

Grace and peace be to you from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, Amen. Over the next coming weeks, we have the excellent opportunity to meditate on a particular section of Scripture. One that is expounded on, rightfully so, in the Catechism. The ten commandments. Over the coming weeks, we are going to take time to examine and expound on each of them. They are a summary of God's will for our lives, but the more we study the ten commandments, we realize that they are there to bless us, protect us, and lead us to rejoice in their learning and meaning for our lives as Christians. This week, on Trinity Sunday, it is pretty fitting for us to begin with this series. Our Text comes to us from the First Commandment as recorded in Deuteronomy 5:7:

"You shall have no other gods before me."

I am by no stretch of the imagination a financial expert or even remotely qualified to give investment advice, so all of this comes from a google search, but there is a common strategy that is involved in almost every future financial plan called: "Diversifying your portfolio ."It's the practice of putting your money and investments across multiple areas and institutions. And the reasoning is very sound. By doing this, you are able to balance the stability but lack of larger payouts with high risk and high rewards of other kinds of investments. In doing this, you come out ahead by balancing risk and reward and getting more than you put in, but also not risking everything by putting all of your eggs in one basket. In this way, you protect yourself by opening your horizons and diversifying where you put your things.

In a sense, diversification is the exact opposite of what God commands us to do in his first commandment. God, through the mouth of Moses, commands the people of Israel to be unilateral in their allegiance, in praise, in honor, and in the worship of one God. The true God.

God absolutely forbids the worship of another 'god,' an idol, a false god. Anything but him and him alone. And a brief overview of the history of the people of Israel makes sense why God had to write this one down for his people. After they had left Egypt while Moses was on Mt. Sinai, the people commanded Aaron to make a golden calf that they could bow down and worship. When Joshua died, after they entered the promised land, the people built shrines on the high hills and under the trees. They went out and worshipped alongside the pagans, prostrating themselves to Baal and Asherah poles. Even the kings of Israel set up false gods in the temple. All of them diversifying their god portfolios seeking to get the most that they can while making it the easiest on themselves.

But what about us? All of us are sitting here in a church, a temple to the Lord to the true God most likely, none of us have shrines to other gods to Buddha to Allah to other false idols in our houses; what does it have anything to do with you and die? Well, worshipping an object made of wood and stone isn't the only way that mankind disobeys the first commandment.

Luther, in the Large Catechism, in his explanation of the first commandment, explains what it truly means to have another god. He writes: "What does it mean to have another God? To have a god is nothing more than to trust and believe in something from the heart. Now you understand how much it is that this commandment requires. It requires that man's whole heart and all his confidence be given to God alone and no one else." To have no other gods, like the first commandment says, means that whenever bad things happen, when you lack something when you hurt, you come to God and God alone. Idolatry doesn't consist of placing an object up and worshipping it; it takes place in the heart.

Taking in Luther's explanation of what it means to have a God, a false god, we really start to understand how we are just as guilty as those Israelites of diversifying our God portfolio. There are so many things on this earth that we like to place alongside of God, the only God, and look to them for help to sort of hedge our bets in order to get the greatest reward with the least amount of risk. We can all too often hold money as the thing which will rescue us one and a when an all-powerful God will and cannot. We lean on our families and power in our own strength and pure grit in order to carry us through the hardest of days rather than relying on the promises and power of our Lord. We establish other sets of doctrine sometimes. We can hold up the bill of rights, or are the teachings of our political party up as a secondary source of where we draw morality from. Leisure pace, free time, fun, excitement, happiness all of these things that were not put into the proper respect can become idols carved objects of woods of our own creation, which we learn to lean on to rely on to seek happiness from.

Where is the Gospel in the first commandment? Well, the remarkable statement of grace for this commandment comes from the verse just previous, in Deuteronomy 5:6 "I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery ."Before God institutes this commandment, he reminds the people of the grace and love he has already shown. Before God asks them to unilaterally serve and love him, he reminds them of how he unilaterally and first loved them. Simply because they are his people and he loves them, he saw their hopelessness, their pain, and their slavery, and he brought them out of that place to the land of blessings, where they could be his people, worship him and him alone, and he could protect and bless them.

And even though they continued to fall away into idolatry, God continued in his promise and his commitment to his people. Continuing to guide them back to him, back to His Word, back to his

promises. Even though his people were sinners and so often diversified their worship of God, God would not go elsewhere to his dedication and love for his people.

And this same God, the Triune God who gave us this same commandment, is the same one who is so committed to his people, to you. In the same way, he brought us out of slavery, spiritual slavery, when there was nothing that we could do to come to him when we were not deserving of it.

While we were dead in sin, he sent the Holy Spirit to pierce our cold and dead hearts through the water and the Word and brought us to life in faith. He sent his Son, Jesus Christ, to die on the cross for every one of our sins, even the times when we have chased after other gods of our own making. He continuously sends through the power of the Gospel, his Spirit, to strengthen our faith when it is weak. He rains down blessings and promises of help and comfort when we need it most. He has prepared a place in heaven for each and every one of us where we will be freed from this life of sin, pain, and sorrow.

As daunting as the first commandment is, so much more rich is the comfort of the promises to those who cling to him. His mercy is sure, goodness and blessing to be shown to you for a lifetime and for eternity. A God who is totally committed to doing what is absolutely best for you. In contrast, all of those other idols turn to dust and rust; God, as the true God, gives blessings forever.

While diversifying your portfolio may be a good idea for your investments. It's a horrible idea for God, but also, it's totally unnecessary! While we on this earth seek after our God and honor him alone, he invariably blesses us beyond our most incredible and wildest dreams. He alone always has our best interests in mind for this life and the one after this. He alone is the one who brought us out of the land of slavery when we were despicable. He alone will never fail. He alone is almighty and powerful to give us every good and perfect gift. There may come a time in our lives when all of those other things forsake you: money, family, happiness, power, prestige. A time when no one and nobody is there for you. But God will. And he always will. Amen.