

7-2-23 Seven Churches of Revelation (Laodiceans)

Revelation 3:14-22.

Click to slide of map of churches.

Do you work hard at keeping up appearances? Do you find yourself being pulled in 2 directions? Eventually one side is going to win. The Spirit and the flesh are fighting all the time; which side is winning?

Who likes cookies? Do you prefer fresh, or old stale ones? They look similar, don't they? They smell similar and often feel similar. But how do they taste?

Who likes milk with their cookies? Do you like it cold or warm?

What about coffee, any coffee drinkers here? Do you like it hot or warm?

You can't always tell by looking at something if it's hot, cold, or warm. Or if it is any good.

Have you ever had a drink of something and assumed it was what you were thinking to find out it was horrible, and you had to spit it out or got sick (vomited)?

Danger Zone

#1 priority in food safety is temperature. 40F-140F is known as the danger zone. When food is in this temperature range bacteria can grow and spread very quickly. You can't see things like e-coli or salmonella, but it can make you very sick or even kill you.

In my over 13 years of pastoral experience, I have learned that one of the #1 priorities in the Body of Christ is temperature.

Luke-warmness is as dangerous to the spiritual body as e-coli is to the human body. The bacteria of sin and apathy will spread all over the body and we will not even notice. In fact, on the outside things may seem like they are going very well. The Church of Laodicea was basing their success upon human standards and Jesus was looking at the heart of the matter.

The longer you allow your life to be in the danger zone the more potential there is for the bacteria to spread and do its damage.

The church of Laodicean is geographically between Hierapolis, known for its hot springs and Colossae, known for its fresh cold natural springs. Unfortunately for the Laodiceans, no matter where they got their water from, it arrived lukewarm. The city of Laodicea was also known for making medical eye suave and black/darker colored clothing.

The Church of Laodiceans was in the Danger Zone

Read Revelation 3:14-16.

You have heard me, and I am sure many preachers over the years say that there is no neutral in living for God. There is only forward and reverse.

What was the Danger Zone that the Laodiceans were in?

A. Danger Zone

1. They had lost their passion/zeal/fervency.

- Today, we would say they lost their why.
- Fervency - feelings of great warmth and intensity.
- Zeal - great energy or enthusiasm in pursuit of a cause or an objective.
- Passion - strong and barely controllable emotion.
- What are you passionate about? Do you have a favorite sports team? What gets your blood flowing?
- If we aren't careful and intentional about it, we can lose our passion for our mates, our families.
- As believers in Jesus Christ, we have every reason to be "fervent in spirit" (**Rom. 12:11**). Fervent in prayer is also vital (**Col.4:12**). When the two disciples were walking down the Emmaus Road, walking with Jesus and as they listened to Him their hearts burned with fire.

Luke 24:32, "And they said to one another, "Did not our heart burn within us while He talked with us on the road, and while He opened the Scriptures to us?"

- Jesus, the faithful and true witness, God, said He wished they could recognize that they were lukewarm. If they were hot, they would know why they were doing it. If they were cold, they could get things back to where they should be. But they couldn't even tell where they were spiritually.
- The Dead Sea has living water flow into it, but it doesn't allow any water out. There is no life found in the Dead Sea. How many of us spiritually are like the Dead Sea? We read God's Word, we come to church, we pray, memorize scripture, but like the Dead Sea, nothing living comes out of us. Nothing changes and worse yet, we think everything is great!

2. They forgot/lost their vision.

- **Read verses 17-18.**
- The church at Smyrna thought itself poor, when it was rich; the Laodiceans boasted that they were rich, when in fact they were poor.
- Why? Why were they poor?
- **"Because you say, I am rich, have become wealthy, and have need of nothing..."**
- They became proud of their ministry and began to measure things by human standards instead of spiritual standards.
- "I am great, ok, good. Look at all I have! I need nothing..." "I have it all figured out and don't need any help or input."
- God said, here's what I know about you! And He piles up 5 things against them: **"and do not know that you are wretched, miserable, poor, blind and naked."**
- That is a stunning statement...for of all 7 churches in **Rev. 2 & 3**, no doubt this church had the fanciest building / highest class of people in it / largest annual budget.
- Wretched... unhappy, dissatisfied (though rich! Elvis Presley, at height of his career said, "I guess I'm the most miserable man alive!")

- Miserable... sometimes translated, “pitiful” (you think everyone envies you, but, you are to be pitied!)
- Poor... A shocker! They never thought of themselves like that before! Rich materially, but in God’s economy, they were stone broke!
- Blind... unable to receive spiritual truth.
- Naked... God says, outwardly you try to look like one thing, but I see right thru it.
- The point is: they were just the opposite of what they thought they were!
- You’d better make sure that your own spiritual estimate of yourself matches up w/ God’s knowledge of what you really are.
- At the bottom of it all was materialism, which led to self-sufficiency, which led to complacency.
- The board at the Laodiceans church could proudly show you the latest annal report with its impressive statistics; yet Jesus said He was about to vomit them out of His mouth!
- Jesus said they needed to **“buy from Me gold refined in the fire, that you may be rich; and white garments, that you may be clothed, that the shame of your nakedness may not be revealed...”**
- They were too comfortable and needed some correction, via persecution. Nothing makes God’s people examine their priorities faster than suffering.

1 Peter 1:7, “that the genuineness of your faith, being much more precious than gold that perishes, though it is tested by fire, may be found to praise, honor, and glory at the revelation of Jesus Christ,”

- White raiment= symbolic of God’s righteousness. They had been walking in self-righteousness and shaming the name of Christ as if they had been walking around naked! They were famous for their black garments, but they needed white.
- Jesus continued, **“...and anoint your eyes with eye salve, that you may see.” (v.18)**
- Eye salve= They were blind to reality / living in a fool’s paradise / proud of a church that was about to be rejected...that made God sick.

B. God’s Cure

Read Revelation 3:19-20

- They were famous for their eye salve, and the ointment that God prescribed is found in **verse 19**.
- Nothing clears your spiritual vision like **confession and repentance**.
- I want each of us to stop right now and examine our own lives...
- Ask yourself the question, “Do I make God sick?”
- Is my prayer life lukewarm? “I pray, but I’m not really into it.”
- Is my witness lukewarm? “I might invite to church, but don’t witness.”
- Bible reading lukewarm? “I only do it occasionally.”
- Giving lukewarm? “I find myself giving grudgingly, not cheerfully.”
- Relationships lukewarm? “I want to be a loving kind fill in the blank.” But are you a godly representative in your relationships?
- Attendance lukewarm? “I come a lot!” That wasn’t the question, it’s all or nothing / hot or cold / every opportunity or...don’t worry about it, go to the lake or something, rather than do it halfway, and on top of that, make God sick! Let’s rise above!

- There is a cure to the problem of lukewarmness. It is repentance. Christ is standing at the door knocking and all you must do is let Him in. Now I know that this passage has been preached many times concerning salvation, but **verse 19** indicates to us that this is talking about Christians. Hebrews tells us that God disciplines His children.
- The major problem here is the fact that Jesus is on the outside of the Church and not the inside. The good news here is that we simply must let Christ back into the Church. Once we humble ourselves and repent of our sins, then Christ forgives, forgets, and fellowships with us.

Conclusion:

Read Revelation 3:21-22

1. If you are sitting here today hoping that someone sitting next to you or behind you is getting this sermon, you are probably lukewarm.
2. If you think you got all of this figured out because you have heard a hundred sermons just like this one, then you are probably lukewarm.
3. If you are thinking about what time it is right now, you are probably lukewarm.
4. If you are mad that I would dare say these things, you are probably lukewarm.
5. If you are agitated at someone and you can't get them out of your mind, you are probably lukewarm.
6. If you plan on not moving during this invitation and not changing, you are probably lukewarm.
7. If you are more worried about lunch than that lost person God has put on your mind, you are probably lukewarm.
8. If you have a list of complaints and they happen to be regarding your personal preference, you are probably lukewarm.
9. If you spend more in a month on stuff that amuses/entertains you than you give back to the Lord's work, you are probably lukewarm.

Humble yourself, repent, and let Jesus back in before He spits us out.

This past week, I know of two of our preteens trusting in Christ as Lord and Savior. They went to camp in a whole different place than they left.

What about you? Do you have a relationship with Jesus? A life transforming one?

Maybe you are a believer here, but you have backslidden. Do you hang on the ledge of lukewarmness.