TITLE: First Love

TEXT: Rev. 2:1-7; Ephe. 1:13-15; Mt. 5:14-16

INTRODUCTION: First love is really a pretty tremendous thing when you think about it.

 Some may be in that stage of life and relationship right now, others of us can remember to way back when.

 When a man and a woman first fall in love there seems to be no Limits to your love. No mountain that is too high or any sea that is too deep...

 Most often there is nothing that you wouldn't do for that special someone, no sacrifice that is too great...

 Do you ladies remember when it used to take you two or three hours just to get ready for that special date?

 ( Pam still does)

 Guys, do you remember when you used to actually clean and wax the car before you would go out on a date to try to impress your special lady?

 When you would go out to dinner it would usually take at least an hour just to decide where you were going to eat--(where would you like to go honey? I don't care, where is it you would like to go? where ever you would like to go!)

 It seems like, after not too much time, things begin to change... Husband may get home and say, let’s go out to eat--wife, give me 15 minutes and would you clean up the car a little bit? (He clears a spot for you on the seat)!

 Where are we going eat---MacDonald’s!

 How things change!

 Whether male of female, we are all probably guilty of forgetting that time of first love and become complacent in our relationships.

 We start to take the other person for granted and often times this will start to cause a riff or a split in the relationship....

 This almost seems to be a flaw in our nature.....

 The problem is, that as bad as this can be in our relationships with each other, there is a relationship that this kind of complacency is even more damaging in ...

 And that is if we allow this to happen in our relationship with God.

 In the Book of revelation Christ addresses seven Church's In Asia. Of the seven Church's addressed in Chapter's 2 & 3, all were actually Church's of John's day. But they also represent types and conditions of Church's in all generations. This idea is supported by the fact that only seven were selected out of the many that existed and flourished in John's time and by the statement at the close of each letter that this is what the Spirit says to the Church's (plural).

 In Jesus's address to the first Church, the Church at Ephesus, he says this:

**Reve 2:1 (NIV) "To the angel of the church in Ephesus write:**

**These are the words of him who holds the seven stars in his right hand and walks among the seven golden lampstands:**

**2 I know your deeds, your hard work and your perseverance. I know that you cannot tolerate wicked men, that you have tested those who claim to be apostles but are not, and have found them false.**

**3 You have persevered and have endured hardships for my name, and have not grown weary.**

**4 Yet I hold this against you: You have forsaken your first love.**

**5 Remember the height from which you have fallen! Repent and do the things you did at first. If you do not repent, I will come to you and remove your lampstand from its place.**

**7 He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To him who overcomes, I will give the right to eat from the tree of life, which is in the paradise of God.**

 Jesus first commends them for their deeds, their hard work, for their perseverance and for their demanding sound doctrine....

 But then He says:

**4 Yet I hold this against you: You have \*\*forsaken your first love.**

 What does it mean to forsake ones first love?

Forsake= **aphiemi {af-ee'-ay-mee}**

**1) to send away**

**1a1) of a husband divorcing his wife**

**1c1) to disregard**

**1c3) to omit, neglect**

**1e) to give up, keep no longer**

 This Church was just commended by the Lord for its good deeds and hard work and perseverance. They were busy doing the things that the Church has been called to do, yet, they were being admonished for forgetting who they were doing it for!

 They were forsaking, neglecting and omitting their first love, the very reason for their good deeds, hard work and perseverance!

 So Jesus tells them...

**5 Remember the height from which you have fallen! Repent and do the things you did at first. If you do not repent, I will come to you and remove your lampstand from its place.**

**Remember the height from which you have fallen!**

 What was the height, that high place, which they had fallen?

 Listen to what the Apostle Paul has to say to this particular Church several years earlier....

**Ephe 1:13 (NIV) And you also were included in Christ when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation. Having believed, you were marked in him with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit,**

**14 who is a deposit guaranteeing our inheritance until the redemption of those who are God's possession--to the praise of his glory.**

**15 For this reason, ever since I heard about your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love for all the saints, I have not stopped giving thanks for you, remembering you in my prayers.**

 In the beginning the Church at Ephesus had a tremendous love for Christ that overflowed in their expression of love for others!

 The apostle commends them for this...**For this reason, ever since I heard about your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love for all the saints, I have not stopped giving thanks for you, remembering you in my prayers.**

 The word used for love here, the love that this Church had for others is ag-ah-pay!

 It is the word that is used for God’s love. It literally means a feast of love!

 It is the non-self-seeking, sacrificial love that God has for the Church... The love of God is that God so loved the world that He gave His only Son that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.

 It is the love that Christ showed us as He sacrificed Himself on a cross outside of Jerusalem for our sin!

 Jesus said that this Church, these believers, even though they were doing Church-y things, that they had forsaken their first love, that they had neglected, omitted, this kind of love, the love that they had when they first believed, that fervent love that they had for Christ in the beginning that motivated them to be a vehicle of Christ love to others.

 Think back to the time when you first accepted the Lord... Then ask yourself, do I still have the same fervor, the same zeal in my love for Christ and my love for others that I did then?

 If the answer is no than are we guilty of forsaking our first love?

 Jesus says to..

 **Remember the height from which you have fallen!**

 Remember, think back upon, call to memory that time when you first came to believe…

 Christ's command not only exposes the problem but He offers a way to correct the fault..

**5 Remember the height from which you have fallen! Repent and do the things you did at first.**

 The imperatives here are instructive...Remember, Repent and Do!

 First we are to remember, to call to mind how things used to be, how God wants things to be again.....

 Remember those times of first love when we were attentive in our relationship with Jesus. When He was the most important thing in our lives... Remember how things used to be.... Remember that enthusiasm of first love and how we desired to please God and share His love with others…

 Then we are to repent. Repent of how things are now, how we have allowed them to become.

 Repent for our lack of zeal and fervor. Repent for our lack of or diminished love. Both for Christ and for others.

 Repent means to change one’s mind, to do a 190', to turn around.

 And then we are to do the things that we did at first!

"to do"= **Poy-eh-o: to act rightly; to produce; to carry out; to execute; to perform to a promise!**

 Jesus says: Remember the height from which you have fallen, the height of first love.

 Repent because you have allowed yourself to fall from that high place.

And then, once again, do the things you did at first,

your former works that were motivated by love.

 **If you do not repent, I will come to you and remove your lampstand from its place.**

 What does that mean? I will remove your lampstand from its place?

 What is it that a lampstand does?

 It provides light!

 A lampstand here represents our light bearing, our witness of Christ.

 Jesus is saying, repent or you will cease to be a bearer of My light in the darkness of the world around you.

 **Matt 5:14 (NIV) "You are the light of the world. A city on a hill cannot be hidden.**

**15 Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house.**

**16 In the same way, let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven.**

 Church, when we come to Christ for the forgiveness of our sins and allow Him to become the Lord and savior of our life, we become a bearer of His light to others.

 That is our universal calling! That is the purpose for our remaining on this planet…

 God has made us bearers of His light and we are to bring that light to the world around us.

 Once we are saved, if God didn't have light for us to bear to others who are lost in the darkness of this world and help lead them out of that darkness into His light, then He would just take us to be with Him…

 There would be no reason for us to remain here….

 In Christ, we are called to bear light, the light that He has placed within us, the light of Himself.

 And a Church that is not bearing light is of no value, it has no purpose…

 In fact, a Church that isn't bearing the light of Christ ceases to be the Church.

 A little girl got home from Sunday school, where she had been taught the verse: **Let your light so shine before men that they may see your good works and give glory to our Father who is in heaven.**

 She asked her mother, when she repeated the verse, what it meant. Her mom said, “Well, it means that when you are good and kind and thoughtful and obedient, you are letting Christ’s light shine in your life before all who know you.”

 The very next Sunday in Sunday school, the little girl got in a bit of a fracas with another student and created somewhat of an uproar—to such an extent that the Sunday school teacher had to go and find her mother to get her settled down a bit in the class. Her mother was concerned when she got to the classroom and said, “Sweetie, don’t you remember about letting your light shine for the Lord before men?” The girl blurted out, “Mom, I have blowed myself out.”

 Many of us have done just that. In our relationship to Christ, we have allowed our light to be blowed out.

 Metaphorically, in Scripture, there are only two choices. There is light and there is darkness…

 We can be children of light or we can be children of darkness.

 Being Twilight, part light -part darkness- is not an option.

 By the choices that we make, the way that we live, We will either be one or the other..

 We either reflect the light of Christ in our lives or we don't!

 If we are a Christian and if we have forsaken our first love, That love that we had for Christ in the beginning that motivated us to love others with the same love that He has for us, ag-ah-pay love, Gods love, we will cease to bear the light that God has placed in us and we will be in danger of having God remove our lampstand, our ability to bear His light in our world...

 Example: Light bulb that has burned out.

(Say it is the only light in that room and there are no windows-you end up grouping around in darkness)

 A light bulb that doesn't produce light anymore is useless…

 So it is with us as Christians when we stop producing the light of Christ in our life because we have allowed ourselves to fall from the heights of first love.

 If Jesus were to address a letter to us today, what is it that He would have to say?

 Would we be commended for our deeds, our hard work and our perseverance and would we be commended for our standing firm in the faith and not forsaking, not neglecting our relationship with Him?

 Would we be commended for our bearing the light and love of Christ to the world around us--- Or would we be told that our lamps are growing dim and are in danger of going out and being removed?

 Jesus said:

**7 He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To him who overcomes, I will give the right to eat from the tree of life, which is in the paradise of God.**

 Do you have an ear to hear the Spirit this morning?

 Is your relationship with Jesus the same in passion and zeal today as it was the day you first came to believe?

 Are you bearing the light that God has called you to bear to the world around you?

 Have you not allowed yourself to fall from the heights of first love?

 If so then hear Gods promise to you this morning----

**To him who overcomes, I will give the right to eat from the tree of life, which is in the paradise of God.**

 Is it your desire to overcome and one day partake

freely of the tree of life in the paradise of your God?

 Then never forsake your first love…

 Prayer....Lord, if we have allowed ourselves to fall from the heights of first love this morning, if we have allowed our relationship with you to grow cold, if our motivation for doing what you have called us to do is any thing other than that of love, the love that we had in the beginning, your love that you placed within us, then, Lord, may we remember the height from which we have fallen, may we repent for falling from such a high place, and then may we do the thing that we did at first, bear your light, Your love to the world around us…Amen