

Totems and Temples

Psalm 146

The Psalms (no. 2 in the series)

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This document was prepared by Michael Hanna using Peter's notes and the video version of this sermon. If you encounter any significant discrepancies or errors in this document, please let Michael know. Thank you!

Prayer

The Psalm that we're looking at today begins like this: "Praise the Lord, O my soul!" Which is kind of an interesting line, "Praise the Lord, O my soul," because, like, who's talking? Right? Maybe it's like the spirit in us talking to our soul. Like there's something wrong with our soul. Our soul is all shriveled up and closed in on itself and our spirit is like, "Praise the Lord, you . . . you soul. You damn soul. You closed up soul." So that's what we're gonna do, alright? Would you stand up with me, and in this song you can talk to your soul and tell your soul to "Praise the Lord." Bless the Lord, O your soul.

Lord God we pray that you would send your Spirit. We thank you that you already have, we thank you that your Spirit is here. We pray that your Spirit would move in us, and Lord God, that you would cause us to worship. I think that we're saying we present ourselves as living sacrifices. And if necessary, Lord God, would you just bust these old souls open and cause us to worship you? To forget about ourselves, worship you, and join with all creation as we bless you, Lord God, for you are good. In Jesus' name we worship. Amen.

Message

Last week we began preaching from the Psalms with Psalm 145.¹

All the Psalms that follow, #146–150, begin and end with this phrase: "Praise the Lord," or in Hebrew *Hallelujah*. *Hallel* means "praise" and the *Jah* is short for Yahweh: "Praise Yahweh."

This command appears 34 times in the Psalms, and 16 times in the last five psalms.

Psalm 146

¹ Praise the Lord!

If you're easily confused by my sermons, this is the point: "Praise the Lord." It was the point of the Revelation: "Worship God," which means "Praise the Lord." If you want to know what it is that you're commanded to do, this is it: "Praise the Lord. Praise the Lord. Praise the Lord!"

Now, something inside of you might say “No! you can’t command a person to praise. That’s like pointing a gun at a person’s head and commanding them to love you.”

Well, yes, it is. But the psalmist didn’t command you to praise, he commanded you to “Praise the Lord.” He doesn’t need to command you to praise, because you already do. Like we said last week, worship is your favorite thing to do.ⁱⁱ Remember?

- We watched a video of people praising the Broncos at Mile High Stadium.
- We listened to a fellow sing a song to the praise of his “Susie Q.”
- We listened to another fellow praise his “four-speed dual-quad Positraction 409” in a ’62 Chevy Impala.
- We saw how one fellow praised Budweiser Beer by wearing a t-shirt.
- We saw how Vincent van Gogh praised sunflowers by painting their picture.
- We saw how we all praised Abraham Lincoln by commissioning his statue at the Lincoln memorial.
- And we saw how Bernie Fife worshipped himself by singing a song of praise to himself.

Worship is your favorite thing to do. We worship, like we breathe. You see a great movie and you can’t wait to give it praise—by telling all your friends they need to see it too.

I had a seminary professor that used to say, to be human is to worship.

And, as we learned last week, worship shapes you in the image of that which you worship, without even trying.

[Image: Bronco faithful, wildly bedecked in orange and blue.]

The psalmist doesn’t command us to praise; he commands us to “Praise the Lord.” See? Maybe you can’t command true praise, but you can re-direct it. In fact, we do that quite often. Here’s a silly example:

[Image: Breakfast plate and a stack of three fluffy pancakes, topped with a pat of melting butter and drizzled with syrup.]

Suppose you head down to I-HOP one Saturday morning when you’re just starving, and the pancakes taste oh so good. So, you call your waitress over and you say, “Hey these pancakes are so awesome; I’m blown away. Thanks for these awesome pancakes.”

She says, “Oh I’m glad you liked ‘em. But I didn’t make ‘em, that was Leroy the cook.”

So, she gets Leroy. And you tell Leroy the cook: “I praise you for the pancakes.”

He says, “Cool, but I didn’t grow the wheat or make the butter. That was the farmer... and his cow.”

So, you find the farmer and say, “Thanks for the pancakes and the butter!”

The farmer says, “Well, that wasn’t me, that was the sun and the rain that grew the wheat... and my cow that gave the milk.”

If the farmer is a Pagan, he might also say, “So you ought to worship the sun and the rain.”

If the farmer is a Hindu, he might say, “So you ought to sacrifice to my cow.”

If the farmer is a Jew, he might say “Hallelujah!” that is, “Don’t praise the cow, or the sun, or the rain, or me, or the cook, or the waitress; but praise Yahweh *for* the cow, the sun, the rain, me, the cook, and the waitress. Praise God for making the lot of us, and even making the hunger in you that made you get out of bed and drive on down to I-HOP.

Understand? You were already praising. The waitress, the cook, and the farmer just redirected your praise . . . and maybe even amplified it a bit with some knowledge of the Good.

If the farmer is a Christian, he might say, “Hallelujah, praise God in Jesus’ name, for not only did God make all those things, he made all those things with his Word... and not only made all those things, he fills all those things with his Glory, which is himself revealed in Christ Jesus.

“He’s the faith in me. He’s the light in the sun. He’s the logic in the biology of the cow—the logos in the bio-logos. He’s what everything means.

“He’s the Truth in that cook. He’s the Way that waitress walked to your table. He’s the Life that was sacrificed for you in that pancake.

“He’s the Good you tasted in the pancakes. He’s the glory of God that fills the whole earth. Hallelujah, Praise the Lord! Praise the Lord!”ⁱⁱⁱ

Remember in Isaiah 6?

Isaiah sees what David somehow saw. He sees the “*kabod hador*” the glorious splendor of God’s majesty. He sees the Lord high and lifted up, seated on the throne, and the train of his robe fills the temple. The angels cry one to another, “The whole earth is filled with his Glory!” Not will be filled, might be filled or could be filled... *is filled* with his Glory.

And remember when Jesus was high and lifted up on his cross?

The curtain in the temple, separating the Glory on top of the Ark, which is the throne of God—the curtain separating the *Kabod Hador* from the people—that curtain ripped from top to bottom and the Glory got out.

And remember, according to the Revelation, that happened from the foundation of the world; the lamb was slain from the foundation of the cosmos. Holy, Holy, Holy, is the Lord; Praise the Lord!

The whole earth is filled with his Glory... I wonder why we don’t see it—the whole earth filled with his Glory?

Well, maybe “Praise the Lord” is not the antidote for praising nothing, so much as the antidote for praising anything... and everything. GK Chesterton wrote: “When we cease to worship God, we do not worship nothing, we worship anything.” See, “Praise the Lord” is the antidote for idolatry.

The very first commandment of the big ten is: “Thou shalt have no other Gods before me”—that’s idolatry. The second is, “Thou shalt not make for yourself any graven image...” —that’s idolatry.

At the root all sin is basically idolatry.^{iv} You’ll remember that it was the besetting sin of Israel. And it was the big one on the way to the Holy Land. Israel made a golden idol. It was a *calf*.

I remember learning that as a kid and thinking, “What’s wrong with those Jews? If you’re gonna make an idol, make something cool, like Voltron, Skeletor, or Santa Claus . . . but a calf? Why a calf?”

Well now that I’m older, and I’ve had some run ins with God, I understand. You can keep a calf in a pen. A calf is useful, containable, comfortable, and safe... God, not so much. For an ancient nomad a calf is like a new Ford pick-up or a Chevy Impala. A calf carries your things, plows your field, give you milk and even meat. You can control a calf.

So, they made a calf, but of course it was dead. They couldn’t make a living calf, let alone a living God.

Men make idols, and pretend that the idols make them, and that’s a rather sneaky way to worship yourself. The self-made man. I think that’s probably the idol behind all of the idols. The American Idol: me.

Anthropologists like Emile Durkheim have argued that this is what all religion is—a sneaky way for people to worship themselves.

Durkheim studied a group of Aborigines and came to the conclusion that particular tribes value particular traits, which they desire to affirm and instill in their members. And over time they come to associate these particular traits with particular animals, that he called “totems.”^v

Durkheim postulated that over time these totems—like Eagles, Impalas, and Broncos—begin to be worshipped as gods. In the Pacific Northwest, he noted that tribes would often carve their totems on trees and lift those trees, or poles—those totem poles—for all to see.

He postulated that all religion is totemic. And since the totem is simply the symbolic representation of the predominant values of the society, all religion is just the way that society worships itself. It’s how we fashion people in our own image, and even fashion gods in the image of us.

In the beginning God made man in his own image . . . and man returned the favor. That’s totemism according to Durkheim, and idolatry according to the Bible. And it all kind of makes sense, doesn’t it?

I have my totems, and I even kind of try to turn myself into a totem pole. I mean I wear my Broncos ball cap and my Budweiser shirt. And maybe I even get an Impala tattooed on my arm, next to the name “Suzie Q.” I worship those things, and thereby use those things, to create myself in their image. The image of my idol, which is really myself. I’m worshipping myself, and I’m using them to do so. My totems.

Do you think we could ever turn God into a totem?

Psalm 146

1 Praise the Lord!

Praise the Lord, O my (*nephesh*) soul!^{vi}

2 I will praise the Lord as long as I live;

I will sing praises to my God while I have my being.^{vii}

3 Put not your trust in princes,

in a son of man, in whom there is no salvation.

- 4 When his breath** (*ruach*, also translated spirit) **departs, he returns to the earth;**
(literally “his earth,” his *adamah* in Hebrew, his dust or clay)^{viii}
on that very day his plans perish.

“Put no trust in princes,” the *nadibim*.

That can mean a prince like Donald Trump, Nancy Pelosi, or King David—and if David wrote this, that’s a particularly fascinating statement. It can also mean something like the nobility or the superstars—kind of like the Denver Broncos. “Put no trust in princes.”

On the afternoon of October 20th, 1986, the Denver Broncos were 6 and 0, having already beaten the Los Angeles Raiders in the first game of the season. I was the High School Youth Pastor at Bel Air Presbyterian Church in Los Angeles, California. Intimidated by LA, and homesick for Denver, for two years I had turned myself into a Denver Bronco Totem Pole. I would literally go to youth group covered in Denver Bronco paraphernalia, and the entire youth group would ritually assault me, rip off my clothes, and fashion head bands out of the orange fabric. But by 1986 I had made some disciples, who had converted from the silver and black to the orange and blue. It was awesome!

And October 20th, 6–0, they were playing the New York Jets on Monday Night Football . . . and they got blown out 22-10.

I laid awake all night replaying 3rd downs in my head, telling myself things like, “Peter, it doesn’t matter. They’re just hired professionals. John Elway isn’t even from Denver and probably doesn’t love you. It doesn’t matter.”

But it was too late, I had so profusely praised the Broncos, that it wasn’t just the Broncos that crashed and burned; Peter Hiatt crashed and burned . . . and couldn’t sleep all night long.

Idolatry will destroy you, and you will destroy the idols that you worship.

For several years, about twenty years ago, I often did chapel for the Denver Broncos. Bill Rader, who’s part of the Sanctuary now, was their chaplain at the time, and would invite me to come down and do chapel before the game. The first time I did, it was a super-bowl year and they were playing our arch nemesis the Kansas City Chiefs . . .

I remember being a bit overwhelmed with this sudden and unexpected fear:
Having met some of the guys and shared a breakfast, I suddenly realized: these guys, are just guys. In my mind they had become numbers and statistics, like machines . . . and, at the same time, little gods, like idols.

I suddenly realized: these guys are just guys—they could have gas, get in a bad mood, lose focus, and totally blow this game.

These guys are just guys—and yet, all of Denver thinks they’re gods!

And then I found myself terrified, not only for me, but for them . . . because when our idols don’t live up to our expectations, we often crucify our idols—I know this from experience. I’ve been an idol, and I’ve seen the crowd suddenly turn and chant, “Crucify. Crucify. Crucify.”

Idolatry kills us . . . and then we kill our idols.

Now Pancakes are a silly example, and the Denver Broncos are kind of a silly example . . . but your wife, husband, children, and best friends, are not silly examples.

- If you idolize your wife, it will kill you, and then you'll crucify your wife.
- If you idolize your kids, it will kill you, and then you'll destroy your kids.
- If you idolize your friends, it will kill you, and then one day you'll find yourself all alone, for no one can live up to your expectations.

No one can be god for you, except the Lord. *So praise the Lord!*

Am I saying don't praise your wife? Well kind of . . . I'm saying don't worship your wife. Don't praise your wife but praise the Lord for your wife. Then you'll begin to truly love your wife, for you'll see that she isn't a totem; she's a temple. She's an earthen vessel that contains the breath of God.

3 Put not your trust in princes . . .

Hey, did you know that Prince rhymes with Vince? So some translate the verse this way: "Put not your trust in Princes or Vincens."

Vince leads us in worship, and I have never, or hardly ever, heard anything negative about Vince or the way he leads us. But do you suppose that we could idolize Vince, or the way he leads us in worship?

Sometimes, *not here, not recently*, but sometimes, I'll hear people say things like, "Worship just didn't do it for me today; I couldn't worship."

Listen closely: if you say that . . . Worship didn't do it for you today, because you weren't *worshipping the Lord*, instead you must've been *using the Lord to worship yourself*. I hope the music and the songs, the sermons and the prayers, help you worship, but they are not the things that you worship. And if they are, it's just a sneaky way of worshipping yourself.

We want to always find the most helpful forms of worship, but the form of worship must never ever keep you from worshipping.

Most of the time, the perfect worship song for me, is a song that clearly explicates four-point Barthian Calvinism minus Barth's fear of the Apokatastasis, set to music that sounds just like Led Zeppelin.

That's my favorite kind of worship song; but it may not be your favorite kind of worship song. You know all the Psalms are worship songs, and some of them are outrageously happy, and some express this incredible sorrow.

If you feel happy, and the worship song is sad, weep with those who weep, but don't you dare stop worshipping and blame it on Vince. If you feel sad and the worship song is happy, rejoice with those who rejoice, but don't you dare stop worshipping.

The Psalmist says, "Praise the Lord" (PTL).

That doesn't mean "Praise the Praise" (PTP).

We so easily confuse PTL with PTP because we're idolaters.

And so, it's no wonder that God has a habit of destroying temples, because we have a way of turning our temples into totems. The Glory, *kabod hador*, leaves the temple and God reduces it to dust and begins to build a new one.

**3 Put not your trust in princes,
in a son of man, in whom there is no salvation.**

When I trust myself to save myself, I put my trust in dust, trap myself in my own earthen vessel, and can no longer worship God who longs to fill my vessel with himself . . . and he is Salvation.

"God is Salvation," *Yeshua*, Jesus: that's Yahweh in an earthen vessel.

Well: don't praise the praise, don't worship the worship, don't put your faith in faith. Put your faith in the Lord, and praise the Lord.

5 Blessed is he whose help (*ezer*: "helper") is the God of Jacob, ^{ix}

Remember? The God of Jacob makes a lousy idol. He'll show up in the middle of the night, wrestle you all night long... and then, when he's beat the tar out of you and it makes no sense, he just might bless you with all things, including a promised land.

**5 Blessed is he whose *helper* is the God of Jacob,
whose hope is in the LORD his God,
6 who made heaven and earth,
the sea, and all that is in them,
who keeps faith forever;
7 who executes justice for the oppressed,
who gives food to the hungry.**

The LORD sets the prisoners free; (not "some prisoners," just "the prisoners")
8 the LORD opens the eyes of the blind. (not "some blind," just "the blind")
The LORD lifts up those who are bowed down; (in the previous psalm we just read that he lifts up all who are bowed down)

Maybe the quickest way to find out if you're an idolater is to ask yourself: "Am I anxious?"

See, Peter Hiatt is anxious because he trusts the wrong things to execute justice for the oppressed, feed the hungry, set the prisoners free, open the eyes of the blind, and lift up all who are bowed down. He trusts the wrong things, and that's all a way of trusting himself.

And yet, Peter Hiatt might never trust God to execute justice, if he never encountered injustice. Peter Hiatt might never trust the Lord to open the eyes of the blind unless he himself were at one point . . . blind.

If then, God opened Peter's eyes he might ceaselessly praise God for the Light...and trust him to open the eyes of the blind—all the blind. Trust is faith and faith is reckoned as righteousness... because it is. Faith is what the Adam lacked, and what now makes the Adam right.

- the Lord loves the righteous.** [faith is right]
 9 **The Lord watches over the sojourners;
 he upholds the widow and the fatherless,
 but the way of the wicked he brings to ruin.**

The way of the wicked is the way of *not* trusting the Lord, and so *not* praising the Lord.

- 10 **The Lord will reign forever,
 your God, O Zion, to all generations.
 Praise the Lord!**

Praise the Lord!

So where is the Lord? Well, you know: he's the slaughtered lamb standing on the throne... and you remember: he was enthroned on a tree... or a *pole*.

And that reminds me of one of the weirdest stories in the Bible. When the Israelites were being led through the wilderness and delivered from bondage, some of them stopped praising the Lord, and began to complain about the Lord, for they thought he was doing a bad job of saving them. So the Lord sent fiery serpents among the people.

It wasn't the first time that God exposed people to serpents, or the serpent. In the garden the serpent tempted Eve and Adam to trust themselves and take knowledge of the Good from the tree.

Well, in Numbers 21, the serpents bite the people and the people begin to die. Moses prays to Yahweh, and the Lord tells Moses to make a bronze serpent and place it on a pole, saying "everyone who is bitten, when he sees it, shall live."

The story always confused the Jews because they had been commanded not to make graven images and worship them. But they weren't to worship the snake, it was more like a confession that they had worshipped the snake and made an idol... a snake... of themselves. ("a son of man in whom there is no salvation").

It would've remained a bizarre little Old Testament tale except that in John chapter 3, Jesus says this:

"...as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up, in order that all, those trusting in him, might have eternal life. For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that all, those trusting in him, might not be destroyed, but have eternal life."^x

In John chapter 2, Jesus had just told the Jews, who had just asked for a sign, "Destroy this temple and in three days I will raise it up... and he was speaking of the temple of his body." (2:19-21)

How did they—how do we—*destroy* the temple that is Jesus?
 Well . . . I think we turn him into our totem . . . and hang him on a pole.

And you see that's not just something the Romans and Pharisees did on the tree in the garden two thousand years ago . . . and it's not just something that Adam and Eve did on the tree in the garden at the beginning of time . . . it's something we do:

- every time we take the Good and turn him into our totem

- every time we try to create ourselves in the image of the God, by taking the Life of the Good from the tree
- every time we idolize ourselves, by using knowledge of the Good to glorify ourselves
- every time we attempt to justify ourselves

And hey, check this out: in the middle of our garden, there is a tree. [*Peter points to the cross in the sanctuary.*] He wants us to see it, that we might live—forever. A tree . . . or a pole—is it a totem pole?

On the tree we attempted to turn God into our totem, didn't we? We attempted to nail him down, control him, and use him to make ourselves like him . . . or him like us—dead in our trespasses and sins.

On the tree we attempted to turn God into our totem. And on the tree God turned us into His temple.

When we turn Jesus into our totem,
 We seize control
 We use the Good to justify ourselves
 We crucify Christ and everything dies.

When Christ rises from the dead,
 We see that God has justified us,
 We surrender control and begin to worship.
 We become the temple of the living God, the New Jerusalem coming down.

But you see, there is an idol that's nailed to the tree ("He who knew no sin became sin..."), and that idol is the product of the serpent's lie—that idol is us, the old us, the old Adam—humanity.^{xi} And there is a temple that's built at that tree, it's like the fruit of that tree—it's the Body of Christ, the living temple. It's where the bride of Christ is made.

On the cross we turned God's temple into our totem. And on the cross God turned our totem into his temple—actually, he turned all our totems into his temple—an entire new creation.

You see Jesus doesn't just rise from one tomb in one place 2000 years ago. Jesus rises from every tomb in every place through all of space and time.^{xii}

 So, *Praise the Lord! Praise the Lord! Praise the Lord!*
 Love the Lord, Love the Lord, Love the Lord!

And that doesn't mean you love other things less, it means you love, and enjoy, everything more...^{xiii} For everything becomes a temple in which, through which, and with which, you will praise the Lord—who is anything and everything you could ever want to worship.

Worship is your favorite thing to do, and when you begin to worship God in everything, you begin to see the Good risen from the dead in everything. You begin to see a universe that constantly does your favorite thing to do and does it with you: Praise the Lord.

You begin to see what Isaiah saw: the whole earth filled—the Denver Broncos, the New England Patriots, Susie Q and your '62 Chevy Impala, Abraham Lincoln, pancakes, cows, farmers, waitresses,

and even your darkest night and very worst enemy—you begin to see the whole earth filled with the Glory of the Lord.

Communion

All because the Glory of the Lord took bread and he broke it saying, “this is my body given to you.” It is his earthen vessel... the Son of Man. (*This is the Son of Man, in whom there IS salvation.*)

And he took the cup saying, “this is the covenant in my blood. Drink of it all of you.” The life is in the blood.

All creation comes to life as the blood flows from the throne and returns to the throne as praise. We tried to make him our totem, and he turned us, and all things with us, into his temple. *Praise the Lord, Praise the Lord, Praise the Lord!*

Benediction

You see something happens when you praise the Lord in the depths of your sanctuary, the sanctuary that is your soul. When you in your inner being praise the Lord, you stop praising yourself. You stop worrying about yourself. You stop condemning yourself. You present yourself as an offering. You lose your soul, and you find it, worshipping the Lord.

And that worship that’s coming out of you: that’s not just you. That’s the Spirit of Jesus crying “Abba, father.” That’s Jesus rising from the dead in you, in your earthen vessel. And then, check this out: You’re not a son of man in whom there is no salvation. You’re a son of man, praising the Lord. You’re his body, his temple, in his world. In Jesus’ name, believe the Gospel and Praise the Lord.

Endnotes

ⁱ Psalm 145 is considered by many to be the Last Psalm of David. Some think the five psalms that follow (146-150) are also from David (Matthew Henry). Some argue that Psalm 146 was written by the prophet Haggai and the prophet Zechariah. The Septuagint—the ancient Greek translation of the Hebrew Old Testament—attributes this psalm to Haggai and Zechariah (*The Interpreter’s Bible, 4, p. 746*).

ⁱⁱ Last week’s sermon: <https://relentless-love.org/sermons/your-favorite-thing-to-do/>

ⁱⁱⁱ The pancakes at I-HOP are a silly example, cause if you’re like me, and like most Americans, you probably wouldn’t praise any of those things, or those people, for your pancakes. You’d congratulate yourself—that’s the American idol: “I worked for these pancakes, I deserve my pancakes. I hope nobody steals my pancakes! Give me more of those damn pancakes.”

^{iv} Jesus said “The first and greatest commandment is to love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, mind and strength...” To not do that, is idolatry. And so, idolatry is like the basis of all sin.

^v The bald eagle is a totem for Americans—it symbolizes independence and freedom, and is helpful for selling life insurance etc.

The Chevy Impala—the Impala is a totem, for Chevy owners who sing songs about the Dual-Quad Positraction 409.

I had a Ford Mustang—the Mustang is a totem.

I'm a Bronco fan—the Bronco is a totem.

vi “Praise the Lord, O my *nephesh*.” The soul or *nephesh* is the thing that’s made when God breathes his breath into the *adamah*, the clay. When we praise the Lord, perhaps our soul surrenders the breath that we have held within ourselves as pride—a vessel of wrath.

“Praise the Lord, O my soul.” I wonder, “Who’s talking?” When I say this, is it the Spirit in me, talking to the soul that is the old me—the old me about to become the new me as I begin to praise?

vii If you don’t “Praise the Lord,” perhaps you have no “being,” or at least you are not living; “As long as I live, I will praise the Lord.” To live is to “lose your *nephesh* and find it.” To live is to receive breath as a gift and surrender that breath as praise. The breath, the Spirit, is Life (Rom. 8:11). To live is to breath. It is a river of Life that flows from the throne and returns as praise.

viii It’s important to note that if this text is true, and it does agree with the view of death represented in the rest of the Old Testament, (see Ecc. 12:7), then the supposedly “traditional” view that some souls (*nephesh*) will be endlessly tortured in a place called “hell,” is Biblically untenable. However, the notion that souls may suffer in a place called *sheol/hades* is entirely tenable—these are souls that refuse to die. The body has died, but refuses to give up the “ghost,” the *ruach*. These are souls trapped in death for fear of the second death, the death of death, which is Life. The Good News is that we will all die that we may all live. Death and Hades will be cast into the lake of fire, death will be no more, and the voice from the throne (the *Kabod Hador*) will say, “LOOK! I make all things new.” And every creature in heaven and on earth and under the earth and all that is within them will worship the *Kabod Hador*, the glory they see standing on the throne. All (every *nephesh*) will “let everything that has breath praise the Lord. Praise the Lord!” (Psalm 150:6—last verse in the Psalms)

ix *Ezer* is the same word that appears in Genesis 2. Remember Adam couldn’t find his *ezer*, His “helper,” and so Adam was alone in the presence of God, who is Love. Adam is alone; it’s the first thing declared not good. And it’s declared not good before the fall. Adam is alone in his earthen vessel; he does not yet know that Love is Good, God is Good, and His Word is Good; he does not have faith in his “helper.”

x My literal translation based on the *ESV*, *The Nestle-Aland Greek New Testament, 27th edition*, and *The McReynolds English Interlinear*. The McReynolds interlinear translation of John 3:14–16 reads as follows, “And just as Moses elevated the snake in the desert thusly to be elevated it is necessary the son of the man that all the one trusting in him might have life eternal. Thusly for loved the God the world so that the son the only born he gave that all the one trusting into him not might be destroyed but might have life eternal.”

xi I’ve learned that Native Americans have a type of totem pole that they call a “shame pole.” The totem on the pole is meant to remind a person of their shame. The serpent on the pole must’ve been like a shame pole; a son of man on the pole must also be a shame pole, for we have put our trust in “a son of man in whom there is no salvation.” Scripture says that “He who knew not sin, became sin that we might become the righteousness of God.” At the cross Jesus bore our shame and gave us his righteousness. On the tree we see “a son of man in whom there is no salvation”—the old Adam. And we see “the son of man in whom there is salvation”—the new Adam, the *eschatos* Adam, the firstborn of all creation, the firstborn from the dead, Jesus.

xii Jesus is “the Good” that we turned into our totem, that God raises from the dead to turn all things into His Temple... His Living Temple.

xiii If you “love the Lord your God with ALL your heart, soul, mind, and strength,” how could you “love your neighbor as yourself” (the second half of the same commandment), unless God was in your neighbor—unless your neighbor was a temple of the Living God? And, of course, they are.

You can’t love God with all you have and love anything else... for with what would you love the anything else?

You can’t love God *and* anything else, unless you love God *in* that something else