when he lays down his life for us on the cross and dies for our sins so that we might live look at his resurrection how he defeats sin and death and the demons and is raised over over it all and is ascended to the heavens at the right hand of the father then that you can see

God's authority and God's power and that's why when Philip asked Jesus in John 14 show us the father Jesus says how can you ask me to show you the father if you have seen me you have seen the father because Jesus is the image of the invisible that raises the question however is it okay then for us to create artistic depictions of Jesus since he was incarnated and he took on human flesh he did have a physical appearance so what about the Christ the Redeemer statue in Rio de Janeiro what about the Jesus film or the chosen series because of the incarnation I think it is permissible to create artistic and dramatic representations of Jesus however I still don't think that we should create representations of Jesus to bow down to them and to serve them because God gave us the living person of Jesus as his image not pictures of him I don't think it is a coincidence that no portrait of

Jesus has survived to this day there is nothing from the first century handed down to us New Testament never describes the physical appearance of Jesus except taken from Isaiah 53 no one knows exactly what Jesus looked like but Jesus passed down his word Jesus promised that when the spirit of God comes after his ascension that he will speak and bring to remember all that he has said and taught us the spirit speaks the words of Jesus he does not produce pictures of Jesus in our minds I think theologian Edmund Clowney gets to the right heart of this dilemma he says in our desire not to profane Christ but worshiping an image of him we must also be cautious that we don't spiritualize him into thin air if we show no pictures of Jesus everyday life to our children how will they know his reality let me offer a principle that may help us determine what is a good use of image when it comes to portraying

Jesus I suggest that portraits of Jesus are the problem many representations show the reality of Jesus without offering a portrait which in its very nature invites us to worship so he's saying don't produce portraits that are meant to appear like exact representations of Jesus here is Jesus this is how you should get to know him a helpful example of this is the 20th century portrait of Jesus entitled The Head of Christ by American artist Warner Salmon have you guys seen this if you google it I bet you'll come up and you'll be oh yes I know exactly I've seen this picture before it's probably the artistic work that has enjoyed the greatest mass appeal in the modern age by the end of the 20th century it had already been reproduced over half a billion times worldwide you find as a

kid that's what

[ 37 : 27 ] I grew up seeing so whenever I thought of Jesus I imagined that picture and I think that's inappropriate I don't think that's what that's I think that's the intention that's the way images should function in our in our worship in our thinking about God and to give an example that some people have you know attributed miracles to this painting by Salmon and they have made pilgrimages to it in Coptic Orthodox Church in Houston where they claim that this picture the portrait of Salmon cured a boy with leukemia I don't think this is any different from the cult of saints venerating images of Christians from past ages while we can honor Christ and represent him in art if we cross over to saying that that piece of art is who Christ is if we start paying homage to it and venerating it and attributing supernatural powers to it I think we are violating the second commandment as it applies to us as Christians God does not intend for us to create images of him or his son he intends for us to be his images as we are sanctified and restored more and more to the likeness of

Christ remember God created us in his image even though because of our sin the image of God in us is defaced it is still there and by Christ and by the Holy Spirit we are being restored more and more to the fullness of God's image in Christ that's why Romans 8 29 says this for those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his son 2nd Corinthians 3 7 and 18 now the Lord beholding the glory of the Lord are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another for this comes from the Lord who is the Spirit so let's not look around at other images there's now no longer a veil that divides us and God the veil has been removed and we see the fullness of God in Jesus Christ and so we can behold him and let's behold him in his word and as we behold him we'll be transformed more and more to the glory of

Christ to the likeness of Christ and that is our Christian calling that's why we are here to belong to Jesus to love Jesus become like Jesus so let's pray for that together heavenly father that is what we long for we seek no idols because Christ is sufficient for us Lord help us to worship him rightly and behold his glory every day in your word and as we do that Lord we pray that you would by your spirit transform us make us more like him that we might more rightly represent you to the world and lead this creation in the worship of the triune God in Jesus name we pray amen