**They Set up Idols in Their Hearts**

**The Word**

Read together Ezekiel 14:1-11

**The Big Picture**

The people of Israel set up idols in their hearts, and their attachment to those idols was becoming a serious barrier to their relationship with God, so God brought judgment on their idolatry to win back the hearts of his people. Likewise, today we need to assess where our hearts have unhealthy attachments to created things that are getting in the way of our relationship with God so that we might repent of our idols and experience and serve God more freely.

**Questions for Discussion**

1. Consider the key phrase repeated throughout Ezekiel 14: “When any Israelite sets up idols in his heart and puts a wicked stumbling block before his face” (v. 3, 4, and 7). Explain in your own words the relationship between idols and stumbling blocks.

2. Read together the four principles from Ignatius in the sermon outline. What stands out to you most from those ideas?

3. Describe a time in your life when you had a “disordered attachment” to something (ie. an idol) and God worked in a way to free you from that idol so that your relationship with that thing became healthy and in line with God’s desires.

4. Identify something you have a “disordered attachment” to at this time in your life. Consider the two questions posed at the end of Sunday’s message. How is my attachment to this helping me to experience and serve God more freely and fully? How is my attachment to this preventing me from experiencing and serving God more freely and fully?

**Digging Deeper: Sermon Outline**

I. The Passage

A. Overview

1. The elders are coming to inquire of God through Ezekiel (v. 1)

2. But in reality, their hearts are full of idolatry (v. 2-3)

3. God will deal with them harshly and make an example of them (v. 4, v. 8)

4. God’s purpose in judging them is to wake up the rest of the Israelites with the hope of recapturing their hearts (v. 5, 11)

5. So the call of the passage is to repent of their idolatry (v. 6)

B. Two key phrases (see v. 3, 4, and 7)

1. Set up idols in theirs heart

 Their hearts have developed an unhealthy attachment to these things

2. Put a wicked stumbling block before their faces

a. Originally a literal rock that blocks your path and causes you to fall

b. Metaphorically, something that causes you to stumble morally, to fall morally, something that hinders you in your walk with God

II. Consider our idols today

A. The First Principle and Foundation from St. Ignatius

1. The human person is created to enjoy and serve God.

2. All other things on the face of the earth are created by God for human beings in order to help them pursue the end for which they are created.

3. It follows from this that one must use other created things, in so far as they help towards one's end, and free oneself from them, in so far as they are obstacles to one's end. To do this, we need to cultivate an “active indifference” to God’s created things.

4. Thus, we should not want health more than illness, wealth more than poverty, fame more than disgrace, a long life more than a short one, and similarly for all the rest, but we should desire and choose only what helps us more towards the end for which we are created.

B. A. W. Tozer quote: “Before the LORD God made man upon the earth, He first prepared for

him a world of useful and pleasant things for his sustenance and delight.  They were made for man’s use but they were meant always to be external to the man and subservient to him. In the deep heart of the man was a shrine where none but God was worthy to come.  Within him was God; without, a thousand gifts which God had showered upon him. Our woes began when God was forced out of His central shrine and things were allowed to enter.  Within the human heart things have taken over. Men have now by nature no peace within their hearts, for God is crowned there no longer.  God’s gifts now take the place of God, and the whole course of nature is upset by the monstrous substitution.”

C. Ordered and disordered attachments

1. When we have an ordered attachment to a created thing, we hold it loosely and appreciate it as the gift it is but never confuse it with the Giver. It, therefore, becomes a “window” to God: we can experience God’s grace and goodness through it, and we can use it to serve and glorify God.

2. When we have a disordered attachment to a created thing, we cling to it and ask it to be our source of security, significance, and satisfaction. It becomes a “stumbling block”

3. Consider the examples of 1) health and 2) wealth and how we can have either an ordered or disordered attachment to them

4. The goal in all of this is freedom: freedom to experience and pursue the end for which we were created (= God Himself).

D. Challenge for the week

 1. Choose one idol and consider your attachment to it this week.

2. Spend time at the end of each day and consider your relationship with that potential idol throughout the past day:

a. How is my attachment to this helping me to experience and serve God more freely and fully?

b. How is my attachment to this preventing me from experiencing and serving God more freely and fully?