

“Ephesus – The Church That Let Their Love Grow Cold” E A Terry Delivered 09 07 20
Matthew 22: 34 – 40; Revelation 1: 1 – 8; Revelation 1: 9 – 20: **Revelation 2: 1 – 7 (Sermon)**

In Revelation 1: 12 & 13 we read that The Apostle John saw ***“seven golden lampstands and among the lampstands was someone like a son of man”***.

Then in verses 13-16 John identifies the ***“someone like a son of man”***, as Jesus Christ.

In Revelation 1:20 Jesus tells us the seven golden lampstands are the seven churches and the seven stars are the pastors **or** the spiritual leaders of that church.

The lampstands should remind us of the lampstand with seven branches that was in the tabernacle.

In the tabernacle, the high priest had sole oversight over the lampstand.

The high priest was the one who lit the lamps.

The high priest poured the oil in the lamp, he was the one who trimmed the wicks and he was the one who snuffed out the lamp when it smoked and smoldered because it was not producing the desired light.

Jesus is our great high priest. (Hebrews 4:14)

A lamp’s sole function is to produce light and a lampstand holds the light.

In Matthew 5:14 Jesus said ***“we are the light of the world.”***

Jesus also said; ***“let your light shine before men that others may see your good works and glorify your father which is in heaven.”*** (Matthew 5:16)

Jesus is standing in the midst of the lampstands or the churches inspecting the churches.

Jesus is judging the churches to see how much light they are putting out.

After all, a lampstand that is not producing light is useless.

Jesus is still in the business of inspecting His church.

As we read in our focal scripture lesson, Jesus doesn’t mind trimming wicks or using the snuffer when a church is not producing light to their community.

The question before us this morning is this, ***“what would Jesus say to or write to Mt. Paran Presbyterian Church?”***

In verse 2 & 3 Jesus compliments the church at Ephesus in three areas; their deeds, their doctrine, and their devotion.

Remember John is writing to believers so when Jesus is talking about deeds and hard work Jesus is not talking about works for righteousness.

We know this because Titus 3:5 says ***“not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us...”***

And in Ephesians 2:8-9, we read ***“for by grace are ye save through faith and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God, not of works, lest any man should boast.”***

The works Jesus is talking about are the works we do because we are saved.

Specifically, Jesus is talking about our efforts minister to people in need and sharing the good news of Jesus Christ with the people around us.

John Calvin wrote, ***“Faith alone saves but the faith that saves is not alone.”***

The Ephesians were hard workers.

They did not get tired and quit.

They understood that ministry was to be a part of their purpose in life.

Do you ever feel discouraged or feel like no one appreciates the work that you are doing at church?

Jesus says, I know when you teach a Sunday School Class, I know you are a Youth worker, I know when you clean the church. I know when you call people that are not in church. I know when you tell other people about me.

Jesus says I appreciate your faithful service.

We all work hard to please those we love.

And we will work tirelessly for The Lord if we love Jesus.

Doctrine is what a church believes and what it teaches.

The people of Ephesus took doctrine seriously.

We all need to get serious about studying our Bibles and we need to test everything in light of Scripture.

All of us need to get into God’s Word and we all need to get God’s Word into us.

You will not become a mature Christian if you only listen to the sermon on Sunday.

We all need to be actively studying and mediating on God’s word every day.

In addition, we all need to be involved in a Bible study group.

It is in group Bible study groups that we learn what God’s word says, what God’s word means, and how to apply God’s word to our daily life.

Jesus also congratulated the church at Ephesus for persevering in the face of hardship.

The Ephesians did not give up when trouble came their way. (Revelation 2:3)

What about Mt. Paran?

Are we known for our good deeds?

Do we test the doctrine that is taught and / or preached?

Are we faithful to the teachings of Christ even when it is not popular?

Do we address unchristian conduct in our congregation?

Have we grown weary of sharing the good news of Jesus Christ with the unsaved people God has put in our life?

You would think that a church that is focused on good deeds and good doctrine would be madly in love with Jesus, but just the opposite was true of the church at Ephesus.

Jesus condemns the church at Ephesus; ***“you have forsaken your first love. Remember the height from which you have fallen.”*** (Revelation 2:4)

The New Living Translation put it this way; ***“But I have this complaint against you. You don’t love me or each other as you did at first! Look how far you have fallen!”***

The church at Ephesus had lost their intense enthusiasm and their devotion to the person of Jesus.

The church at Ephesus had not gone wrong in their works or their doctrine but rather in their personal relationship with Jesus.

Being a Christian is not following a bunch of rules or doing work around the church.

Being a Christian is all about a personal relationship with Jesus Christ.

Revelation 21:2 describes the church as the ***“The Bride Of Christ”***.

As you know a Christian marriage is based upon love, commitment, sacrifice, and an intimate relationship with each other.

When a couple gets married, they are passionately in love.

They want to be with each other.

They share and they sacrifice.

They willingly do what makes the other person happy.

That is the kind of relationship that Jesus wants to have with each one of us.

A lot of new believers are passionately in love with Jesus but sadly as time passes, cynicism sets in and their love for Jesus begins to fade.

In our lesson from Matthew Jesus clearly tells us that the greatest commandment is ***“to love The Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul and with all your mind.”***

In other words, we are to love our God with all that we are.

It is easy to say we love Jesus but it is much harder to demonstrate our love for Jesus in all that we do and say each and every day.

In John 21 we can read the account our risen Lord Jesus asking Peter ***“Simon son of John, do you love me more than these?”***

The ***“these”*** Jesus was referring to was Peter’s family and friends, Peter’s boat and fishing business, and Peter’s life style.

Jesus was asking Peter if Peter loved Him more than everything else in Peter’s life.

Jesus told the Christians at Ephesus; ***“you have forsaken your first love.”***

If we really love Jesus we will love to study and mediate on God’s word because Jesus is ***“The Word”***. (John 1:14)

If we really love Jesus, we will love the truth because Jesus is ***“The Truth”***. (John 14:6)

If we really love Jesus, we will love peace because Jesus is ***“The Prince of Peace”***. (Isaiah 9:6).

If we really love Jesus, we will love justice because ***“The Lord is a God of Justice”***. (Isaiah 30:18)

If we really love Jesus, we will love other people as much as we love ourselves. (Matthew 22:39)

Loving other people means loving people who are different from us, loving people who wrong us, as well as loving the unbelievers God has put in our lives.

If we really love Jesus, we will not be prejudice.

If we really love Jesus we will ***“rid ourselves of all malice, deceit, hypocrisy, envy, and slander of all kinds”***. (1st Peter 2:1)

Being passionately in love with Jesus is a challenge for many churches today that have strong teaching and strict standards.

Those churches are more concerned with winning arguments than with winning people for Christ.

Law without love is just legalism.

And unfortunately, that is what the church in Ephesus had been reduced to.

The teachers and preachers who had served the church in Ephesus in the past constantly communicated

the supremacy of love.

The Apostle Paul mentioned love more than twenty times in his letter to the Ephesians.

The Book of 1st John repeatedly commands believers ***“And this is his command: to believe in the name of his Son, Jesus Christ, and to love one another as he commanded us”*** (1st John 3:23);

“Dear friends, let us love one another, for love comes from God. Everyone who loves has been born of God and knows God. Whoever does not love does not know God, because God is love” (1st John 4:7-8);

“And so we know and rely on the love God has for us. God is love. Whoever lives in love lives in God, and God in him” (1st John 4:16).

Jesus is crystal clear that what He wants is for us to love Him and to love each other more than any thing else.

Sadly, the actions of many churches and the actions of many Christians do not reflect a real love for Jesus.

Fortunately, Jesus also gave the church at Ephesus a command that, if followed, would ignite the flames of love in their hearts once again.

The key to rekindling your love for The Lord is: ***“Remember the height from which you have fallen. Repent and do the things you did at first.”*** (Revelation 2:5)

Remember – Repent - Return.

Do you remember the joy you felt when you first realized that God loved you so much that He died for you?

Do you remember the relief you felt knowing Jesus had forgiven all of your sins?

Do you remember the excitement you had knowing Jesus wanted to be your best friend?

If you do not remember your love for The Lord maybe you need to fall in love with Jesus again.

If you do not know Jesus as your personal Lord and Savior, I beg you to ask Jesus to save you and for Jesus to be a part of your daily life before you leave this broadcast today.

The word ***“repent”*** literally means to turn around and go another way.

To repent means to turn away from our sinful nature and our sinful acts and turn to Jesus.

We all need to admit that we have failed to love Jesus the way that we should.

We all need to admit that we have not lived up to the vows we made when we gave our heart to Jesus.

The way to rekindled our love for Jesus is to turn away from our sinful and selfish ways and to turn to Jesus.

The final command is return. Jesus said, ***“do the things you did at first.”***

New Christians are eager to read their Bible every day?

New Christians pray constantly and pray about everything?

New Christians are quick to volunteer to serve The Lord.

When we cleaned out the crawl space in the Fellowship Hall we found bulletins from 1958 – 1962.

At that time Mt Paran had some church activity almost every evening; they had a Wednesday night Praise & Prayer service, members conducted worship at a local nursing home, people volunteered at The Baltimore Rescue Mission, and the neighborhood was invited to play basketball in the Fellowship Hall every night.

Revelation 2:5 says whatever it was you did before —do it again, do it intentionally, and do it regularly.

Jesus is still in the business of inspecting His church.

Jesus doesn't mind trimming wicks or using the snuffer when a church is not producing light to their community.

The question for us today is, *“what would Jesus say or write to Mt. Paran Presbyterian Church?”*

Would Jesus condemn Mt. Paran Presbyterian church for leaving our first love?

What about you personally?

Do you love Jesus more today than you did last year?

Can you honestly say that you love The Lord Jesus Christ with all your heart?

Do you love your fellow members as much as you love yourself?

Do you willingly give your time, your talents, and your treasure to The Lord?

You see an intimate personal relationship with Jesus Christ will make all of your relationships and all of your Christian service a joy, not a job.

Remember Jesus warning in verse 7 ***“he who has an ear, let him hear what The Spirit says to the churches.”***

Today we looked at three ways are to test our love for Jesus.

In John 14:14 Jesus said; if you love me, you will keep my commands.

In John 21 Jesus said; if you love me you will feed my sheep and you will care for my sheep.

Then in 1st John 4:21 we are told if we love God, we will love other people.

Remember genuine love for Jesus is passionate, enthusiastic, sacrificial, and is filled with joy.

God's word to us today challenges all of us to examine ourselves to see if our love for The Lord is genuine.

Ask yourself; Am I obeying all of Jesus' commandments?

Do I love everybody, Am I spiritually feeding and caring for the people around me?

If you love The Lord with all of your heart, mind, and soul then Jesus promises that you will have the opportunity to eat from the tree of life both now and throughout eternity. (Revelation 2:7)

Remember, the key to rekindling your love for The Lord is ***Remember – Repent - Return.***

That was Jesus' command to the Christians at Ephesus.

And that is still Jesus' word to us as a congregation and to each one of us as individuals today.

AMEN