

Homily  
by Ed Pacht  
Rochester NH

### Trinity 9

*'Then came certain of the elders of Israel unto me, and sat before me. And the word of the LORD came unto me, saying, Son of man, these men have set up their idols in their heart, and put the stumbling-block of their iniquity before their face: should I be enquired of at all by them?'*

Ezekiel was never one to mince words. When some of the most respected people in all Israel came to him in his role as prophet, seeking God's blessing on what they were doing, they heard words they were not expecting, "these men have set up their idols in their heart."

Were they bowing down before false gods?

Were they sacrificing at their altars?

Were they actually taking part in pagan worship?

Is that what this was all about?

Probably not. In all likelihood these men were faithful in the worship of the true God, in His temple, by the rites He had commanded. It is very unlikely that they frequented pagan temples, or that they offered pagan worship in their homes. These were the elders, the spiritual and temporal leaders, the clergy, if you will. Without a doubt their visible actions merited the respect in which they were held.

*"...these men have set up their idols in their heart."*

What on earth could that mean? Why would a prophet say that to respected leaders?

St. Paul, in the middle of his praises for the Church in Thessalonica, had this to say:

*"... ye know what commandments we gave you by the Lord Jesus. ... that ye should abstain from fornication: That every one of you should know how to possess his vessel in sanctification and honour; Not in the lust of concupiscence, ... That no man ... defraud his brother in any matter: ... For God hath not called us unto uncleanness, but unto holiness. He therefore that despiseth, despiseth not man, but God ..."*

It's the same question the prophet asked, *"What is it that you value more than God?"*

Whatever is elevated in our heart above our desire to please Him, that is an idol. A false God. A refusal to acknowledge Him as Lord.

Is it the desires of the flesh?

Is it material prosperity?

Is it our own rights?

The popular song famously proclaimed, "I had to do it my way..."

Whose way?

We've come here to worship, or have we? We need to ask that.

The God-sent prophet Ezekiel spoke for God when he said to those with idols in their hearts:

*"... should I be enquired of at all by them?"*

"Do I have to listen to those who won't really worship Me? Is it right that they should even ask?"

*"Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve,"* is what Moses said, and Jesus Himself quoted. Perhaps we should ask ourselves how far that is true of us. Perhaps, when we realize how short we fall, we should admit it, and beg forgiveness. Before we ask for anything else.

What idols are in my heart?

Let us pray.

Lord, open my eyes that I may see my own failure, that I may know what it is that I place before thee, that I may identify the idols that I am serving, and help me to cast them aside. Forgive me, direct my heart and mind and life, that I may serve thee with a pure heart, that I may come before thee in holiness, and that I may dwell with thee forever, O loving and almighty Father, through Jesus Christ, thine only-begotten Son, in whose Cross is my salvation, who liveth and reigneth with thee and the Holy Spirit, now and forever. Amen.