

Return to Our First Love - Revelation 2:1–7 — Sermon Guide

Purpose

To hear what the risen Jesus says to the church in Ephesus and to consider what He may be saying to CBC. Jesus commends faithful labor, perseverance, and doctrinal discernment, but He also lovingly confronts a church that has forsaken its first love. The goal is to remember, repent, and return to wholehearted love for Christ.

Ice Breaker

Can you remember a season when your love for Jesus felt especially fresh, eager, or attentive? What marked that season?

Scripture Focus

Read **Revelation 2:1–7**. Additional passages to consider: Revelation 1:12–18; John 15:1–11; Jeremiah 2:2–5; 2 Corinthians 11:3.

Observations from the Text

Jesus speaks to the church in Ephesus as the One who “holds the seven stars” and “walks among the seven golden lampstands.” He is not distant from His churches. He knows what is happening in and among them.

Jesus begins with commendation. He sees their deeds, hard work, perseverance, endurance, and doctrinal discernment. They are not passive, lazy, or careless with truth. They have tested false apostles and endured hardship without growing weary.

But Jesus also gives a serious correction: “You have forsaken the love you had at first.” The church is energetic in service, patient in suffering, and orthodox in faith, yet flawed at the center. Their activity has continued, but their affection has cooled.

Jesus then gives a clear pathway: remember, repent, and do the things they did at first. He warns that if they do not repent, their lampstand may be removed. Yet He also promises life to the one who overcomes.

Core Teaching Connection

Revelation is not merely about future events. It reveals Jesus as He is now: risen, glorified, walking among His churches, knowing His people, speaking truth, and calling them back to life.

The church in Ephesus reminds us that a church can do many right things and still drift from love. Service, perseverance, doctrinal clarity, and ministry activity matter, but they

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cannot replace communion with Christ. We can work for Jesus while attending less and less to Jesus.

Earl Palmer described this as the “Ephesus Syndrome,” where first love is gradually replaced by the heavy diet of church activity, responsibility, controversy, or ministry work. The remedy is not to manufacture old feelings, but to return to the Beloved: remember what has been lost, repent of rival loves, and re-do the practices of love.

Group Discussion

1. What stands out to you most from Jesus’ words to the church in Ephesus?
2. What does Jesus commend in the Ephesian church?
3. What does it mean to “forsake the love you had at first”?
4. How can a person or church remain active, orthodox, and hardworking while losing affection for Christ?
5. Which of the three words — remember, repent, re-do — feels most important for you right now?
6. What might Jesus be saying to CBC through this passage?

Dig Deeper

1. Read Revelation 1:12–18. How does this vision of Jesus shape the way we hear Revelation 2?
2. Read Jeremiah 2:2–5. How does God describe Israel’s early devotion and later drift?
3. Read John 15:1–11. How does abiding in Christ connect to love, obedience, and fruitfulness?

Personal Reflection

- Where has my love for Christ grown cooler?
- What rival loves compete for my affection, attention, or dependence?
- Am I serving Jesus while neglecting communion with Jesus?

Closing Prayer

Risen Jesus, You walk among Your churches and You know us fully. Thank You for seeing what is good, and for loving us enough to correct what is deadly. Forgive us for activity without affection and orthodoxy without intimacy. Help us remember, repent, and return to You, our first love. Amen.