

Sermon Series: "You've Got Mail!"—Lord of Life Lutheran, Westfield, IN— 9/7/08

Title: "Everything but the One Thing"

Text: Revelation 2: 1-7

Intro.: *Ills.: Religion without authenticity is meaningless*

Theme: Staying fervent and alive in our first love for Christ is a day to day effort based upon his everlasting commitment of love to us.

What is the Christian's first love?

- It is a committed **ZEAL** for the Lord's work (vs. 2)
 1. Not afraid to roll up sleeves and get dirty (*toil*) in Lord's work (Ephesian culture as cosmopolitan melting pot)
 2. Not *putting up with* (bearing, condoning) non-godly living (Artemis/Diana center – perverse worship)
 3. Protecting *defending* — witnessing to the message (Nicolatians – antinomians – no law – anything goes)
- It is **LONG-SUFFERING** – not "*losing heart*" while waiting on Lord (vs.3)
 1. Not grow weary by keeping the prayer lines open (Luke 18:1)
 2. Not grow weary by keeping your eternal destination in view (2 Cor 4:16)
 3. Not grow weary by keeping in mind the work at hand (2 Cor 4:1)
 4. Not grow weary by keeping your focus on the harvest (Gal 6:9)

How can a Christian lose his or her "first love?"

- By becoming **DOUBLE VISIONED** (*left behind/forsaken--vs.4*)
 1. "*consider the height from which you have fallen!*" vs. 5
 2. Losing the desire for the highest treasure (heaven)
- By being **DISTRACTED IN FOCUS**
 1. "*By this all men will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another.*" John 13: 35
 2. Thought laudable Ephesians defended the truth at all costs (vs.6) as more important than the main thing
 3. **Ills.: Distracted by the scents**
 4. Losing the vision of the dying world around you
 5. *Speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in all aspects into Him who is the head, even Christ. Eph 4:15*
- By prioritizing **CREATURE COMFORTABLE** in your religion (*protis—prime priority vs. 4*)
 1. The Ephesians had become a "2nd generation" regional church – became a "country club"
 2. Today's church have we become too comfortable with our buildings, our programs, our traditions
 3. God threatens to take it all away if we become comfortable with rather than convicted about our Christianity(5)

What to do if you find yourself having "fallen out of love"

- **REMEMBER** — vs. 5--(*call to mind – present tense--ongoing*)
 1. It is not legalism/guilt that will motivate you to change, but the unconditional gift of grace to a sinner
 2. God's total free gift – *Neither do I condemn you, go and sin no more. John 8: 11*
 3. God's total satisfying of our **love hunger** (eat of tree of life — reference back to paradise in Genesis 2 and 3)
- **REPENT**— vs. 6--(*change of mind – aorist--once and for all be done*)
 1. Change your mind (attitude) with resulting action
 - a. "*Do it and be done with it*" (no long term penance)
 - b. Rejoice in the victory of forgiveness that is yours in Christ
 2. Focus on what is good – notice God's approach (*this you have-6*)
 - a. *Be wise about what is good, and innocent about what is evil. Rom 16: 19*
 3. Start "*doing the first deeds*" vs. 5b
 - a. God is not interested in home movies but in living sacrifices.
- **RULE** — vs. 7--(*to the one overcoming – present tense ongoing*)
 1. **Print and read Romans 6: 11-14**
 2. Using God's power at your disposal to conquer Devil's temptation
 3. Using God's power at your disposal to regain your "first love" and resulting deeds

Religion without authenticity is meaningless

Wayne Cordeiro, pastor of New Hope Christian Fellowship O'ahu in Honolulu, Hawaii, writes: Some time ago some wonderful people in our church gave Anna, my wife, and me a dinner certificate to a nice restaurant for \$100. We thought, *Wow, a hundred bucks. Let's go for it.* We found a free evening. We dressed up. I took a bath, used deodorant and cologne—the whole thing. I even washed and waxed my car, because we wanted to take it through the valet, and I didn't want my Ford Pinto to look bad. The night came, and we were excited. We went to this ritzy restaurant and walked in. They gave us a nice, candlelit table overlooking a lagoon adjacent to a moonlit bay there in Hawaii. Oh, it was nice. And we thought, for a hundred bucks for just the two of us, we could eat high on the hog. So we ordered the most expensive thing there. It was wonderful. When the bill came, I said, "Honey, why don't you give me the certificate." She said, "I don't have the certificate. I thought you brought it." I said, "You have to have it. You're supposed to have it. You're the wife!" She said, "I don't have it." And I thought, We are in deep yogurt. Here we are. We look rich, we act rich, we even smell rich. But if we don't have that certificate, it invalidates everything. There are times in our lives when we can look holy, we can act holy, we can smell holy. But without an authenticity of love for the Lord, we've forgotten something. It's first-love that validates everything else. **Wayne Cordeiro, "A Personal Relationship," Preaching Today audio no. 2**

Distracted by the Scents

A man bought a new hunting dog. Eager to see how he would perform, he took him out one day, hoping to track down big game. No sooner had they gotten into the woods than the animal picked up the trail of a bear. Excitedly the hunter followed close behind. Then suddenly the dog stopped, sniffed the ground, and headed in a different direction. He had caught the smell of a deer that had crossed the path of the bear. A few moments later he halted again, this time captivated by the scent of a rabbit that had crossed the path of the deer. And so, on and on it went until finally the breathless hunter caught up with his dog, only to find him barking triumphantly down the hole of a field mouse.

Rev. 2:1-7

¹To 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: ²I know your deeds, your hard work and your perseverance. I know that you cannot tolerate wicked men, that you have tested those who claim to be apostles but are not, and have found them false. ³You have persevered and have endured hardships for my name, and have not grown weary.

⁴ Yet I hold this against you: You have forsaken your first love. ⁵Remember the height from which 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. ⁶But you have this in your favor: You hate the practices of the Nicolaitans, which I also hate.

⁷ He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To him who overcomes, I will give the right to eat from the tree of life, which is in the paradise of God. [NIV]

Romans 6:11-14

Even so consider yourselves to be dead to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus. Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body so that you obey its lusts, and do not go on presenting the members of your body to sin as instruments of unrighteousness; but present yourselves to God as those alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness to God. For sin shall not be master over you, for you are not under law but under grace.