

“Relighting the Lampstand”

Summary

We're exploring a powerful journey through the seven churches of Asia Minor, as described in the book of Revelation. This spiritual expedition challenges us to examine our hearts and return to our first love for Christ. The central message revolves around cleansing ourselves from idolatry and renewing our minds to align with God's perspective. We're reminded of the transformation of Joshua the high priest in Zechariah 3, where God removes filthy garments and replaces them with rich robes - symbolizing our need for spiritual renewal. This story parallels our own journey, urging us to shed worldly thinking and embrace the mind of Christ. We're called to become vessels of God's light, filled with the oil of His Spirit. This message invites us to reflect on our own spiritual condition and consider how we can shine brighter for God in our daily lives.

Main Points – Relighting the Lampstand

Title: Rekindling the Lampstand: A Call to Spiritual Renewal and Unity

Sermon Summary: This sermon recounts a transformative journey through Turkey and Jerusalem, exploring the spiritual significance of the seven churches in Revelation. Pastor Christie emphasizes the need for spiritual renewal, breaking free from religious constraints, and embracing a deeper, more authentic relationship with God. The message calls for unity among believers, shedding idolatry and self-ambition, and returning to our first love for Christ. It challenges the congregation to become sensitive to the Holy Spirit's leading and to stand firm in faith despite worldly pressures.

Key Points:

- The importance of understanding and cutting ties with ancient idolatrous practices that still influence modern Christianity
- The need to repent and cleanse ourselves from hidden idols in our hearts
- The call to unity and love within the body of Christ, moving away from self-centered ministry
- The challenge to return to our first love for Christ and walk in humility
- The prophetic act of lighting the lampstand to signify a new season of revelation and power in the church

Scripture Reference:

- Revelation 2-3 (Letters to the Seven Churches)
- Zechariah 3-4 (Vision of Joshua the High Priest and the Golden Lampstand)

Stories:

- Pastor Christie's personal testimony of being led by God to leave a toxic marriage 34 years ago, based on the letter to the Church in Philadelphia
- The journey through Turkey, visiting the sites of the seven churches mentioned in Revelation
- The experience in Jerusalem, including water baptism and a symbolic marriage ceremony with the Lord
- The historical background of Ephesus and the cult of Artemis, relating to modern issues of feminism and sexual perversion

Small Group Study Guide – Relighting the Lampstand

Key Takeaways:

1. God is calling us to return to our first love and cleanse ourselves from idolatry.
2. We need to embrace our true identity as sons and daughters of God, not as groveling sinners.
3. God wants to use clean vessels to steward revival, free from self-ambition and comparison.
4. The need to be sensitive to the Holy Spirit and allow Him to move freely in our lives and church.

Discussion Questions:

1. Pastor Christie mentioned returning to our "first love" with Jesus. What does this mean to you, and how can we practically cultivate this in our daily lives?
2. How has your understanding of your identity in Jesus been challenged or affirmed by this message?
3. The sermon touched on the dangers of idolatry in our hearts. What are some subtle forms of idolatry that Christians might struggle with today?
4. Discuss the significance of the lampstand (menorah) symbolism. How does this imagery enhance our understanding of our role as believers?
5. Pastor Christie emphasized the importance of unity and avoiding comparison in the body of Christ. How can we foster this attitude in our small group and wider church community?
6. What does it mean to be a "clean vessel" that God can use? How can we pursue this in our spiritual lives?
7. How can we become more sensitive to the leading of the Holy Spirit in our personal lives and corporate worship?

Practical Applications:

1. Take time this week for self-reflection and ask God to reveal any areas of idolatry or misplaced priorities in your life.
2. Write down 3-5 truths about your identity in Jesus from Scripture. Meditate on these daily for the next week.

3. Commit to spending 15-30 minutes each day this week in uninterrupted time with God, focusing on rekindling your "first love" for Him.
4. Identify one area where you've been comparing yourself to others or seeking recognition. Surrender this to God in prayer.
5. Practice being more sensitive to the Holy Spirit by pausing throughout your day to ask, "Lord, what are you saying to me right now?"
6. Reach out to someone in the church you don't know well and find a way to encourage or serve them, fostering unity in the body.
7. Read through the letters to the seven churches in Revelation (chapters 2-3) and reflect on what message God might have for you or our church today.

Discussion Questions – Relighting the Lampstand

How might we identify and remove 'idols' in our own hearts, and what impact could this have on our spiritual lives?

In what ways can we return to our 'first love' with Jesus, and how might this shift our priorities in ministry and daily life?

How can we balance being 'in the world but not of it' when faced with cultural pressures similar to those experienced by early Christians in places like Smyrna and Ephesus?

What does it mean to be a 'walking menorah,' and how can we embody this concept in our daily lives?

How might reconnecting with our Jewish roots impact our understanding and practice of Christianity?

In what ways can we cultivate unity within the body of Christ while still embracing our unique callings and gifts?

How can we discern between religious practices and genuine relationship with God, and what steps can we take to deepen the latter?

What does it mean to have the 'mind of Christ,' and how can we practically renew our minds to align with this concept?

How might understanding the historical and cultural context of the seven churches in Revelation change our interpretation and application of these messages today?

In what ways can we prepare ourselves to be 'clean vessels' for revival, both individually and as a church community?

Scriptures – Relighting the Lampstand

Here are the scripture references mentioned or alluded to in the sermon, along with some suggested relevant verses for key themes:

Explicitly Mentioned:

1. Revelation 3:7-13 (Letter to the Church in Philadelphia)
2. Jeremiah 29:11
3. Revelation 2-3 (Letters to the Seven Churches)
4. Zechariah 3:1-10
5. Zechariah 4:1-14
6. Micah 6:8

Alluded to:

1. Romans 8:14 ("They're the sons of God, those that are led by the Spirit of God.")
2. Galatians 5:19-23 (Works of the flesh and fruit of the Spirit)
3. Ephesians 2:6 ("We're seated in heavenly places in Christ Jesus.")
4. 2 Corinthians 5:20 (Ambassadors for Christ)
5. Revelation 1:12-13 (Jesus walking among the lampstands)

Devotional – Relighting the Lampstand

Here's a 5-day Bible reading plan and devotional guide:

Day 1: Returning to Our First Love

Reading: Revelation 2:1-7

Devotional: In the letter to the church in Ephesus, Jesus commends their good works but points out a critical flaw - they had left their first love. This serves as a powerful reminder for us today. It's easy to become caught up in religious activities, programs, and even ministry while losing sight of our primary relationship with Jesus. Take time today to reflect on your own spiritual journey. Have you maintained the passion and intimacy you once had with Christ? Or have other things slowly taken precedence? Ask the Holy Spirit to rekindle that first love in your heart. Remember the joy and excitement of your early walk with God, and invite Him to restore that freshness in your relationship with Him.

Day 2: Overcoming in the Face of Persecution

Reading: Revelation 2:8-11

Devotional: The church in Smyrna faced intense persecution, yet Jesus encouraged them to remain faithful even unto death. While we may not face the same level of opposition, we all encounter challenges to our faith. Reflect on areas in your life where following Jesus comes at a cost - perhaps in relationships, career choices, or lifestyle decisions. How can you cultivate the courage to stand firm in your convictions? Remember that Jesus promises the crown of life to those who overcome. Ask God to strengthen your resolve and deepen your trust in Him, knowing that any earthly suffering pales in comparison to the eternal glory that awaits.

Day 3: Walking Through Open Doors

Reading: Revelation 3:7-13

Devotional: To the church in Philadelphia, Jesus presents Himself as the one who opens doors that no one can shut. This powerful image reminds us that God is sovereign over our circumstances and opportunities. Are there areas in your life where you feel stuck or limited? Bring these before the Lord today. Ask Him to reveal the doors He's opening for you - they may be opportunities for ministry, personal growth, or steps of faith. At the same time, consider if there are doors you've been trying to force open that God has closed. Surrender your plans to Him, trusting that His ways are higher than yours. Pray for discernment to recognize and courageously walk through the doors God opens, even when they lead to unfamiliar territory.

Day 4: Embracing Our Identity in Christ

Reading: Zechariah 3:1-5

Devotional: The vision of Joshua the high priest being cleansed and reclothed powerfully illustrates our transformation in Christ. Satan's accusations are silenced, and God Himself provides new garments. This is a beautiful picture of our salvation and ongoing sanctification. Take time to meditate on your identity in Christ. Are there areas where you

still feel defined by past sins or failures? Bring these before God, asking Him to help you fully embrace the new identity He has given you. Thank Him for removing your filthy garments and clothing you in His righteousness. Ask the Holy Spirit to renew your mind, replacing any condemnation with the truth of who you are in Christ.

Day 5: Relying on God's Spirit

Reading: Zechariah 4:1-7

Devotional: The vision of the golden lampstand and olive trees emphasizes the importance of relying on God's Spirit rather than our own strength. The continuous supply of oil represents the Holy Spirit's empowerment in our lives and ministries. Reflect on areas where you may be striving in your own power rather than depending on God. Are there mountains in your life that seem insurmountable? Remember that it's "'Not by might nor by power, but by my Spirit,' says the Lord Almighty." Surrender your efforts to God today, asking Him to fill you afresh with His Spirit. Pray for a greater sensitivity to the Holy Spirit's leading in your daily life, and trust that He will provide all you need to accomplish His purposes.