

Hook

Young couple on their honeymoon and its obvious – holding hands, gazing into each other’s eyes, he is attentive to her every need → but the new bride grows tired of the attention, of the constant questions, and wants to act like a couple who’s been married for years. The new groom doesn’t quite understand why, but agrees – at the next stop he calmly says, “Your turn to carry the bags.”

Love – it’s so fresh, so exciting, so engaging when it’s new, but something happens. Jesus even warns that’s what is happening as we approach the last day, “The love of most will grow cold.”

I wonder how it was for the first marriage after the garden of Eden. They would have remembered the walks in the cool of the morning, remembering the next new and exciting taste of fruit, remembering the new and unique sound of a song bird – this one is for you, try this, look at that – it must have been exciting – that first love – and by that I’m not talking about Adam and Eve. I’m talking about their marriage with God. First love...

But then it all changes and they are cast out of the garden of Eden for they ate of the forbidden tree and their first love was gone.

You know how it is – first love, a wedding day but then the job responsibilities and the appointments to keep and the stress to deal with and the problems to face and the children to care here and there and one day you look across the table and wonder who the person is sitting across from you – and while that can and does happen in marriage, I’m talking more about your marriage with God.

For worship here in church isn’t quite as thrilling and the old hymns are just... OLD and the new hymns are too NEW and we end up going through the motions. And life is not quite as exciting and the need for a Savior is not quite as demanding and pretty soon we are longing for the good old days, the days of Eden when our hearts were on fire with God’s love.

That’s how it was for the church in Ephesus.

Ephesus – describe

Listen to what Jesus says to them: 7 stars = pastors, 7 lampstands = churches...

Did you here what kind of a church they were? Active, hard working, persevering in spite of persecution, they were discerning in doctrine always standing up for the truth, they were morally pure standing up for what is right. Nicolaitans = ?? not sure but probably a group that was teaching you could live however you wanted as long as you believed in Jesus. This was a faithful church, doing all the right things.

“Yet” Yet. I hold this against you. You have lost your first love.

The church in Ephesus may have been doing all the right things but they weren’t doing them for the right reason – out of love for Christ. They were going through the motions, they were robots carrying out their duties, they were machines acting without thinking or loving. And you catch what Jesus is saying don’t you? Doing the right things for the wrong reasons is still wrong. Doing the right things for the wrong reasons is still sin. Jesus once said the same thing to a group of people with a similar problem, “They honor me with their lips but their hearts are far from me.”

This was a church that was started by the Apostle Paul and was influenced by the hardworking and caring pastors Timothy and Appollos. These people were described by Paul as people who had “a love for all the saints” (Eph.1). Paul prayed in his letter to them that they continue to be “rooted and established in love” (3:17). He tells us that they grasped how “wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ” (3:18). But now that love – that first love was gone.

Look at Jesus’ warning:

Ephesus was a major, thriving city on a harbor – but now silt has filled in the harbor and the sea is six miles away and so Ephesus eventually stopped and the church is no longer there – all because they lost their first love.

That's a warning for us isn't it? A warning for us to keep our first love with God. How do we do that? Repent – repent... that's the watch word of Advent. That's the call from John the Baptist we'll be hearing over the next couple of weeks. Repent. Change your mind. Turn away from your sinful attitude, your lacksidical approach to life and worship and God. Repent and look to Jesus for forgiveness and life. He is the one who is coming to Restore Eden.

It was Easter Sunday when he started walking and talking with two disciples on the road to Emmaus. Those disciples were in a fog, dazed from the past events, shocked at the death of their Lord and not knowing what had happened. Life was so exciting, filled with so much meaning and love but now what were they going to do. And then this stranger started to explain the Scriptures to them, then it started to make sense, and then the stranger broke bread with them and they knew – this was Jesus who had died for them and now risen from the dead. Oh, how that changed their lives: “Were not our hearts burning within us while he talked with us on the road and opened the Scriptures to us.”

And by His Spirit, working through the word that Jesus has given us ears to hear, we too are restored to our first love, to Eden, to paradise, the garden park of God.

You know there were two trees in the garden right? The tree of the knowledge of good and evil but also another tree that never carried out its purpose – the tree of life. God couldn't, he wouldn't let Adam and Eve eat from that tree because he didn't want them to live forever outside of Eden. But Jesus is coming to make all things new again. He is coming to restore Eden. He already has reversed the effects of sin in our lives and he is coming to give us a new heaven and new earth with the tree.

Read Revelation 22:1-4.

I can hardly wait to eat from that tree. But I say why wait? Let's live in our first love now. Amen.