*False gods*

There are many false gods we can struggle with. I thought of four brackets. The first bracket involves things that are intrinsically evil like the seven deadly sins. When they gain control of our lives it is deadly. The second bracket involves things that are neutral such as money, fame, or power, which can be used for good or evil. Still when they control our lives it’s not good. A third bracket involves things that could be intrinsically good, such as our country, our family, ourselves, or even a virtue. How could a virtue be bad? Well, first of all, it’s okay to worship Love because scripture tells us Love is the fullness of God. But all other virtues are only aspects of Love. Without Love they could be bad.

Let’s take the example of courage. How could courage be bad? Well, Adolph Hitler received two medals of bravery in World War I. But as we know, he was evil. If we are courageous just to prove we can be, it might not be good. We could hurt ourselves and others. On the other hand, if we risk our lives in order to save someone out of Love, it is a noble, beautiful, rare thing . . . even sacred.

The final bracket involves our misconceptions of God. Two prevalent misconceptions are the image of an angry god and the image of an indifferent god. We can have these even as Christians. How does this come about? Well, one way is through our parents. Before we’re capable of understanding religion as toddlers, we depend on our parents for any sense of right and wrong. They are our first God image. The first being the Mother God image who we depend on everything for in the womb. We are molded by parents and depend on them for everything. The image of our parents is imbedded deep within our psyche, in our subconscious, and without realizing it, we often project their image on to God. Most parents are good, but because they are human, are also flawed. Some folks, unfortunately, have had abusive parents. If we had a hard or indifferent parent, we might project that onto God.

Lets’ take a deeper look at the image of an angry god. Sometimes, scripture describes God as angry. We can misinterpret this. Anger is one of the seven deadly sins. God can’t be angry in this sense. God is just and can be tough. He is tough because He disciplines us so we can be our best. This can also come about when we have a spirit of self-condemnation. We may have done something bad and can’t forgive ourselves. We project that onto God and think we are unforgivable. Sometimes, we can even secretly desire an angry god. This can happen when we are hurt seriously by others and want justice. Justice is good but sometimes there is a little revenge mixed in with it. We may long for an apocalyptic event so that the bad people will get it! This is not good. God always wants conversion. We should too.

What about the indifferent god? This can come about also if we feel like we’ve been shunned by society. We might project this onto God too. Another way this image could be conceived is through our intellectual concept. We think of God as beyond us. God created the cosmos. God is perfect. We are imperfect. Why would God care about us? We ‘re like tiny little ants.

Still, even if we have the right concept of God, that He is just and merciful, beyond and intimate, and I think a lot of us do, they say the longest distance in the universe is from our head to our heart. This is a great saying and very true. We need to know the true God with all our beings and through our actions. Because we are finite and imperfect and God is infinite and perfect, we will always have much more to learn. Let us pray to know God with all our being and through our actions.