

14 "To the angel of the church in Laodicea write:
These are the words of the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the ruler of God's creation.
15 I know your deeds, that you are neither cold nor hot.
I wish you were either one or the other! 16 So, because you are lukewarm- neither hot nor cold- I
am about to spit you out of my mouth.
17 You say, 'I am rich; I have acquired wealth and do not need a thing.' But you do not realize
that you are wretched, pitiful, poor, blind and naked.
18 I counsel you to buy from me gold refined in the fire, so you can become rich; and white
clothes to wear, so you can cover your shameful nakedness; and salve to put on your eyes, so
you can see.
19 Those whom I love I rebuke and discipline. So be earnest, and repent. 20 Here I am! I stand
at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in and eat with
him, and he with me.
21 To him who overcomes, I will give the right to sit with me on my throne, just as I overcame
and sat down with my Father on his throne.
22 He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches."

We come this morning to the last of the seven letters the Lord sent to His churches: the letter to the church in Laodicea.

Laodicea has the grim distinction of being the only Church of which the Risen Christ has nothing good to say.

Laodicea

Laodicea was the capital of an area of 25 communities, and sat on a plateau in the Lycus Valley at the crossroads of two very prominent trade routes.

As a result Laodicea was one of the wealthiest cities in the world.

And that wealth was expanded by three important industries:

1. Their wool industry – they were famous for the clothes they exported that they made from the black, glossy wool from the sheep they bred.

In fact, sometimes people just referred to Laodicea as Trimitaria (after a famous garment they sold).

2. Their medical school which was considered the cutting edge of medical technology in the area of medicine.

The nearby medical school was leading the way into what was regarded as the cutting edge of medicine at that time – the treatment of multiple-symptom diseases with multiple medicines.

They were especially known for an eye medication they had developed – a salve they made from a special powder.

3. And their banking industry.

When Cicero was travelling in Asia Minor it was at Laodicea that he cashed his checks, because that's one of the few places he could make huge bank drafts.

1

The city was so rich, and so proud of their wealth, that when the city was completely destroyed by an earthquake in A.D. 60, Rome offered to pay for rebuilding, and they refused (Tacitus *Annals* 14.27).

In fact, not only did they rebuild their own city from their own resources, but they pitched in to help rebuild other nearby cities.

The Christian community at Laodicea was closely connected with that of Colossae and is mentioned five times in Colossians (2:1; 4:13, 15, 16[2x]);

Paul wrote a letter to Laodicea (Col.4:16) (possibly Ephesians).

Identification

To the angel of the church in Laodicea write: These are the words of the Amen

The only other place where someone is called “Amen” is Isa.65:16-17

**Whoever invokes a blessing in the land will do so by God Amen
he who takes an oath in the land will swear by God Amen ...**

17 "Behold, I will create new heavens and a new earth. The former things will not be remembered,

2

God is referred to as “God Amen” there because He is the one who makes something “amen” (a certainty).

We see a similar thought in 2 Cor.1:20 **no matter how many promises God has made, they are "Yes" in Christ. And so through him the "Amen" is spoken by us to the glory of God.**

Christ makes God's promises "yes" and "amen." They are a certainty in Him.

the faithful and true witness

To make a good witness, a person must...

1. have seen with his own eyes that which he tells about.
2. He must be absolutely honest in reporting it.
3. He must have the ability to accurately communicate what He has witnessed.

That makes Jesus the ideal witness for God. And that's exactly how He introduced Himself at the beginning of the book.

3

Rev.1:4-5

Grace and peace to you from him who is, and who was, and who is to come, and from the seven spirits before his throne, 5 and from Jesus Christ, who is the faithful witness...

So Jesus is the faithful witness and the Amen.

That means if He speaks about the present or the past, His words are faithful and true, and if He says something will happen in the future, that statement is "Amen" – written in stone.

Bottom line – anything that comes out of the mouth of Jesus - you can take it to the bank.

the ruler of God's creation.

Your Bible might say **beginning** instead of **ruler**.

The word is ἀρχή (*arche*), and it can mean either beginning or ruler depending on the context.

In this context it really ought to be translated "beginning."

The word appears 55 times in the NT, and almost half of those are in John's writings. It is a very common word in John's vocabulary, and every time John uses it elsewhere, it clearly means "beginning."

And that includes the two other uses in Revelation (21:6, 22:13)
I am the Alpha and the Omega, the First (*protos*) and the Last (*eschatos*), the Beginning (*arche*) and the End (*telos*).

ἐγὼ τὸ Ἄλφα καὶ τὸ Ὠ, ὁ πρῶτος καὶ ὁ ἔσχατος, ἡ ἀρχὴ καὶ τὸ τέλος.

Jesus is the **beginning of God's creation**. In the same way He is the Beginning and the End.

5

Now don't misunderstand that. That's not to say Jesus *had* a beginning. He *is* the beginning. There is a huge difference.

It's not that Jesus was the beginning of the creation in the sense that He is the first thing God created. Jesus was never created – He has always existed.

In fact, the idea that Jesus is a created being was a heresy that was influencing the church in a sister city of Laodicea – Colossae.

There were three cities all close together in that valley – Hierapolis, Colossae and Laodicea.

And the language of this letter is very close to the language of the book of Colossians even though John wrote this and Paul wrote Colossians.

TT Col.1

Colossae was only about 10 miles from Laodicea, and about 30 years earlier Paul had written them a letter to straighten them out on that very heresy – the idea that Jesus was a created being.

6

Col.1:15-20

Jesus isn't a created being. He isn't part of the creation. **He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. 16 For by him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things were created by him and for him. 17 He is before all things, and in him all things hold together. 18 And he is the head of the body, the church; he is the beginning (*arche*) and the firstborn from among the dead, so that in everything he might have the supremacy.**

So when the Colossians thought maybe Jesus was a created being, Paul said, “No no no!

He Himself is the Beginning, which means he existed prior to all things, He is over all things, and He Himself created all created things.”

7

So Jesus is the beginning in the sense that He is the originator of all things. In Rev.21:6 God the Father is called **the Alpha and Omega, the arche and the end.**

Both the Beginning and the Amen are titles associated only with God in Scripture.

So this is quite an introduction. Jesus identifies Himself as the one who originates all things, reigns over all things...

...and what He says is absolutely valid whether it's testimony about the past, testimony about God, or an announcement of something future.

The point is that the Lord Jesus Christ is absolutely supreme in every way, and so the only thing that matters ultimately in life is where you stand in relationship to Him.

No matter what else you are, no matter what else you accomplish, the only thing that really has any significance is Jesus Christ's assessment of you.

He wants to drill that into their minds before He makes His assessment, and you will see why when you see how serious the assessment is.

8

15 I know your deeds

This is the place where in every other letter Jesus finds something praiseworthy – even in the worst churches we have looked at.

But for this church He finds nothing.

If Jesus were one of those people who, if He couldn't find something positive to say wouldn't say anything at all, then this letter wouldn't exist.

It's not even like the dead Sardis church where Jesus said "You have a few who have not soiled their garments."

There weren't even a few.

This is a church where everyone was completely lost – on the wide road to hell.

So Jesus skips right into the condemnation.

15 I know your deeds, that you are neither cold nor hot. I wish you were either one or the other! 16 So, because you are lukewarm- neither hot nor cold-I am about to spit (ἐμέσαι *emesai*) you out of my mouth.

9

What Does Lukewarm Mean?

The popular interpretation of this is that hot = spiritual fervor for Christ, and cold = spiritual fervor against Christ, and lukewarm = spiritual apathy.

There are some problems with that view.

Those who suggest the view that this is all about fervency vs. apathy will say that Jesus so hates apathy that He would prefer that you be adamantly hostile against Him than to not care at all.

But Jesus doesn't say "I would rather you be hot or cold than lukewarm." He says "I *wish* you were hot or cold."

I can't accept that Jesus is saying He actually wishes people would be hostile against Him.

Keep in mind, this is the Amen – the faithful witness who is utterly true and truthful. He means what He says.

I realize the argument is that it's easier to convert a hostile person than it is an apathetic person. But that's debatable.

It doesn't really say that's what Jesus is talking about here, and you are hard pressed to find that idea anywhere else in Scripture.

The truth is, the Bible has awfully harsh things to say about both apathetic people and people who are hostile against God. Both are bad, and Jesus desires people are neither.

10

Another problem with that view is it ignores the context. Jesus doesn't go on to talk about the subject of apathy.

When He explains what their problem is, it has nothing to do with apathy.

A much better understanding comes when we look at these terms from the perspective of setting in Laodicea.

The big problem in Laodicea was their water supply.

Both Hierapolis and Colossae were known for their water.

Hierapolis had hot springs that were used for therapeutic purposes.

Colossae had springs of very cold, refreshing drinking water.

Both were considered very valuable.

But if you visited Laodicea at that time you would want to have brought your bottle of Evian from Colossae along, because their water was terrible.

People of that time who wrote about Laodicea used the word "emetic" to describe their water.

11

They brought water to the city through a pipeline that, over the years, became more and more silted and corroded and clogged with lime deposits.

The result was very hard water. It was loaded with all kinds of silt and minerals. The people there could drink it because they were used to it, but when people would visit the city and drink the water, it would often make them sick.

The point is their water was worthless. It had no therapeutic value nor was it good for drinking.

Jesus' point in calling them tepid is not to say they had a problem with apathy. His point is that they were worthless and nauseating.

Jesus is telling this church, "You are like your city's water supply – sickening. You are about to make me vomit."

12

This week as I was meditating on this passage I was asking the Lord, "What enlightening insight can You give me about vomiting?"

Vomiting has to be about as vivid a negative image as it is possible for Jesus to paint for us. I don't know of any possible way for human language to communicate more extreme revulsion.

Jesus' reaction to some churches is anger. His reaction to others is Joy. His reaction to others is sorrow...

But His primary reaction to this church was nausea.

13

I am about to spit (ἐμέσαι *emesai*) **you out of my mouth**

In v.17 we see clearly that they are lost. But up through v.16, amazingly they are pictured as being inside of Christ.

Some have suggested that these people were never saved to begin with.

But if that were the case, what would it mean that they were about to be vomited out?

If you're not in Christ to begin with, what do you care if you are vomited out?

What's the difference between being lost in Christ and lost outside of Christ?

It seems clear that the picture here is of apostasy.

14

What was it about this church that so offended and repulsed and sickened Jesus? It wasn't apathy. We don't have to guess about what it was – it's spelled out for us in v.17.

Self-sufficiency

17 You say, 'I am rich; I have acquired wealth and do not need a thing.'

In their condition of being so well off financially, they imagined themselves to be rich spiritually.

“I’m rich, I’ve acquired wealth and I do not need anything” are three ways of saying the same thing:

“I’m self-sufficient,
I’m self-sufficient,
I’m self-sufficient.”

That was their sin. That’s what it means to be lukewarm.

Their attitude toward Christ was like their city’s attitude toward Rome when Rome offered to help them rebuild: “No thanks. We don’t need your charity. We have plenty of resources of our own.”

That’s very common in a wealthy culture.

15

If you read about the problems the church faces in various parts of the world, it seems like places that are very poor financially generally don’t have as much of a problem with spiritual self-sufficiency.

(They may be tempted with superstition or syncretism more, but usually not with religious self-sufficiency.)

But in wealthier areas – across Europe, Canada, the United States, there are liberal churches by the thousands – jammed full of people who feel no need at all to be born again.

That even happened in Israel when they prospered. We read about that in Hos.12:8 (and Jesus may even be alluding to that passage here – listen to how similar it is):

Ephraim boasts, "I am very rich; I have become wealthy. With all my wealth they will not find in me any iniquity or sin."

No matter how desperately in need of forgiveness you are, God will forgive. The one time He won't forgive is when there is a lack of desperation for forgiveness.

16

God will instantly and completely forgive the most vile blasphemies or the dirtiest, most wicked sins man can conceive.

But He will not forgive the person who thinks himself to be righteous already.

Jesus said **Blessed are the poor in spirit for theirs and theirs alone is the Kingdom of Heaven.** (Mt.5:3)

The word **poor** means absolutely destitute and desperate with zero to offer – a beggar.

TT Lk.18

Most people, if you ask if they think they will go to heaven, will say “yes.”

And if you ask why, they will express some confidence in their own righteousness.

It was like that in Jesus' time too, so He told a parable about people who are **confident in their own righteousness.**

17

Lk.18:9-14 To some who were confident of their own righteousness and looked down on everybody else, Jesus told this parable:

10"Two men went up to the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the

other a tax collector. (tax-collectors were notorious sinners, and

Pharisees were known for their extraordinary righteousness) 11The

Pharisee stood up and prayed about himself: `God, I thank you that

I am not like other men-robbers, evildoers, adulterers-or even like

this tax collector. 12I fast twice a week and give a tenth of all I get.'

13"But the tax collector stood at a distance. He would not even look up to heaven, but beat his breast and said, `God, have mercy on me, a sinner.'

14"I tell you that this man, rather than the other, went home justified before God. For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted."

Those who are **confident in their own righteousness** are not going to heaven, they will not be forgiven their sins, and they are not saved, and can never be saved as long as they remain in that condition.

18

Human religion will tell you that spiritual poverty will keep you out of heaven, and so you must generate spiritual riches – make yourself good.

Then Jesus came along and said, “No, it’s not spiritual poverty that will keep you out of heaven, it’s the illusion of spiritual riches.”

From the beginning of the NT to the end Jesus was always calling people to recognize their spiritual poverty.

All human religion is based on pride.

Just look at their attitude. They are coming to church with the attitude, “**I have need of nothing.**”

People like that will read their Bible every day, but if they are honest with themselves they will have to admit that deep down their attitude is, “I have need of nothing.”

19

“I’m just reading this to fulfill my Christian duty, but I’m not desperately in need of anything in here.”

They come to church with that attitude: “I have need of nothing that is offered here. I just come because I enjoy it.”

They kneel down in prayer, and they spend a lot of time praying for physical health, finances, their job, marriage, etc. – but rarely about spiritual things, because it just doesn’t seem like they need anything in that department.

People like that think they need nothing from God and they get nothing from God...except judgment.

Those who have a true heart of faith and who believe God’s Word come to God in desperation.

“I am in *desperate* need of a righteousness from God that is not my own.”

They read the Bible not to fulfill a duty, but like a man who is starving – gnawing on a piece of meat trying to get every last morsel of nourishment.

Their prayers are dominated by spiritual things: “God *please*, make me righteous. *Please*, take away my anger and selfishness. Give me love for people. Take away my lust. Rescue me from my flesh. Give me greater faith...”

21

But the people in this church weren’t like that. They thought there were just fine spiritually.

If they took a spiritual inventory – filled out a spiritual growth survey, they would say, “I’m doing great! Growing by leaps and bounds.”

Jesus: “You think you are doing great... **17 But you do not realize that you are wretched, pitiful, poor, blind and naked.**

They had no idea that the truth was they were spiritually **wretched**. In fact it literally says, “You are *the* wretched.”

It’s the use of the article that designates the highest in a category. Like when we say, “That was *the* place to be.”

So Jesus is saying, “When it comes to spiritual wretchedness, nobody measures up to you.”

Jesus puts this in very strong terms, because their only hope is if they realize their condition.

The only other time this word is used in the Bible is in Ro.7:24 where Paul recognizes his sin and says **What a wretched man I am! Who will rescue me from this body of death? 25 Thanks be to God-through Jesus Christ our Lord!**

You see there are only two kinds of people: those are wretched and who admit their wretchedness and come to Christ in desperation,

And those who are wretched and imagine themselves spiritually rich.

These people were in the second group, and so Jesus also calls them **pitiful**. That word literally means “to be pitied” or “in need of mercy.”

The picture is of someone who is so pathetic that his only hope is if someone comes along and has mercy on him.

23

Jesus goes on to give a threefold description of why they need mercy.

1. **poor**

This is *ptokos* again – complete destitution. They had zero spiritual resources.

This was a church that was without any spiritual assets.

Any promise about spiritual things made from that pulpit was a check that bounced.

“God will heal your marriage” “We can help you with your sin problem.”
“We will help you know God.” - all empty promises.

If you came there with spiritual problems, or you needed counsel, or you were laden with guilt and in need of restoration and reconciliation with God...

Anything they promised in their yellow page ad about any of that was false advertising.

I’m sure they were doing a lot of things, had a lot of clever, enjoyable programs. But none of them did anything to profit anyone spiritually.

24

2. **blind**

They were without any ability to understand and accept spiritual truth.

Isn’t that something? A *church* – the place people go for spiritual guidance and insight and instruction – yet they are themselves completely blind to spiritual things.

The way they thought about spiritual things wasn’t any different from the way the world thought about them.

(Maybe dressed up in Christian lingo, but essentially the same)

They had no insight. And when they did stumble across something that was true in their blindness they were unable to accept it and appropriate it in their church.

People get that way by choice. The more you are exposed to spiritual truths and don't act on them, the more you lose your ability to accept the next spiritual truth.

3. **naked**

In ancient times the way people were honored was with extravagant clothes, and nakedness always had to do with shame and humiliation. To be exposed in public was the ultimate humiliation.

This church was such a spiritual basket case that if they could just see themselves – what they look like spiritually, they would be mortified and slam their doors closed and run outside and throw a sheet over their sign so no one would come there and see them.

If they could see how pathetic their spiritual condition really was, they would react the same way you would react if you found yourself in the middle of Flatirons Mall completely naked.

So they were spiritually pitiful, without any power, without any understanding and a disgrace.

But that's the natural spiritual condition of all people. If you are just spiritually wretched, pitiful, poor, blind and naked your situation can be remedied.

28

But if you are spiritually blind and bankrupt and think you are spiritually just fine – you are hopeless.

Spurgeon: "Our imaginary goodness is more hard to conquer than our actual sin. Man can sooner be cured of his sicknesses than be made to forego his boasts of health. Human weakness is a small obstacle to salvation compared with human strength"

This is the obstacle that keeps millions from knowing God.

They may claim intellectual arguments, but very often, if they were honest, they would admit that the real reason they refuse to bow the knee the Jesus Christ is because they do not want to humble themselves.

There is no necessity for any stigma if you are financially bankrupt. That could happen through no fault of your own.

But to admit to spiritual bankruptcy – that carries with it a certain amount of culpability.

And so people will do anything but humble themselves before God.

But Jesus said He did not come for the righteous but for sinners.

As the surgeon searches out the sick, and the almsgiver looks for the poor, so God seeks the spiritually bankrupt.

Spiritual self-sufficiency makes you unsavable. And worse than that, it makes Christ sick.

Why? What is it about that that is so offensive to God?

It's this:

It's bad enough that we would sin in the first place.

They say "to err is human," but Jesus was fully human and He never sinned. Sin is not an essential part of what it means to be human.

28

Sin is not just one of the natural foibles of being human. We like to think of our sin as little slip ups, miscues, mistakes, blunders, oversights, snafus, goof-ups...

But that's not the kind of language God uses to describe it.

Every sin you and I have ever committed, large or small, was an act of cosmic treason.

I'm confronted with a decision. I know there is an option that is right and an option that is wrong.

The right one

- would please God
- would glorify God
- would magnify His name and His renown
- would advance His Kingdom and accomplish His desire
- would mimic His character
- would be in harmony with the work of Christ on the cross
- would be in harmony with all of God's work in the creation
- would demonstrate faith and trust in God and His law
- would expose a love for God and His Word
- would be an act of love toward God and others
- would be eternally beneficial

The wrong choice would be the opposite of all that.

So God

- reveals to me which is right,
- He enables me to do what is right,
- He goes through an incredible 1500 year process of inspiring Holy Scripture to teach me how to do what is right,
- He sets aside His heavenly glory, becomes a man, is ridiculed, mocked, rejected and tortured, endures suffering commensurate with the penalty of all people suffering eternity in hell, and dies on the cross...
- He gives me His Holy Spirit to live in me
- He surrounds me with like-minded Christians who will help me choose what is right
- He plants in me a conscience to make it easier for me to do what is right...

...and in the face of all that, out of staggering ingratitude, refusal to trust Him, refusal to fear Him, refusal to believe what He has said...

I decide, "I think I'll just sin – who cares if it's forbidden by my Creator? Who cares if it dishonors God's name? My little moment of pleasure is more important than any of that."

That is cosmic treason, and is deserving of eternity in hell.

It's an infinite offense against an infinitely holy God who is infinitely worthy of obedience and honor.

Now imagine that I do that not only once, but say I do it once and He forgives – He doesn't slam me into eternal hell, He doesn't carry out justice...

He absorbs the penalty Himself and forgives and gives me another chance...

But then I see that I am emboldened to sin a *second* time! What kind of penalty should that require?

But that doesn't even describe my sin problem, because I haven't just sinned two times, or three or ten... I have done all that – committed cosmic treason right in God's face, thousands and thousands and tens of thousands of times.

So have you.

31

Our sins are not just little gaffs or just human weakness we can't do anything about. They are very, very serious.

And so it's bad enough that we sin at all.

And yet, as offensive as that is to God, because Jesus died on the cross to pay the penalty we owed for all that, God is willing to forgive it all!

He will forgive every last sin no matter how vile it was...

He only requires one thing – that we humble ourselves before Him and come to him as spiritual beggars in a posture and attitude of total dependence upon Him.

32

But when a person shows up in His church, after living a whole life of cosmic treason, and then becomes very religious, and then holds that religious activity and church activity up to God and says, "This makes me deserving of heaven..."

– that is about as offensive a thing as you can do against God.

He will forgive your spiritual wretchedness, blindness, poverty and nakedness if you just repent.

But if you refuse to repent, and refuse to acknowledge your spiritual wretchedness, and come to Him with the attitude that based on your own self-styled righteousness you are worthy, and spiritually rich – you are as far from the kingdom of God as you can be.

The Exhortation

So what else does Jesus say to the church that makes Him sick?

33

You might expect that a church this bad would just receive condemnation. But that's not the approach Jesus takes.

Actually, the statement about being on the verge of being vomited out of Jesus' mouth is the only statement of judgment He gives.

The rest of the letter is an offer to be restored!

In v.18 He tells them to do three things (playing off their three industries – banking, textiles and medicine):

18 I counsel you to buy from me

1. gold refined in the fire, so you can become rich

They were like a bank with vaults that were completely empty. They desperately needed to broker a deal to get their hands on some spiritual resources.

“But how do you buy something when you are broke?”

This is Isa.55 kind of buying – they one kind of buying a proud person can't afford.

Isa.55:1

"Come, all you who are thirsty, come to the waters; and you who have no money, come, buy and eat! Come, buy wine and milk without money and without cost.

34

Jesus offers spiritual riches. And the price tag? The only price you have to pay is to appear before Him as a spiritual beggar.

Those who won't humble themselves to do that can't afford the price.

We cannot generate spiritual capital, spiritual assets through our religion.

It only comes from Christ.

35

2. and white clothes to wear, so you can cover your shameful nakedness

They were famous for their black wool clothes.

“You are the great textile exporters – clothing the world, and you don't even realize that you are stark naked. I counsel you to buy from Me *white* clothes.”

White clothes represent righteousness. You can't make yourself righteous by being religious or by reading your Bible or trying hard or reforming your life or going to church...

None of that erases the sin in your heart.

The only way to be righteous is to have God dress you in His own righteousness. And He will do that only for those who completely entrust themselves to Him.

3. and salve to put on your eyes, so you can see.

They were famous for their eye salve. Jesus says, “For spiritual sight, you need to get eye salve from Me.”

Spiritual insight is not only a function of education and information. It also requires enlightenment, which only comes from God.

36

Now, if you were surprised at the moderate tone of v.18, take a look at v.19.

19 Those whom I love I rebuke and discipline.

“I’m saying all this because I love you.”

You can really tell this is God talking here, because we just aren’t like this. To some people we will say, “You make me sick.” And to other people we might say, “I love you.”

But Jesus says both of those things to this same group. This group that so disgusted Him that He wanted to vomit, in the midst of His disgust He also dearly loved and longed to see them repent.

37

The is an allusion to Pr.3:12 **the LORD disciplines those he loves,**

Jesus alludes to that proverb, but changes the word *agape* (LXX) to *phileo*. That adds a very tender touch. *Phileo*, in a context like this, is a more emotional term.

It speaks of the affection of friendship.

Some of us are really good at righteous anger. If you have righteous anger in your heart toward those who dishonor God, fine. But you had better also have love for those people.

The Lord told us not to throw our pearls before swine, but sometimes I wonder if we are too quick to label everyone who resists a little bit swine.

38

19 ...So be earnest, and repent.

It’s not too late for this putrid church. Jesus extends the offer of restoration even to them.

I love that. It really means a lot to me, because God has wired me with a passion for reaching this kind of person.

It seems like since the mission field is so vast, often the Lord will give us a targeted desire for evangelism.

Some people just want to preach the Gospel to those who have never heard – praise God for those folks!

I have a couple friends who really have a heart for the Jews.

Most pastors these days put all their energy into reaching the so-called “unchurched” and the uninterested.

For me, I have a great passion to reach the lukewarm – the people who...

- come to church
- read their Bibles
- teach Bible studies
- serve as officers in the church
- are moral, upright people who fully expect, after they breath their last breath to wake up in paradise...

39

...and they aren't even saved. The next moment after they die to their horror they will find themselves in hell –

- a place of eternal torment. And at that moment they will know there is no getting out – ever.

They will realize their spouse is in heaven, their kids are in heaven, their friends are in heaven.

But they are in a place of eternal torment and outer darkness...forever.

My heart breaks for those people.

So that's why fairly often I remind you of what the Bible says about what a genuine Christian is like and call on you to test yourselves to see if you are in the faith.

We have had people leave Creekside because I do that too often, and they didn't want to have the genuineness of their faith constantly questioned.

40

But I would be falling short of my calling if I didn't call the lukewarm to repentance until the day I die.

I guess I feel kind of like Paul in Ro.9 – he desperately wanted to Jews to be saved because of their rich heritage.

Ro.9:2-5

I have great sorrow and unceasing anguish in my heart. 3 For I could wish that I myself were cursed and cut off from Christ for the sake of my brothers, those

of my own race, 4 the people of Israel. Theirs is the adoption as sons; theirs the divine glory, the covenants, the receiving of the law, the temple worship and the promises. 5 Theirs are the patriarchs, and from them is traced the human ancestry of Christ, who is God over all, forever praised! Amen.

That's the way I feel about people who are active in the church but who have never earnestly repented.

Being a part of a church doesn't make them genuine Christians, but it does give them a rich heritage.

People who attend a church are, on the outside at least, part of an organization

- founded by the Lord Jesus Christ
- sustained by faithful men and women
- perpetuated by the blood of martyrs
- enlightened by the skill of great scholars

As people who attend the church, even in their unsaved condition God has placed them in a place of tremendous spiritual privilege.

So we call the lukewarm to repent.

Don't skip over the fact that He says **be earnest**.

As we learned in our study of repentance, there is no such thing as halfhearted repentance. People who are genuinely repentant are earnest and zealous about it.

20 Here I am! I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in and eat with him, and he with me.

Lit. **Behold, I have taken a stand at the door**

Perfect tense – past action with continuing results.

Given everything we have seen thus far in the letter, and given all the parables Jesus told about a master arriving at the door while the servants are being unfaithful, this is frightening.

To the other unfaithful churches He said things like "Hurry up and repent, for I'm *about* to come." Or "You don't know the hour I will come."

But to this, the most sinful of all churches, He says, “I have come, and I’m already at the door”!

That’s enough to give a church a collective heart attack.

But if they can survive reading that and make it to the next word, what Jesus says next is absolutely astonishing...

“I’m here. I’ve taken a stand. I’m already at the door...and I’m...knocking.”

Knocking? Since when does the Master return home and knock?

42

Jesus is standing outside the church knocking. Everyone is welcome in this church except Jesus.

He has been excommunicated. And in an act of unthinkable condescension the Almighty Creator – the Supreme Amen, the First and the Last, comes and *knocks*, and asks to be let in to His own church!

He does that because He knows that if they don’t come and open the door, eventually it will be time for Him to come in judgment, and they will be destroyed.

But He takes no pleasure in the death of the wicked. He wants them to repent.

So He comes in love and knocks.

And if *anyone* comes and opens the door, He’ll come in! And He will have fellowship, but only with that one who opened the door – not with the whole church.

Even as bad as they are, Jesus is not there in judgment.

Even though He is nauseated by them, He wants to come in and eat with them. Eating with someone, in the ancient world, was a gesture of love and friendship.

It’s interesting that Jesus would bring up eating at a moment when He is so sick to His stomach.

His love for these people who make Him sick is real. He's not just saying He loves them. He really, truly, genuinely desires to eat with them and have fellowship with them.

43

This is another one of those verses that keeps our Calvinism in check.

Is it true that unbelievers are spiritually dead and that no one can come to Christ unless the Father draws him? Absolutely (Jn.6).

However, don't get so carried away with that that you ignore passages like this, which paint a picture of the spiritually blind, destitute, lost unbeliever having the full responsibility over whether he opens the door or not.

Both the sovereignty of God in salvation and human responsibility in salvation are taught in Scripture.

So whether or not you become a Christian is based on what you decide. But once you have decided in favor of Christ, you can look back and see that it was He who drew you to Himself.

And the picture here is that He is knocking – seeking fellowship with you, and waiting for you to respond.

Barclay: "The unique new fact that Christianity brought into this world is that God is the seeker of men. No other religion has the vision of a seeking God...St. Bernard way back in the twelfth century used often to say to his monks that, "However early they might wake and rise for prayer in their chapel on a cold mid-winter morning or even in the dead of night, they would always find God awake before them, waiting for them-- nay, it was he who had awakened them to seek his face."

21 To him who overcomes, I will give the right to sit with me on my throne, just as I overcame and sat down with my Father on his throne.

There's just no middle ground with Christ. You're either being vomited out of His mouth or seated on His throne in heaven.

What an emotional roller coaster this letter was to study.

45

Jesus starts by telling them, “You are the most repulsive and worthless bunch of tepid, lukewarm disgusting people there are...”

And ends up offering them His throne.

That’s God – He loves to take that which is most worthless and make it the most valuable (seated on not just a throne – but the very throne of God ruling all creation with Christ).

The point here is not that there is a literal chair, and we are all piled up on it. It’s a figure of speech illustrating the great promise we see so often in Scripture that we will reign with Him.

As we studied two weeks ago, we will share in that wonderful gift from the Father to the Son – the most wonderful of all realities.

Conclusion:

There is a high probability that there are some people here this morning who are like these people – lukewarm (self-sufficient spiritually)

And it’s not that you think you are some kind of spiritual superstar. It’s just that you don’t want to admit that spiritually you are completely bankrupt.

Because if you admit that, then you have to admit that all these years since your conversion experience, you haven’t actually been saved.

If you give your heart to the Lord now, you’re afraid people will look at you and think, “He was faking it.”

You won’t entertain the possibility that your conversion hasn’t been genuine, because you don’t want to admit that to your husband or wife or parents or kids.

46

But most of all you don’t want to admit it to yourself. It might require too much of you.

If you entertain that possibility, what if it turns out you really aren’t saved? Then what? That means your only hope is zealous repentance, and that’s hard.

It might mean major changes in your life. It's so much easier to just not think about it.

Your life feels fine now. Everything is smooth. You don't want to rock the boat.

So you just keep telling yourself, "I prayed a prayer, I came down an isle, I was baptized, confirmed, I even served as an elder..."

I want to urge you this morning to at least think about it.

47

Don't be afraid of what it might cost you. If it turns out you are not saved then all it can cost you is what you have – which is nothing but a wretched, poor, blind, naked, dead life that you can give to the Lord in exchange for true riches.

22 He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches."

Cards & brochures

- Pick up a visitor's pack
- Doughnuts (Next week come early)
- SS (Ruckus)
- Tapes, CDs, MSS
- Choir rehearsal
- Deacon meeting
- Remaining pictures (list)
- E-mail Bible study class
- Come to prayer once a month!
- Book club
- Dinner groups
- fellowship meal next week.
- Deacon meeting
- Bible study group 4:30
- Shepherd's conf. In March 5-9
- Fill in flow charts!
- Suggest tape cases
- Pick up your newsletter

- Applebees
 - Thursday Bible study on Knowing God's will
 - Tuesday Bible study on Knowing God's will
 - Call people forward to pray
- * Open house and caroling the 15th

We will close our service the way Paul closed the book of 2 Cor.

Benediction: 2 Cor.13:5-14 Examine yourselves to see whether you are in the faith; test yourselves. 11 Finally, brothers, good-bye. Aim for perfection, listen to my appeal, be of one mind, live in peace. And the God of love and peace will be with you. 12 Greet one another with a holy kiss...14 May the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all.