Do You Have a Golden Calf?
(A sermon about present-day idolatry!)

Intro:
- 1 Cor. 10:1-11 Israel is an example to us, we shouldn’t crave evil things
  - illus.: vs. 7 idolatry, created golden calf, worshiped it, “people sat down to eat and drink, and stood up to play”

- Do you have a golden calf? – or have you gotten all idols out of your life

Israel and the golden calf
- story: God had rescued Israel from Egyptian bondage
  - by giving them a great leader who feared God – Moses
  - by producing great signs that convinced Pharaoh to obey God’s command
    - last sign was death of the firstborn, but Israelites were saved by observing the 1st Passover
  - by sending them out of Egypt with great wealth given to them by Egyptians upon their departure
  - by miraculously parting the Red Sea, and they crossed on dry land
  - by destroying the Egyptian army in the Red Sea

- Ex. 32:1-6 Israel quickly turned to idolatry
  - Aaron made them an idol, lied that it was the idol that brought them out of Egypt, condoned their lustful playing by which they satisfied fleshly pleasures
What is the problem, if we’re engaged in idolatry? – if we’re putting God 2nd to anything
- Ex. 32:8 they turned aside from the way God commanded them
- Col. 3:5 whenever we turn aside from God’s command we become idolaters – put other things before God
- What are some popular golden calves today? – idols – things put before God
  - all forms of fleshly pleasure that’s put before God (1 Jn. 2:15-16)
    - alcohol, drugs, money and pleasure it buys, pride, sinful movies and music, etc.
    - results: theft, lying, deception, illegal activities, etc.
  - relationships put before God:
    - spouse, children, parents, siblings, friends, boyfriend, girlfriend
    - results: adultery, fornication, homosexuality, etc.
  - whenever we put something or someone first in our lives, behind God, we give them the devotion God deserves – it’s idolatry

- Ex. 32:6, 15-18 they were more interested in fulfilling sinful lusts than serving God
- Heb. 11:25 Moses gave up the passing pleasures of sin to obey and serve God – opposite of Israel
- illus.: young man who wanted to become famous before becoming a Christian
  - studied music in high school, dreaming of winning America Idol
    - was in all the musical and theater events possible
    - often missed church to practice and perform
    - decided he wanted to study music in college, didn’t think being a Christian would help
  - went to college on a scholarship, all expenses paid, had incredible success
    - stopped going to church all together
  - auditioned for American Idol, got on the show, and won
    - still didn’t go to church, he was too busy
  - after the Idol tour, he started his career
    - he was famous, and now he thought about becoming a Christian, but he was too busy
    - to become a Christian he’d have to stop singing in clubs, and couldn’t perform during church times, he wasn’t willing to make the change
  - one late night he was in a car accident and died
    - he opened his eyes in eternity, finding himself punished for his sins
    - he cried out in agony
      - “Why didn’t I become a Christian? I always meant to do it!”
  - then a scary voice came from the depths of hell
    - “Because I tricked you!” Satan said. “Your idol was music and fame! That’s how I got you to worship me! And now you are mine forever!”
  - God has to be first in our lives, or we’re idolaters (Lk. 10:27; 1 Jn. 5:3)
    - Who is first in your life?
    - Do you have any golden calves?
    - Are you an idolater, or is God first in your life?
problem: turn away from God’s commands, want to fulfill lusts

- Ex. 32:7, 9 they corrupted themselves with sin because they were _obstinate_ (stiffnecked, KJV)
  - obstinate:
    - _perversely adhering to an opinion_, purpose, or course in spite of reason, arguments, or persuasion (Webster)
    - adhering to human opinions rather than obeying God
    - satisfying fleshly desires rather than satisfying God
  - _God had just brought them our of Egypt_, witnessed great miracles, and they _soon turned to sin_, too _impatient_ to wait for Moses’ return with the word of God – put themselves before God
  - 2 Ch. 30:7-8a _we are stiff-necked (obstinate) if we do not yield to the Lord_
    - whenever we turn away from God, we put other things before Him and become idolaters, because we’re _obstinate_ (stiff-necked) – we want to do what we want, not what God wants

- Ex. 32:21-24, 35 they had a weak leader who gave into sinful men – Aaron – cf. Moses and Joshua weren’t there
  - with a strong leader, many people followed God who would have turned to sin
    - _but, Aaron was not strong_, he made the golden calf, and Israel sinned
    - _but, having a weak leader didn’t excuse_ the people of their sin, but didn’t help them stay faithful
  - they were not all sinful, but none had courage to lead
    - _the priests later confessed they were still for the Lord, but were weak, and not good leaders_, because they did not rise up against sin without Moses
  - Christians: some people are prone to sin, especially those who have come out of the world
    - _they will often fall away unless_ there is good leadership
    - _grounding of babies in Christ_ must be one of our top priorities
  - Gal. 6:1 _spiritual men today must stand up and lead_
    - _all that is necessary for a church to sink into apostasy is for holy men to do nothing_

- Ex. 32:22-24 Aaron didn’t take personal responsibility, but blamed it on the people and a real accident
  - _illus._: like Saul, when didn’t completely destroy Amalekites, the king and best animals were brought back to the camp, Saul blamed the people rather than taking personal responsibility, dethroned by God
  - Christians: as long as we don’t take personal responsibility for our sins, and our failure to lead, we will never succeed as God’s people

- Ex. 32:25 (vs. 17-18) they were out of control
  - story: Aaron had let the people get out of control
    - _he could have stopped_ it with good leadership, like Moses
    - _people would have followed_ him with he would had led
    - _people had a choice_ as to whether to sin
  - sin:
    - _within just a few days, a group of people can get out of control_ by giving themselves over to lustful desires
  - self-control:
    - _is a choice_ – e.g., Israel
    - _we lose it when we turn ourselves over to sin_ – make ourselves slaves to sin
  - 1 Cor. 9:24-27 (Gal. 5:23; 2 Pet. 1:6 – 2 Tim. 3:3)
    - _we must exercise self-control (vs. 25), and discipline our bodies (vs. 27)_
  - 1 Tim. 3:4
    - _as fathers and mothers, we must keep our children under control_ – qualifications elders
- Ex. 32:26 they were not for the Lord
  - story: the Levites were for the Lord, but not the other tribes – therefore, they were for sin

- Rom. 14:7-8 everything we do is for the Lord – live, die (Col. 3:17)

- if we live and die for the Lord, we won’t give ourselves over to sinful lusts, to serve them, as slaves

What is God’s reaction toward idolatry?
- Ex. 32:10-11 anger burned against them, wanted to destroy them

- Ex. 32:19-20, 27-29, 34-35 God / Moses punished the people
  - when we give ourselves over to sin, God punishes and chastises us – this life, for eternity if we don’t repent

- Col. 3:5b-6 whenever we turn away from God to sin, we become idolaters, God’s wrath is upon us
  - Heb. 10:26-30 sin willfully, terrifying expectation of judgment and the fury of fire, severe punishment
    - Heb. 6:6 sin and fall away, crucify to ourselves Jesus, and put Him to open shame
    - Heb. 12:29 our God is a consuming fire

  - when we put God 2nd to anything or anyone, His anger burns against us, and we have nothing to look forward to except severe punishment
    - but if we repent. . . .

Summary / Inv.
- review: if we’re engaged in idolatry – problem / solution
  - Do you have a golden calf? If so, tear it down and serve God!

- Ex. 32:30-33
  - solution: repent and correct the problems, beseech God for forgiveness

  - if you’re not a faithful Christian, God isn’t 1st in your life, and you have at least one idol
    - you know the solution: repent, beseech God for forgiveness – live for the Lord
    - inv.: