

Sermon Mark S. Aites
SERIES: 7 CHURCHES OF ASIA
SERMON #7: THE CHURCH IN LAODICEA

TEXT: REVELATION 3:14-22

INTRODUCTION:

1. This lesson brings us to a conclusion of our series on the seven churches of Asia.
2. Throughout our study we have noted the good and bad points of the various congregations.
 - 1) We noted the great church in Ephesus; strong in defending the faith, who left their first love.
 - 2) We learned then of Smyrna, and the coming intensified persecution; and the charge to remain faithful unto death (**Rev. 2:10**).
 - 3) We examined the church in Pergamos; their weakness in that some were holding to false doctrines and the admonition to hold to the truth, that they might overcome.
 - 4) As we looked at the church in Thyatira; an apparent growing congregation, we learned of "Jezebel" who needed to be dealt with and the admonition to overcome.
 - 5) We learned of Sardis, a congregation which the Lord said who thought they were alive, but were dead; but a righteous remnant did remain there; charged not to follow suit with that part of the church which had died.
 - 6) And Philadelphia, praised for their perseverance, endurance, and refusal to deny Christ.
3. In this lesson, Laodicea.
 - 1) A city founded in 250 B.c. by Antiochus II of Syria.
 - 2) The city was named after his wife Laodice who later poisoned him.
 - 3) In the Roman Empire this particular city was only one of six with this name.
 - 4) The city was located on the main route between Ephesus and Syria.
 - 5) It was renowned for being a commercial and financial center, as well as being a great manufacturing center.
 - 6) The city was once destroyed by an earthquake in 61 A.D.; and of interest refused help from Rome in the cost of rebuilding it.
 - 7) Perhaps Laodicea was most noted for its great medical school, famous for the ointments which were used for eyes and ears.
 - 8) The time of the establishment of this congregation is not certain; possibly during Paul's stay in Ephesus (**Acts 19:8-10**).
 - 9) Because Colossae was 11 miles away, some believe that Epaphras may have had a part in its beginning (**Col. 4:12-16**).
4. As with the other messages to the churches, we have learned that the one speaking, (which John is recording to be sent), is Christ.
5. Once again His attributes are noted, beginning by referring to Himself as *The Amen*.
 - 1) **Amen** - originally a Hebrew word, used in the Greek also; "originally it carried the idea of nursing or building up."
 - 2) "The derived use which has come down to us is that of something which is established, positive. Here it indicates the stability of Jesus who writes to this weak church." (Summers)
 - 3) He is the one who is firm and stedfast; who is true and certain.
2 Cor. 1:20 "For all the promises of God in Him are Yes, and in Him Amen, to the glory

of God through us.”

6. He is the *Faithful and True Witness*.
 1. There is no flaw in His character for He is perfection.
 2. **John 14:6**
 3. As a witness, He sees and knows all, even as He walks amidst the churches (**2:1**).
 4. **1 Pet. 3:12** *“For the eyes of the Lord are on the righteous, And His ears are open to their prayers...”*
7. He is the *beginning of the creation of God*.
 1. Some have misunderstood this statement. He is not the first thing which God created, but He Himself was the agent in God’s creation.
 2. **John 1:1-3,14** *In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.
2 The same was in the beginning with God.
3 All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made.
14 And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth.*
 3. **Col. 1:16-17** *“For by him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by him, and for him...”*
8. In this study, this one is unique of the other congregations as this is the only one which does not receive any praise from the Lord.
9. We begin our four-fold message noting:

DISCUSSION:

I. THE PROBLEM.

3:15-16 *“I know your works, that you are neither cold nor hot. I could wish you were cold or hot.*

16 *“So then, because you are lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will vomit you out of My mouth.*

B. The Laodicean brethren were *lukewarm*.

1. Jesus knows all of our works, and could see that Laodicea had nothing commendable.
2. They were neither hot nor cold.
 - 1) Speaking metaphorically, to be cold or hilly spiritually, is to turn from God.
 - 2) Hot is to be fervent and zealous, i.e. “on fire” in serving God.
3. To be in between suggests apathy, complacency, and indifference.
4. When once a man was asked the two greatest problems in America, he replied, “I don’t know and I don’t care.” The man replied to him that he had just given the both of them. (Source: *Rebirth Of America*)

C. Jesus even conveys to them that He wished that they were cold or hot, reminding us that God has never been pleased with those who try to proverbially “straddle the fence.”

1. Joshua said: *“Choose you this day whom ye will serve...”* (**Josh 24:15**).
2. Elijah cried out to Israel, *“And Elijah came unto all the people, and said, How long halt ye between two opinions? if the LORD be God, follow him...”* (**1 Kings 18:21**).

3. **Matt. 6:24** *“No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon.”*
- D. The Lord then graphically replies to these brethren, *“I will spue (vomit) thee out of my mouth.”*
 1. The brethren in Laodicea were nauseating or sickening to Christ. This is the only instance where we find such an expression in the New Testament.
 2. Here we vividly learn that lukewarm brethren and churches are disgusting and abhorrent to God.
 3. Long ago the Lord warned Israel: **Lev. 18:27-28:** *(For all these abominations have the men of the land done, which were before you, and the land is defiled;)*
28 *That the land spue not you out also, when ye defile it, as it spued out the nations that were before you.*
 4. Again **Lev. 20:22** *Ye shall therefore keep all my statutes, and all my judgments, and do them: that the land, whither I bring you to dwell therein, spue you not out.*
- E. Even today, churches that are lukewarm are so revolting to God and so weak that the land may well spue them out, in that the church is dead.
 1. Hence, church buildings go up for sale.
 2. Brethren completely end up falling away, or drift to other congregations.

II. THE REASON.

- 3:17** *“Because thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked.”*
- A. They claimed to be rich.
 1. They lived under the deception or delusion that they didn't need anything.
 2. They were rich in that they had goods, and were in their opinion self-sufficient.
 3. In other words, they really had no real need for God; apparently, so they thought.
 - B. Jesus provides us with the truth of Laodicea.
 1. They were *wretched* -- in need of pity.
 2. *Miserable* -- without hope.
 3. *Poor* -- spiritual poverty.
 4. *Blind* - spiritually blind.
 5. *Naked* -- they were not clothed in righteousness and godliness and holiness. They didn't have any of the necessary spiritual apparel.
 - D. Here we are reminded that the Lord does not see as we do.
 1. **1 Sam. 16:7** *“But the LORD said unto Samuel, Look not on his countenance, or on the height of his stature; because I have refused him: for the LORD seeth not as man seeth; for man looketh on the outward appearance, but the LORD looketh on the heart.”*
 2. **Isa. 55:8-9** *“For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the LORD.
9 For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts.”*

III. THE SOLUTION.

3:18 *"I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich; and white raiment, that thou mayest be clothed, and that the shame of thy nakedness do not appear; and anoint thine eyes with eyesalve, that thou mayest see."*

- A. The "gold tried (refined) in the fire" is different from the precious metal.
 - 1. This is really a comparison between true riches and those which are false.
 - 2. **Col. 3:1-2** *"If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God.
2 Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth."*
 - 3. A refined gold in a spiritual context may well refer to a faith that has been proved by fiery trials (**1 Pet. 1:7**).
- B. They also needed to buy white garments to cover their nakedness.
 - 1. In **Matt. 22**, Jesus spoke of those who were invited to a great wedding feast, in which those assembled were wearing white.
 - 2. One at the feast was not wearing white, and as a result, was cast into outer darkness (**Matt. 22:11-14**).
 - 3. White garments are obtained and maintained through faithful obedience to Christ.
- C. They also needed to *anoint thine eyes with eyesalve, that thou mayest see.*
 - 1. If you recall from the background information, Laodicea was renowned for its eye ointment.
 - 2. They took great pride in these ointments, but in reality, they were in need of spiritual eye ointment.
 - 3. Paul addressing the church at Ephesus:
Eph. 1:18 *"The eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that ye may know what is the hope of his calling, and what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints,"*
- E. Each of these solutions are necessary even today.
 - 1. True riches: **Matt. 6:19-21** *"Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal:
20 But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal:
21 For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also."*
 - 2. White raiment: **Rev. 3:5** *"He that overcometh, the same shall be clothed in white raiment; and I will not blot out his name out of the book of life, but I will confess his name before my Father, and before his angels."*
 - 3. Proper spiritual eyesight: **Heb. 12:2** *"Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God."*

IV. THE PLEA.

3:19-22 *"As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten: be zealous therefore, and repent.*

20 *Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me.*

21 *To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne.*

22 *He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches."*

A. *"As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten."*

1. **Rebuke** -- this word refers to the kind of rebuke which causes one to see the error of his way; brings repentance.
 2. **Chasten** - refers to the idea of discipline.
 3. **Heb. 12:7-8** *"If ye endure chastening, God dealeth with you as with sons; for what son is he whom the father chasteneth not?
8 But if ye be without chastisement, whereof all are partakers, then are ye bastards (illegitimate children), and not sons."*
 4. **1 Cor. 11:32** *"But when we are judged, we are chastened of the Lord, that we should not be condemned with the world."*
 5. **Prov. 3:12** *"For whom the LORD loveth he correcteth; even as a father the son in whom he delighteth."*
- C. *"Be zealous therefore and repent."*
1. **Zealous** - signifies to be motivated, to take action.
 2. The Lord is calling for an immediate repentance from their lukewarmness.
- D. *"Behold, I stand at the door and knock."*
1. We must remember that the Lord came to save the lost, not destroy them (**John 3:17**).
 2. Jesus affords a promise to those willing to open the door: *"if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me."*
 3. The phrase *open the door* is understood figuratively or metaphorically; the door referring to one's willingness to receive the Lord willingly and obediently.
 4. The Lord does not force Himself into our hearts; the choice is ours.
 5. It is sad when we realize that those words concerning the door were written to not just a member, but an entire congregation.
 6. "Laodicea had everything but Christ." (Summers)
 7. It is a sad picture, for Christ is not within, but rather is outside seeking to get in.
 8. To get in, there had to be willing hearts to let him in.
- E. **3:21** *"To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne."*
1. Laodicea, despite the fact that it received no praise, has a promise put before it; if you will, an incentive.
 2. If they would leave their lethargy and apathy and become zealous for the Lord, the promise is i.e., that of glory and fellowship.
 3. They would be blessed to sit in fellowship with the Father and Son.
 4. Summers suggests that perhaps the reason for this promise is because of the tremendous difficulty in overcoming their lukewarmness.
 5. It is true that it can be easier to convert one from his coldness than one who is lukewarm and has the "I don't care" attitude.

V. APPLICATION.

- A. Our lessons in these seven churches have provided as with some good application.
 1. Ephesus, strong as she was, lost the love that she needed; possibly the fruit of combating false teachers.
 1. They needed a revival; to renew their relationship with God.
 2. Without repentance the church there would die, and eventually did.

3. In that sermon we learned that love must prevail in the church.
 2. Smyrna was troubled by the Jews who opposed the Christ, and who was about to face an intense persecution.
 1. The admonition the Lord provided them is a valued one for us as well.
 2. **2:10** *"Fear none of those things which thou shalt suffer: behold, the devil shall cast some of you into prison, that ye may be tried; and ye shall have tribulation ten days: be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life."*
 3. Pergamos was chastised of the Lord for tolerating idolatry in the congregation.
 - 1) Their charge was to repent and purge the false idols and doctrine.
 - 2) The Lord admonished them to overcome and He would give them a victory (signified by the white stone).
 - 3) Today Christians struggle with many idols; sports, social events, clubs, etc.
 - 4) **Matt. 6:33** *But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you.*
 4. Thyatira was a growing congregation, commended twice of the Lord for its works.
 - 1) But they tolerated a false prophetess, noted in the text as, "Jezebel."
 - 2) They needed to deal with her and hold fast to the truth.
 - 3) Even today, there are those who would mislead us, and pull us away from the truth.
 - 4) We must hold fast to the Word that we not get swept away in man's errors.
 5. Sardis, the sad congregation was told, that although men thought it was alive, that in fact, it was a dead church!
 - 1) The righteous remnant was encouraged to strengthen what remained.
 - 2) And to be watchful, lest they be prepared to meet God.
 - 3) For us, we learned the sad lesson that churches can and do die; and that we must remain watchful to prevent such tragedies.
 6. Philadelphia, the only church in which the Lord did not find a problem.
 - 1) Troubled by Jews opposed to Christ, they were encouraged to persevere and endure.
 - 2) They were not to let anyone take their crowns.
 - 3) The encouragement to us is to be cautious, that no one causes us to turn from Christ, that we would forfeit our crowns.
 - 4) Not even family or friends.
- B. And of course Laodicea:
1. The only church not to receive praise because of its lukewarmness.
 2. The pointed reminder to us that if we are not warm, that is hot or zealous for Christ, then we are either lukewarm or cold; both of which are unacceptable to the Lord.
 3. We also have contemplated the sad thought that Laodicea didn't have the Lord in their midst.
 - 1) We understand that in the congregation.
 - 2) Such can be the case today in an entire congregation; but also it can be the case with individuals.

CONCLUSION:

1. I know of no better way to close this series by realizing that Jesus stands at the door and knocks.

2. Perhaps for some they have grown hard of hearing, not recognizing that he is knocking at the door.
3. Others may realize it, but perhaps you are trying to ignore Him.
4. If you let Him in your life, all will change.
5. **Matt. 11:28-30** *Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.*
29 *Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls.*
30 *For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.*
6. Is the door of your heart still open; let Jesus come in this very hour.
7. (Plan of Salvation)