Have You Lost Your First Love?

Revelation 2:1-7

Introduction: Lost Things – (Spiritual Victories treasures)
(ie) Lost Treasures – Colorado's Lost Gold Mines…Treasure of the Sierra Madre

"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 people, 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 the love you had at first. [5] Consider how far 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. [6] But you have this in your favor: You hate the practices of the Nicolaitans, which I also hate. [7] Whoever has ears, let them hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To the one who is victorious, I will give the right to eat from the tree of life, which is in the paradise of God.

(ie) Story of Ephesus - Acts 19 extraordinary miracles, occult deliverance, Diana (Artimus) of the Ephesians, (danger of Mariolatry) John the apostle lived there with Mary mother of Jesus. 50,000 drachmas or silver coins Roman denarius was approximately equal to US$20 in 2018. $20 x 50,000 = $1,000,000.

Seven churches of Revelation

1. Ephesus – lost first love
2. Smyrna - suffering afflictions
3. Pergamum - teachings compromise
4. Thyatira - toleration of immorality
5. Sardis - asleep, reputation, dead
6. Philadelphia - hold on in testing
7. Laodicea - lukewarm, lost passion

The original seven churches mentioned in the Book of Revelation do not still exist as active Christian congregations.

Hold fast. Don't lose.

Stir up. Fan the flame. Return, refresh, renew, revive, and restore.

Churches devolve…lose fire, smolder, lukewarm and die.

Presbyterians, Lutherans, Episcopalians, Methodists, etc.

1. The First Commandment

What is the greatest and first commandment: *"Love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, mind, and strength."* -

Just about everyone likes a good love story. It's the fodder for most movies and novels written these days. Love is an amazing thing. People in love do crazy things!

The woman with the alabaster jar of ointment.

Our passage depicts one of those crazy things. A woman kneeling at Jesus feet and breaking an alabaster box of ointment (year's wages) at the feet of Jesus. Let's explore this extraordinary love affair with Jesus that is marked in ALL 4 Gospels. **Therefore, I tell you, her many sins have been forgiven – for <u>she loved much</u>. But he who has been forgiven little loves little."**

(Matthew 26:6-13, Mark 14:3-11, Luke 7:36-50 | 10:38-42, John 11:1-2 & 12:1-8)

<u>Francis Chan</u>, in his book, *Crazy Love* has some great things to say about being in love with Jesus. **<u>Have you ever fallen in love with Jesus.</u>** (Oh, I like Jesus, but I wouldn't say I've fallen in love with him.) But friend, salvation is a relationship. It is a love relationship with the lover of your soul. Do people around you know you are in love with Jesus?

Lovers in Love: Quote Chan p100 (Being "Love" is a form of insanity)

"When you are truly in love, you go to great lengths to be with the one you love. You'll drive for hours to be together, even if it's only for a short while. You don't mind staying up late at night to talk. Walking in the rain is romantic, not annoying. You'll willingly spend a small fortune on the one you are crazy about. When you are apart from each other, it's painful, even miserable. He or she is all you think about; (You are obsessed) you jump at any chance to be together.

(ie) **Marilyn and me** – tests, walks, sitting close, missing classes, driving long distances, phone calls that cost as much a week as you are making, giving up all to be together.

2. The Problem and Warning

How in love are you with your Savior? *Does it matter?*

Jeremiah 2:12-13, 32
Be appalled at this, O heavens, and shudder with great horror," declares the LORD. 13. "My people have committed two sins: They have forsaken me, the spring of living water, and have dug their own cisterns, broken cisterns that cannot hold water. 32. Does a maiden forget her jewelry, a bride her wedding ornaments? Yet my people have forgotten me, days without number.

- Mark 4:19 – love of other things choke the word
- Matthew 24:12 - Love of many will wax cold
- John 21:15-22 Do you love me more than these?
- 2 Timothy 3:2-4 lovers of themselves, lovers of pleasures more than God
- Revelation 2:1-7 (4) You have left your first love.
- Revelation 3:14-21 (16) You are lukewarm (not cold or hot) spew you

<u>Quote About Heaven Without a Savior</u> – (John Piper Quote)

"The critical question for our generation – and for every generation – is this: If you could have heaven… (without Christ would you be satisfied there?) …If you could have heaven, with no sicknes, and with all the friends you ever had on earth, and all the food you ever liked, and all the leisure activities you ever enjoyed, and all the natural beauties you ever saw, all the physical pleasures you ever tasted, and no human conflict or any natural disasters, COULD YOU BE SATISFIED WITH HEAVEN, IF JESUS CHRIST WERE NOT THERE?"

Accept Christ:
Some people view salvation as a formula to adhere to. It is the words you say, actions you take, doctrines you believe in, sacraments you ingest, a theological stance you take, or the church you belong to.

But salvation is none of that. Salvation is about a relationship of Love with the Savior. (John 3:16) *"He that has the Son has life and he that has not the Son has not life."* (1 John 5:12) Salvation is not about theology. It is not about "accepting" Jesus Christ. The devil accepts Jesus Christ is the Son of God but it does him no good. **I urge you to read A W Tozer on *"Accepting Christ"* in *That Incredible Christian*.**

John Piper
***"Facebook and Twitter have proved for all time and eternity that prayerlessneess is not due to a lack of time."* But a lack of love.**

The Appointment

Robert Boyd Munger captured this idea in his wonderful little booklet, *My Heart Christ's Home*. He describes the Christian life as inviting Jesus into one's house. Each room represents an area of our life which is either open or closed to the Savior.

The Living Room

…we walked into the living room. This room was intimate and comfortable. I liked it. It had a fireplace, overstuffed chairs, a sofa, and a quiet atmosphere.

He said, "This is indeed a delightful room. Let us come here often. It is secluded and quiet, and we can fellowship together." He promised, "I will be here early every morning. Meet me here, and we will start the day together."

Well, as a young Christian I was thrilled. I couldn't think of anything I would rather do than have a few minutes with Christ in close companionship. So morning after morning, I would come downstairs to the living room. He would take a book of the Bible from the case. We would open it and read together. He would unfold to me the wonder of God's saving truths. My heart sang as He shared the love and the grace He had toward me. These were wonderful times.

However, little by little, under the pressure of many responsibilities, this time began to be shortened. Why, I'm not sure. I thought I was too busy to spend regular time with Christ. This was not intentional, you understand. It just happened that way. Finally, not only was the time shortened, but I began to miss days now and then. Urgent matters would crowd out the quiet times of conversation with Jesus.

I remember one morning rushing downstairs, eager to be on my way. I passed the living room and noticed that the door was open. Looking in, I saw a fire in the fireplace and Jesus was sitting there. Suddenly in dismay I thought to myself, "He is my guest. I invited Him into my heart! He has come as my Savior and Friend, and yet I am neglecting Him."

I stopped, turned and hesitantly went in. With downcast glance, I said, "Master, forgive me. Have You been here all these mornings?"

"Yes," He said, "I told you I would be here every morning to meet with you. Remember, I love you. I have redeemed you at great cost. I value your fellowship. Even if you cannot keep the quiet time for your own sake, do it for mine."

The truth that Christ desires my companionship, that He wants me to be with Him and waits for me, has done more to transform my quiet time with God than any other single fact. Don't let Christ wait alone in the living room of your heart, but every day find time when, with your Bible and in prayer, you may be together with Him.

Derek Prince
Foundations for Faith, a study of Hebrews.

"The keeping of God's word is the supreme distinguishing feature which should mark you out from the world as a disciple of Christ.

Your attitude toward God's word is your attitude toward Christ.
You do not love God/Christ more than you love his word.
You do not obey God/Christ more than you obey his word.
You do not honor God/Christ more than you honor his word.
You do not have more room in you life for God/Christ than you have room for his word."

(ie) "Backsliding begins with a dusty Bible."

Tozer, *Pursuit of God*
"To have found God and still to pursue Him is the soul's paradox of love, scorned indeed by the too-easily-satisfied religionist, but justified in the happy experience by the children of the burning heart. St. Bernard stated this holy paradox in a musical quatrain that will be instantly understood by every worshipping soul"

> *We taste Thee, O Thou Living Bread,*
> *And long to feast upon Thee still:*
> *We drink of Thee, the Fountainhead,*
> *And thirst our souls from Thee to fill.*

I want to deliberately to encourage this mighty longing after God. The lack of it has brought us to our present low estate. The still and wooden quality about our religious live is a result of our lack of holy desire. Complacency is a deadly foe of all spiritual growth. Acute desire must be present or there will be no manifestation of Christ to His people. He waits to be wanted. Too bad that with many of us He waits so long, so very long, in vain.

Little Things: Song of Solomon 2:15
Take us the foxes, the little foxes, that spoil the vines: for our vines have tender grapes.

Conclusion

What must I do?

1. **Recognize** your lost love (or diminished) for Jesus. Symptoms are real. No anticipation of Jesus coming again. No joy in worship, not just on Sunday. No desire to read and study God's word. No hunger and thirst after righteousness (godliness). Satisfied with earthly pleasures.

   Repent – means to turn around. Going the wrong way. About face! Stop chasing other loves. Identify the offending substitute for love of Christ – good things, not best things. If you could enjoy heaven without Jesus, then something is wrong. Are you longing for mansions, streets of gold, no disease, no tears and no death, but have little or no desire to see Jesus, something is wrong.

   Mark 4:28 ***Still others, like seed sown among thorns, hear the word;*** ***[19]*** ***but the worries of this life, the deceitfulness of wealth, and the love of other things come in and choke the word, making it unfruitful.***

2. **Return** to the lover of your soul, ask God to passion back into your life and soul. Spend time daily in the word. Spend quiet times in the woods walking with Jesus, communing with him. Let Sunday afternoon be time you spend alone with Jesus, in word, worship, thanksgiving and prayer.

St Patrick's Shield

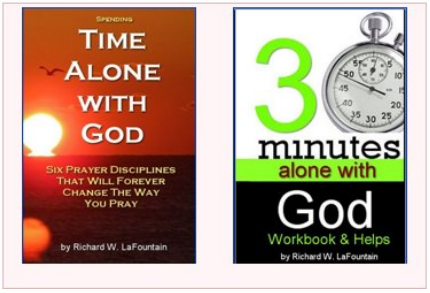
Be Christ this day;
Christ beside me, Christ before me;
Christ behind me, Christ within me;
Christ beneath me, Christ above me;
Christ to the right of me, Christ to the left of me;
Christ in my lying, my sitting, my rising;
Christ of all who know me,
Christ on my tongue of all who meet me,
Christ in eye of all who see me,
Christ in the ear of all who hear me.

Practical Application of Loving Jesus

1) Six Steps of Intimacy with God – *Spending Time Alone With God*

Be still
Be Thankful
Be Worshipful

Confess Your Sins
Clothe Yourself
Cast Your Care



2.) Schedule Time With Jesus – pastors schedule

Scheduled to Pray

1. Every Day an Hour to Pray – *"keeps the clutter away"*
2. Every Week – *"I sit at his feet" - one half day away*
3. Every month a day away – *"get away to pray" – one full day*
4. Every Quarter – *"put my life in order" – retreat 3 days*
5. Every Quarter Staff Together – "brothers together seeking his face"
6. Every Year one week each year – *"see my way clear"*
7. A Sabbath of seven – *"a time to yearn for heaven"*

My goodness pastor how much time are you spending in prayer?
40 to 55 days a year are designated for prayer.

3.) Loving Jesus' Name –

- Search for Him – Jeremiah 29:11-14 (his names)
- Sing to Him - Psalms exalt his name together (his worth)
- Saturate Yourself in Him – St Patrick's Shield
- Seal His Name – adopt one name each year – Malachi

Paul's unabashed goal in life – ***to know Christ***

"Jesus we know and Paul we know, but who are you?"
"Are you known at the throne." Daniel was known at the throne.

16. I pray that out of his glorious riches he may strengthen you with power through his Spirit in your inner being, 17. so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith. And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, 18. may have power, together with all the saints, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep **is the love of Christ**, 19. and to know this love that surpasses knowledge--that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God. 20. - Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us, 21. to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever! Amen.

Matthew 26:6-13

6. While Jesus was in Bethany in the home of a man known as Simon the Leper,
7. a woman came to him with an **alabaster jar** of very expensive perfume, which she poured on his head as he was reclining at the table. 8. When the disciples saw this, they were indignant. "Why this waste?" they asked. 9. "This perfume could have been sold at a high price and the money given to the poor." 10. Aware of this, Jesus said to them, "Why are you bothering this woman? **She has done a beautiful thing to me.** 11. The poor you will always have with you, but you will not always have me. 12. When she poured this perfume on my body, she did it to prepare me for burial. 13. I tell you the truth, wherever this gospel is preached throughout the world, what she has done will also be told, in memory of her."

Luke 7:36-50

36. Now one of the Pharisees invited Jesus to have dinner with him, so he went to the Pharisee's house and reclined at the table. 37. When a woman who had lived a sinful life in that town learned that Jesus was eating at the Pharisee's house, she brought an alabaster jar of perfume, 38. and as she stood behind him at his feet weeping, she began to wet his feet with her tears. Then she wiped them with her hair, kissed them and **poured perfume** on them. 39. When the Pharisee who had invited him saw this, he said to himself, "If this man were a prophet, he would know who is touching him and what kind of woman she is--that she is a sinner." 40. Jesus answered him, "Simon, I have something to tell you." "Tell me, teacher," he said. 41. "Two men owed money to a certain moneylender. One owed him five hundred denarii, and the other fifty. 42. Neither of them had the money to pay him back, so he canceled the debts of both. Now which of them will love him more?" 43. Simon replied, "I suppose the one who had the bigger debt canceled." "You have judged correctly," Jesus said. 44. Then he turned toward the woman and said to Simon, "Do you see this woman? I came into your house. You did not give me any water for my feet, but she wet my feet with her tears and wiped them with her hair. 45. You did not give me a kiss, but this woman, from the time I entered, has not stopped kissing my feet. 46. You did not put oil on my head, but she has poured perfume on my feet. 47. Therefore, I tell you, her many sins have been forgiven – **for she loved much**. But he who has been forgiven little loves little." 48. Then Jesus said to her, "Your sins are forgiven." 49. The other guests began to say among themselves, "Who is this who even forgives sins?" 50. Jesus said to the woman, "Your faith has saved you; go in peace."

Mark 14:3
3. While he was in Bethany, reclining at the table in the home of a man known as Simon the Leper, a woman came with an alabaster jar of very expensive perfume, made of pure nard. She broke the jar and poured the perfume on his head. 4. Some of those present were saying indignantly to one another, "Why this waste of perfume? 5. It could have been sold for more than a year's wages and the money given to the poor." And they rebuked her harshly. 6. "Leave her alone," said Jesus. "Why are you bothering her? She has done a beautiful thing to me. 7. The poor you will always have with you, and you can help them any time you want. But you will not always have me. 8. She did what she could. She poured perfume on my body beforehand to prepare for my burial. 9. I tell you the truth, wherever the gospel is preached throughout the world, what she has done will also be told, in memory of her."

John 11:1-2/
1 Now a certain man was sick, named Lazarus, of Bethany, the town of Mary and her sister Martha. 2 (It was that Mary which anointed the Lord with ointment, and wiped his feet with her hair, whose brother Lazarus was sick.)

John 12:1-8
1. Six days before the Passover, Jesus arrived at Bethany, where Lazarus lived, whom Jesus had raised from the dead. 2. Here a dinner was given in Jesus' honor. Martha served, while Lazarus was among those reclining at the table with him. 3. Then Mary took about a pint of pure nard, an expensive perfume; she poured it on Jesus' feet and wiped his feet with her hair. And the house was filled with the fragrance of the perfume. 4. But one of his disciples, Judas Iscariot, who was later to betray him, objected, 5. "Why wasn't this perfume sold and the money given to the poor? It was worth a year's wages." 6. He did not say this because he cared about the poor but because he was a thief; as keeper of the money bag, he used to help himself to what was put into it. 7. "Leave her alone," Jesus replied. "[It was intended] that she should save this perfume for the day of my burial. 8. You will always have the poor among you, but you will not always have me."

What is the greatest (most important) commandment?
Deuteronomy 6:5/ Mark 12:30

"Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all
your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.' "

Can you love him without being emotional?
Elders in heaven –
7 times fell on their faces at the mention of his name
And at the appearance of his glory.

Here are the beautiful words of the St. Patrick's Breastplate prayer:

I arise today
Through a mighty strength, the invocation of the Trinity,
Through belief in the Threeness,
Through confession of the Oneness
of the Creator of creation.
I arise today
Through the strength of Christ's birth with His baptism,
Through the strength of His crucifixion with His burial,
Through the strength of His resurrection with His ascension,
Through the strength of His descent for the judgment of doom.
I arise today
Through the strength of the love of cherubim,
In the obedience of angels,
In the service of archangels,
In the hope of resurrection to meet with reward,
In the prayers of patriarchs,
In the predictions of prophets,
In the preaching of apostles,
In the faith of confessors,
In the innocence of holy virgins,
In the deeds of righteous men.
I arise today, through
The strength of heaven,
The light of the sun,
The radiance of the moon,
The splendor of fire,
The speed of lightning,
The swiftness of wind,
The depth of the sea,
The stability of the earth,
The firmness of rock.
I arise today, through
God's strength to pilot me,
God's might to uphold me,
God's wisdom to guide me,
God's eye to look before me,
God's ear to hear me,
God's word to speak for me,
God's hand to guard me,
God's shield to protect me,
God's host to save me
From snares of devils,
From temptation of vices,
From everyone who shall wish me ill,
afar and near.
I summon today
All these powers between me and those evils,

Against every cruel and merciless power
that may oppose my body and soul,
Against incantations of false prophets,
Against black laws of pagandom,
Against false laws of heretics,
Against craft of idolatry,
Against spells of witches and smiths and wizards,
Against every knowledge that corrupts man's body and soul;
Christ to shield me today
Against poison, against burning,
Against drowning, against wounding,
So that there may come to me an abundance of reward.
Christ with me,
Christ before me,
Christ behind me,
Christ in me,
Christ beneath me,
Christ above me,
Christ on my right,
Christ on my left,
Christ when I lie down,
Christ when I sit down,
Christ when I arise,
Christ in the heart of every man who thinks of me,
Christ in the mouth of everyone who speaks of me,
Christ in every eye that sees me,
Christ in every ear that hears me.
I arise today
Through a mighty strength, the invocation of the Trinity,
Through belief in the Threeness,
Through confession of the Oneness
of the Creator of creation.

Mark 4 Parable of the Sower

[1] Again Jesus began to teach by the lake. The crowd that gathered around him was so large that he got into a boat and sat in it out on the lake, while all the people were along the shore at the water's edge. [2] He taught them many things by parables, and in his teaching said:

[3] "Listen! A farmer went out to sow his seed. [4] As he was scattering the seed, some fell along the path, and the birds came and ate it up. [5] Some fell on rocky places, where it did not have much soil. It sprang up quickly, because the soil was shallow. [6] But when the sun came up, the plants were scorched, and they withered because they had no root. [7] Other seed fell among thorns, which grew up and choked the plants, so that they did not bear grain. [8] Still other seed fell on good soil. It came up, grew and produced a crop, some multiplying thirty, some sixty, some a hundred times."

[9] Then Jesus said, "Whoever has ears to hear, let them hear."

[10] When he was alone, the Twelve and the others around him asked him about the parables. [11] He told them, "The secret of the kingdom of God has been given to you. But to those on the outside everything is said in parables [12] so that,

"'They may be ever seeing but never perceiving, and ever hearing but never understanding; otherwise they might turn and be forgiven!'"

[13] Then Jesus said to them, "Don't you understand this parable? How then will you understand any parable? [14] The farmer sows the word. [15] Some people are like seed along the path, where the word is sown. As soon as they hear it, Satan comes and takes away the word that was sown in them. [16] Others, like seed sown on rocky places, hear the word and at once receive it with joy. [17] But since they have no root, they last only a short time. When trouble or persecution comes because of the word, they quickly fall away. [18] **Still others, like seed sown among thorns, hear the word; [19] but the worries of this life, the deceitfulness of wealth and the desires for other things come in and choke the word, making it unfruitful.** [20] Others, like seed sown on good soil, hear the word, accept it, and produce a crop—some thirty, some sixty, some a hundred times what was sown."