

Dear Lillian Methodist Church family,

In Revelation chapter 2, Jesus praised the church at Ephesus for its good works; its sound doctrine; its discernment; its patience and endurance under trials. It was quite the compliment coming from the Lord himself. The Ephesian church was founded by Paul, pastored by Timothy and nurtured by the Apostle John. It seemingly had everything going for it.

Yet, from Jesus' point of view, one thing overshadowed all their accomplishments. Somehow along the way, they "left their first love." The spiritually dull may reason that the good outweighed the bad, therefore the church should still be in good standing with Jesus. Not so.

In leaving their "first love," the majority of the believers making up the church had allowed their passion for Jesus to grow cold. They still did most of the right things but their relationship with Christ and the zeal they once possessed, no longer was evident to Jesus. This was such a serious matter that they were warned of losing their church if they did not change back.

"Remember therefore from where you have fallen; repent and do the works you did at first." Jesus took notice of their previous works that displayed their zeal and passion for their Savior. These works were no doubt unseen by the world, and unnoticed by all except Christ himself. I believe these were secret works of fellowship done by each individual believer as they grew in their relationship with Jesus: personal bible study; secret prayer; individual time alone with God. If the relationship is neglected in secret, soon it will be very evident in public. Their good works, as seen in public, would soon suffer if a lack of passion continued.

So where do **we** stand as a church and as individual believers? What is Jesus' critique of the Lillian Methodist Church? Our public ministry and works are, I think, solid, just like the Ephesians. What of our individual members? What about our "first love?"

Do we have a passion for Christ and Christ alone? Has our longing for Jesus been muted by the cares of life? When was the last time we wept before God? Do we weep for the lost? Do we weep over our own sins? Do we shed any tears of gratitude for God's salvation and His provision? We can only answer for ourselves.

This church is the sum of its individual members. As individuals, if our passion for Jesus is not what it once was, then our public ministry will soon suffer for it. We must obey the words of Jesus: "Remember therefore from where you have fallen; repent and do the works you did at first."

See y'all Sunday  
Perry Cunningham  
Lay Leader