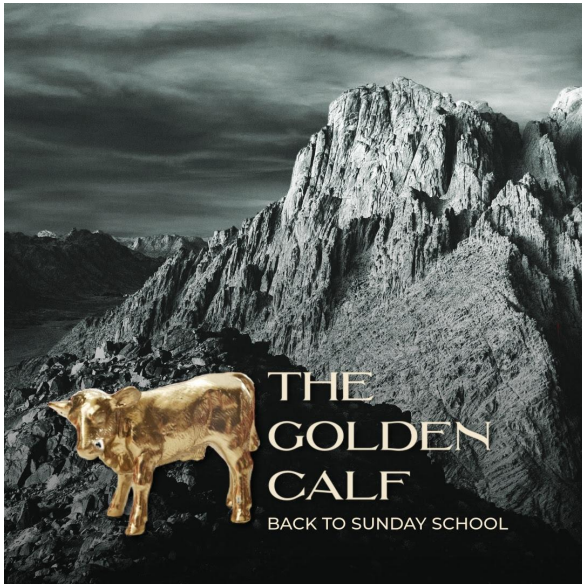


BACK TO SUNDAY SCHOOL: THE GOLDEN CALF

October 8, 2023

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Exodus 32:7-14

When the people saw that Moses delayed to come down from the mountain, the people gathered around Aaron, and said to him, "Come, make gods for us, who shall go before us; as for this Moses, the man who brought us up out of the land of Egypt, we do not know what has become of him."
2 Aaron said to them, "Take off the gold rings that are on the ears of your wives, your sons, and your daughters, and bring them to me."
3 So all the people took off the gold rings from their ears, and brought them to Aaron.
4 He took the gold from them, formed it in a mold, and cast an image of a calf; and they said, "These are your gods, O Israel, who brought you up out of the land of Egypt!"
5 When Aaron saw this, he built an altar before it; and Aaron made proclamation and said, "Tomorrow shall be a festival to the Lord."
6 They rose early the next day, and offered burnt offerings and brought sacrifices of well-being; and the people sat down to eat and drink, and rose up to revel.

7 The Lord said to Moses, "Go down at once! Your people, whom you brought up out of the land of Egypt, have acted perversely; 8 they have been quick to turn aside from the way that I commanded them; they have cast for themselves an image of a calf, and have worshiped it and sacrificed to it, and said, 'These are your gods, O Israel, who brought you up out of the land of Egypt!'"
9 The Lord said to Moses, "I have seen this people, how stiff-necked they are. 10 Now let me alone, so that my wrath may burn hot against them and I may consume them; and of you I will make a great nation." 11 But Moses implored the Lord his God, and said, "O Lord, why does your wrath burn hot against your people, whom you brought out of the land of Egypt with great power and with a mighty hand? 12 Why should the Egyptians say, 'It was with evil intent that he brought them out to kill them in the mountains, and to consume them from the face of the earth'? Turn from your fierce wrath; change your mind and do not bring disaster on your people. 13 Remember Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, your servants, how you swore to them by your own self, saying to them, 'I will multiply your descendants like the stars of heaven, and all this land that I have promised I will give to your descendants, and they shall inherit it forever.'" 14 And the Lord changed his mind about the disaster that he planned to bring on his people.

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REFLECT & DISCUSS

1. Read the passage slowly. Then take a deep breath and read it again. What word, phrase or image stands out to you?
2. Why do you think it was a problem that the Israelites made and celebrated a golden calf as an image for God?
3. Do you have any stories about “idols” or “idolatry” in your life?
4. One definition of Idolatry is the act of worshiping something or someone other than God *as though it were God*. What are the things or people in our society and culture that are treated “as though they are God”? Why do you think that is so?
5. What idols have you learned to acknowledge and rid yourself of?
6. The Golden Calf was made as an act of worship. Have you ever experienced (even well-intentioned) religious buildings, symbols, ideas, or people being made into idols?
7. What do you make of Moses appearing to change God’s mind about the Israelites?
8. Perhaps idols are what we make trying to reach for God too impatiently or incompletely. God desires instead to meet us where we are, and for us to notice when we are ready. How does this idea resonate with you?
9. Perhaps idols are our attempts to contain and control the God who

cannot be contained or controlled. In what ways do you (or might you) instead “clear space” to wait on and let God show up however God chooses to show up?