

When the fire turns to embers: Revelation 2.1-11

Today's TFTD comes from Linda.

“To the angel of the church in Ephesus write: These are the words of him who holds the seven stars in his right hand, who walks among the seven golden lampstands: ‘I know your works, your toil and your patient endurance... But I have this against you, that you have abandoned the love you had at first. Remember then from what you have fallen; repent, and do the works you did at first. If not, I will come to you and remove your lampstand from its place, unless you repent’”. (Rev. 2.1-2 & 4-5)

Do you remember when you first fell in love? First love is special, fervent, emotional. It takes hold of the heart and causes the soul to sing. First love is exciting, vibrant, it can short-circuit your brain.

I recently watched the BBC series ‘US’. It was a thought-provoking and bitter-sweet drama about the breakup of a marriage. The story begins when a slightly nerdy scientist realises that the girl of his dreams has similar feeling towards him and he just can’t believe his luck. Fast forward 20 or so years and all is not well. Not only is he blind to the fact that their marriage is failing but he’s now estranged from his son. His solution; the three of them go off on a grand tour of Europe. Not a good idea. The hope is that he can take the dying embers of what is left of their marriage and return it to something resembling the fire of that first love. Sadly, this doesn’t save his marriage but to his credit he learns a lot about himself and the things in life that really matter.

What is true of our personal relationships is also true of our journey in faith. Remember when you first came to faith, remember how you found your

place within the church, remember how you joined in the fellowship of faith. Remember how you first felt God drawing you into a relationship which has hopefully remained pretty steadfast over the years.

In our passage from Revelation the Church at Ephesus is also told to Remember! “*Remember then from what you have fallen; repent, and do the works you did at first*”. (Rev. 2.5)

The church of Ephesus was active in the Lord’s work, but they were serving out of a sense of duty and not out of a fervent love for God. They had become like Martha, labouring amongst the pots and pans. (Luke 10:38-42).

Jesus looks at these people whom He loves and tells them that they “*have left their first love*.” They love their church; but they do not love him like they used to. They love their doctrine; but they have lost their passion for Jesus. They love their work; but they are not motivated in that work by a passionate love for Jesus. They are busy, but their hearts no longer burn for him. The flame that burned so brightly is now a smouldering ember. They have “*abandoned the love they had at the first*”. In this first letter to the seven churches Jesus sets out his remedy for the church at Ephesus: Remember, Repent, Repeat or the lampstand will be Removed.

Remember: Jesus wants them to look back to a time when their love for him motivated everything they did.

Repent: The word “*repent*” speaks of a change of mind that leads to a change of heart. Jesus is telling these people that they need to search their hearts and change their attitude toward the Lord.

Repeat: Jesus tells them to “do the works you did at first”. Do those things that rekindle your love. Go back to the first works: back to praying, back to the Apostles teaching, back to praising God’s name.

Remove: otherwise if they refuse to get to where they need to be, Jesus tells them that he is willing to remove their lampstand and take their light away.

The Christian life is basically a love affair with the Lord Jesus Christ. This love is the motivation for all we do in his name. So whether we sing, teach, preach, clean, deliver food parcels, visit the lonely, plus the many, many other things we do as a church - everything must all flow out of an ever-deepening love for the Lord. For if our love for him grows cold, then our service means nothing, nothing at all.

St Paul sets the record straight: *“If I speak in the tongues of mortals and of angels, but do not have love, I am a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal. And if I have prophetic powers, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but do not have love, I am nothing. If I give away all my possessions, and if I hand over my body so that I may boast, but do not have love, I gain nothing”.* (1 Cor. 13:1-3).

Every blessing Linda

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