

Sunday Morning Message

January 28, 2018

First Love / First Works – Part One – What Is The First Love?

Text for Today's Message – Revelation 2:2 - 5

Congregational Reading – Revelation 2:2 – 5

Introduction

Last week, we began our series of messages surrounding our theme for 2018 – *First Love/First Works*. We discussed the overall context of the Letter to the Church at Ephesus in Revelation 2:1 – 7. We discussed the “first love” aspect of our theme. (Read v. 4) We stated that the first love was our love for the Lord Jesus, particularly when we first got saved – when it was fresh and new.

Today, we are going to begin to talk about the “first works” (Read v. 5)

The word “first” comes from the Greek word, πρῶτος (*prōtos*), which can either mean first in a succession, or first in priority or importance. My understanding of the meaning of “first works” in our text is that Jesus wants to get back to doing, back to promoting, back to emphasizing the things that are of primary importance to Him. The word “works” is plural, which indicates that there are more than one of these works.

In the next several weeks, we are going to look at these important things that God wants us to remember and do. Because these things are very important to Him, they ought also to be a priority for us.

We will not necessarily be elevating one of these individual works above another as they are all equally important.

The first work that we will discuss is the importance of attending church services. Again, this particular work is not more important than others that we will look into in the future, but I have chosen this one to focus on first, because it is the one work that will remind us about all of the other “first works.” In other words, when we come to church, we will be educated about and encouraged to do all of the other “first works”.

Let's look at a series of very familiar passages that will help us develop the teaching of the Lord Jesus regarding the importance of attending church services:

Acts 2:41 – 47 – The Early Church

Luke 10:38 – 42 – Mary and Martha

Hebrews 10:23 – 25 – The New Testament Commandment

Throughout the history of God's people, within the contexts of both Israel and the Church, God has always desired that his people assemble together. This assembling needs to continue to be a physical, geographically local assembling; even in these technologically advanced days where the internet makes it possible to virtually attend a church service anywhere in the world. In other words, God still wants us to gather together in one building where we can pray together, sing together, praise together, edify and encourage each other, and corporately be challenged by the Word of God.

Let re-emphasize the fact that attending church is not necessarily more important than the other "first works" that we will discuss in the future, but if we can get to the point where we are faithfully doing this "first work" of corporately assembling together, then we will be present to hear about all of the other "first works"

Practical Points – Why is it of primary importance that we come to church?

1 Because we will be taught the Bible

"But if I tarry long, that thou mayest know how thou oughtest to behave thyself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth." (1 Timothy 3:15)

"Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth." (2 Timothy 2:15)

Paul told Timothy:

"Till I come, give attendance to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine. ... Take heed unto thyself, and unto the doctrine; continue in them: for in doing this thou shalt both save thyself, and them that hear thee." (1 Timothy 4:13, 16)

You will be taught important, life-changing Bible Principles for the first time in a church service or a church Bible Study, or a church Sunday School class.

You will be reminded of those truths over and over again in these same church services.

2 Because we will be encouraged and edified by other believers

God has created us as social creatures. We were intended to fellowship with one another. Fellowship is not just for the purpose of entertainment or enjoyment; it is so that we can interact with each other, help each other, strengthen each other, and help to meet each other's needs. We encourage people to develop godly and appropriate relationships with each other here at the church.

"And let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works:" (Hebrews 10:24)

Allow people to encourage you.

Look for people to encourage. (Illustrate – Bob Fenton)

We need each other. Illustrate - No man is an island by John Donne.

'No Man is an Island'

No man is an island entire of itself; every man
is a piece of the continent, a part of the main;
if a clod be washed away by the sea, Europe
is the less, as well as if a promontory were, as
well as any manner of thy friends or of thine
own were; any man's death diminishes me,
because I am involved in mankind.
And therefore never send to know for whom
the bell tolls; it tolls for thee.

Don't isolate yourself. Make friends, fellowship with each other; give an encouraging word to someone who may be a little bit down.

"A man hath joy by the answer of his mouth: and a word spoken in due season, how good is it!"
(Proverbs 15:23)

Look for ways to help somebody, teach somebody, strengthen somebody; and, have enough humility to let others do that for you.

3 Because it is through the church that we can find a place to serve the Lord.

God has only established three institutions: the home, the government, and the church. God works through the local church. He uses local church members to fulfill His will. The local church and the opportunities for service it provides, give us our purpose while on this earth.

Find your place within this body of believers. Get on board. We can all go soul-winning out in our Jerusalem. Then find something specific to do here that will help make Jersey Shore Baptist Church a better and stronger church.

"Serve the LORD with gladness: come before his presence with singing." (Psalm 100:2)

People who serve the Lord and others are happy people.

People who serve the Lord and others are fulfilled people.

4 Because we will have a part in seeing people saved

The church is God's vehicle for fulfilling the Great Commission, the evangelization of the world. There is no greater joy than seeing lives transformed by the Lord. God uses the local church to

save souls. Be a part of it. Don't miss it. Jesus came to seek and to save that which was lost, and uses the local church and the members within the church to do it.

Conclusion

The Church is the Bride of Christ. The local church is picture of that bride. Jesus places a high priority on the local church. Attending church is a "first work." So should we.

Make it your priority to be in church as often as you can. Don't forsake going to church. Try to be at every service.

Make friends with folks in the church. Edify and encourage them. Help them when you can; and, allow others to do the same for you.

Find a place to serve within the church. Do something for the Lord within the church.

Be a part of seeing people saved.

"Likewise, I say unto you, there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth." (Luke 15:10)

Jesus says that we need to remember and do the "first works" and attending church services is one of them. I hope to see you more in church this year.