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Tear Down The Idols

If you're like me, the images that flash across your mind when someone mentions idols are of carved stone, wooden poles, and even elaborate metalwork. In short, things that may be found on an archaeological dig. And with good reason. The world's oldest known wooden sculpture is a nine foot tall totem poll. Carved after the last ice age some 12000 years ago, it peers down with a human like face, unsettling eyes, and a myriad of markings, the meaning of which is lost to the mists of time. We know that such images were of course used for a variety of purposes such as worship, guidance and navigation through prehistoric and ancient times.

How primitive, we may think. And yet such creations have been in my mind for a couple of reasons in these days. Firstly, because we are going through the book of Joshua in our Sunday services, where the people of Israel have been repeatedly instructed to tear down all traces of idols when they settle in the promised land. Especially in chapter 24, where it isn't so much a command, as an invitation to an alternative. Choose this day the Lord says, whether to continue a cycle of worshiping idols, or to follow the living and true God.

The second reason is our own cultural moment. At the pinnacle of her career, our social media and news feeds are often wallpapered with images and news about pop sensation Taylor Swift- who has in the last year become a billionaire due to the success of her Eras Tour. I'll admit to being something of a 'swiftie' for a number of years, which is why her latest career trajectory has fascinated me. She recently ascended yet another plane of fame by publicly dating NFL star Travis Kelcey. It seems she was unstoppable in amassing devoted and loyal fans, and the adoration which comes with them. And coinciding with this, she seems to be experiencing a public levelling. After her latest successful sweep at the Grammy awards, a torrent of social media posts began to focus on her apparent 'snubbing' of pop veteran Celine Dion at the awards, as well as her copious private jet use to the detriment of the environment. And this flood of negative videos, comments and posts began in the blink of an eye.

The much coveted place of star, or idol in our culture is pretty unenviable. For one, it makes the idol into something they are not. They can never live up to the pressure and expectations placed upon a mere mortal, expected to behave like a

god. And of course, in our culture, where news and opinion can travel round the world in seconds- it is deeply unstable. Those who place us at the top of the pole can tear us back down at any time, on the slightest whim.

I think the offer presented at the end of Joshua is a good one for the culture we find ourselves in. As Romans 1-2 fleshes out, idolatry boils down to placing something from the creation in the place of Creator. It rarely works out well for anyone involved. The alternative is much more protective for all of us. Its a call to worship the living God, who by definition can handle that pressure, and to take that impossible weight of ourselves, or any other image-bearers of the living God. Its the freedom to worship the one in who's image we are truly made.