

December 10th, 2017
Pinecrest Baptist Church
a.m.

Sermon Series: What the Spirit Saith to the Churches
Sermon #8 Title: The Church that Got it Wrong
Sermon #8 Text: (Revelation 3:14-19)

On May 28th 2009, an eighth grade girl from Olathe, KS won \$40,000 winning the Scripps Howard National Spelling Bee with the final spelling of the word “Laodicean.” The next evening, on ABC World News Tonight, anchor Charles Gibson closed the newscast with the story, and then signed off saying, “We never heard of Laodicean either . . . and you will probably never hear it again either.”

- By such a statement, Charles Gibson displayed to the watching world two things – 1.) His total ignorance of the scripture, and 2.) His complete demonstration of what it means to be a Laodicean!

Even secular language scholars tell us essentially, that from the moment the Apostle John penned these words, the word Laodicean would become a byword for carelessness, and apathy.

- There are many names in the Bibles that have carried lasting legacies . . . some for great honor, and some for great dishonor . . .

- We all know Matthews, Marks, Lukes, and John’s

- We all also know what it means to be called a Judas, or a Jezebel.

- This is one name that describes a particular kind of people – those who are simply apathetic . . .

What do we know about Laodicea? – Just a little background
***Founding** - It was founded by Antiochus II who named the city after his wife, Laodicea.

***By definition** - Laodicea

- Lao – “laity, or people”

- Dice – “to rule” – the two words together are that the people rule”- “justice of the people” or “rights of the people.”

- it was a culture in which the exercise of individual rights was pre-eminent. The overarching attitude of the culture was an individual’s right to exercise his personal freedoms without interference from another’s social prejudices.

***Location** - “It was located in the Lycus River Valley and was the capital of the region of Phrygia.

***Status** - It was known for it’s three main industries –

- It was a Banking and Finance Center of the Region

- It had a Medical School, where it produced an eye salve, or (what we would call) an optical ointment.

- It was the main producer of black wool.

***Note** - To give you an idea of the wealth of this community, in 65 AD the whole region was devastated by an earthquake. When the Roman government came to the rescue, Laodicea refused to receive any financial help, and completely rebuilt themselves on their own.

This was a city full of wealthy people whose pride was their self-sufficiency, and their emphasis seemed to be on civil rights.

- Now that was the city, and the culture of the city

_____The Church In that City_____

*This was the last church listed and the worst church listed. It was diametrically opposed to the church at Philadelphia. The Philadelphian church had only commendations, and no

condemnations. The Laodicean church has no commendations, only condemnations.

The Great problem in this church is the fact that the lives of the people in the church were products of the culture, rather than the scripture.

As we read the text, there is a subtle, yet piercing indictment on the address line of the letter –

Vs 14 – “And unto the angel of the church of the Laodiceans . . .”

- This is the only church that Jesus identifies by the identity of the people rather than the location of the city . . .

- 1st letter – “to the angel of the church of Ephesus”
- 2nd letter – “to the angel of the church in Smyrna”
- 3rd letter – “to the angel of the church in Pergamos”
- 4th letter – “to the angel of the church in Thyatira
- 5th letter – “to the angel of the church in Sardis”
- 6th letter – “to the angel of the church in Philadelphia”
- 7th letter – “to the angel of the church of the Laodiceans . . .”

*Note – Now you may think that doesn’t mean much, but at the very least, this is a subtle indictment saying, “this is what you’ve made it – not me.” – This is the church the Lord hasn’t built it to be what it is, the Laodiceans have.

- The church is mentioned 4 other times in the New Testament – Paul mentioned it 3 times in the book of Colossians, as well as mentioning a possible letter that he had written to them.

- This was a church that had been a church of the Lord, now, I believe in a mood of indictment, Jesus doesn’t call it a church of the Lord; He calls it a church of the Laodiceans.

As in all previous letters, the Lord identifies particular traits of His that are specific to the issues in each church. – So as He identifies Himself to this church, the first thing that we overhear from the outside in, are the Traits of Jesus they needed to see.

I. The Traits of Jesus they Needed to See – vs 14

*Note – Before Jesus lets them hear what He says, He shows them Who He Is, and He lists three particular characteristics that were to capture their attention.

A. *The Amen*

1.) The Amen

a.) Literally - “let it be so”

- another expression of “truly, truly”

*Note - Before Jesus reveals the righteous ruling against this church, He declares at the very beginning, that He is in moral agreement with it.

*Note - We normally say Amen at the end, Jesus is saying it at the beginning. The judgement is sealed, before it is even revealed.

b.) 2 Corinthians 1:20 - “For all the promises of God in Him are yea, and in Him Amen, unto the Glory of God by us.”

*Note - In everything God has promised, whether it be reward, or destruction, Jesus always stands to second the motion and say “let it be so”. - This is a complete picture of the unity of the trinity. God the Son is always in agreement with God the Father.

c.) One more for good measure – the term “The Amen” is equivalent to an Old Testament name for God. – Isaiah 65:16 – “That he who blesseth himself in the earth shall bless himself in the

God of truth; and he that sweareth in the earth shall swear by the God of truth; because the former troubles are forgotten, and because they are hid from mine eyes.”

The Hebrew word for Truth – in the phrase the God of Truth is the word for Amen! – When Jesus said, “I am the Amen” the Jewish believers who knew their scripture would pick up on that immediately.

B. The Faithful and True Witness

*Note - A witness is only a witness if He has seen something. Jesus is not about to say what He believes, He is about to say what He knows...

1.) Faithful - “trustworthy” - this speaks of the character of Christ the witness.

2.) True - “the real witness”

*Note - There will be no other witnesses called to the stand at the judgment. For the church or against the church, Jesus is not another witness, He is THE witness. What that means is that anyone but Him would be a false witness, because only He sees all that is true about us.

- of course the term “witness” is the Greek word “Martyr”

- Don’t get the idea though that Jesus died as a Martyr for the cause – Jesus died as the atonement for our sin.

- For Jesus call Himself the true Martyr was to say that His life is inseparable from the truth.

- This is PURE UNMIXED, UNRESTRAINED and UNEXAGGERATED truth!

C. The Beginning of the Creation of God

1.) This speaks to His eternity - What Jesus sees and knows, He has seen and known from the creation. There is no unknown history to Jesus.

*Note - This verse isn’t saying that Jesus was the first creation of God. Jesus was not created, because He is God. Jesus did not have a beginning, Jesus is the beginning.

*Note - Christ had been witnessing the Laodicean church since it’s founding. He had seen every generation of the church in it’s work for Him, and/or through Him.

2.) It had no history that He did not know about

3.) He sees all of history as ever-present!

- We remember the past, and look to the future.

- He sees the past, the present, and the future, ALWAYS in His presence.

*Note – Now listen! – Those traits are comforts to some people, but should be concerns to others, and since there was nothing commendable about the Laodicean church, I have to believe that Jesus wasn’t telling them these things to calm them down, He was telling them these things to Wake Them Up!

- Those are 3 specific traits of Jesus that He intended to shock them into attention.

II. The Trouble from Jesus they Needed to Hear – vs 15-17

*Note – Like every other church He reminded them that the One who sees them ever-presently knows their works! – And in that knowledge they are everything they want to be, and nothing He wants them to be . . .

A. their Failing of His Desire

1.) vs 15-16b – “I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot: I would that wert cold or hot . . . thou art lukewarm”

a.) kliaros – tepid, lukewarm – it’s the only time in the Bible it is used – and they won the prize.

*Note – The people of Laodicea were very familiar with this term “lukewarm”. You see for all their great wealth they had a problem. They had built aqueducts to the city to supply it with water. The water they brought down from the cold mountain streams that surrounded them, by the time it made it to town, had warmed up!

The Hot waters that they brought up from the Hot Springs near the Lycus River, by the time they made it to town had cooled off.

Their forever plague was the fact that they had cold water on one side, and warm water on the other but by the time they had come together, neither was enjoyable.

2.) Jesus knows the Spiritual temperature of the church, and He hated and despised the condition of that congregation.

What does it mean to be lukewarm? –

- What it doesn't mean? – It isn't speaking about emotions, and feelings, and always being thrilled with some kind of emotional electricity –

- Sometimes, after you hear a stirring song, or a stirring message, you feel like Chuck Norris and want to go whip someone for Jesus – that's not what He's speaking of.

- Sometimes, after you hear a less than stirring song, and an eternal message, you feel like Chuck Norris came and whipped you on behalf of Jesus –that's not what He's speaking of.

- Hot or cold have to do with faithfulness – REGARDLESS of emotions.

- It is faithful when you feel like it, and all things fit into your mold – it is faithful when you do not feel like it,

when it is not convenient, when it doesn't fit your mold . . .

Metaphorically Lukewarmness is just what it says – not too cold that they have abandoned the Lord and His assembly – not so hot as to be totally abandoned to the Lord and His assembly.

- It is the idea of being faithful on your own terms, in your own time, when you feel like it.

- Furthermore - the descriptions of Lukewarmness, implies a people on autopilot! - They had motions, but not passions – they had routine but no reality.

- Being a wealthy people, it is highly likely that this people would rather give money than time. It is highly likely that they didn't want to be bothered with the church away from church, and thought their money was their service by proxy.

- I do not know exactly what Jesus was referring to in the Laodicean church, but in modern times a predominant and prevailing characteristic that we see in Christendom is an ocean of Volunteers – and that will be an embarrassing shame at the judgment.

(Preacher – What's wrong with Volunteers? – EVERYTHING comparing our concept with the Biblical concept. – No Christian is to ever be a Volunteer to the Lord, He is to be a Surrendered Slave who has forfeited his secular freedom!

- Lukewarmness is a great and terrible sin that cleverly manifests itself in many different forms.

I have no idea who said it, but I read one quote that pinned the tail on the modern day Baptist – “Most of us have no real loves and no real hatreds. Blessed is love, less blessed is hatred, but thrice accursed is that indifference which is neither one nor the other.”

*Note – Now if we're on the outside of the office listening in, what did Jesus say to them that He wants?

- "I would that thou wert cold or hot"

*Note – Christ wants you to give him all, or not at all! He plainly and clearly desired for them to be No Christian, or a Radical Christian, but by no means a Casual Christian.

*Note – This has always been His desire! - Deuteronomy 5:29 – "O that there were such an heart in them, that they would fear me, and keep all my commandments always, that it might be well with them, and with their children forever!"

- Not fiery this time. Not fiery once in a while. Fiery for Him, on time, all the time, for the rest of time.

B. their Foulness in His Distaste

1.) "I will spue thee out of my mouth."

*Note – What are the consequences of being lukewarm? Christ will literally vomit you up. – What does that mean?

- *Note – Don't miss this –

Jesus went through the mockery of the Jews

Jesus went through the scourging of the Roman Soldiers

Jesus went through the agony of the crown of thorns

Jesus went through the pain of the crucifixion

- And not one time in scripture did He explain His pain, did He detail his agony, did He elaborate on His physical condition – But you let a half-hearted, autopilot, routine religionists call themselves a church, and Jesus said, "You make me sick."

- In fact in Matthew 27:34 while Jesus was on the cross, the Bible says, "They gave him vinegar to drink mingled with gall: and when he had tasted thereof, he would not drink."

- On the cross – He tasted it, but would not drink

- Here – Metaphorically He had drunk in, but refused to keep tasting it!

*Note – Now hear this – this church is not merely a Disciplinary problem, a Doctrinal Disagreement, or just a

Disappointment to Jesus, they are sickeningly Distasteful to Him.

C. their Foolishness in His Disgust

1.) Verse 17 – "Because thou sayest . . ."

*Note – Here is the tip of the spear . . . the problem always begins when "we sayest".

- Jesus lays out their pathetic thinking . . .

- This was their measurement of His church . . . their evaluation of how things were going . . .

a.) "I am rich and increased with goods...."

- they had the empty idea that material wealth was the goal of spiritual health . . .

*Note – One of the greatest dangers and most malevolent deceptions is the idea that Attendance, Offerings, and Buildings are the indicators of a church's health and usefulness to the Lord.

*Note – The mindset in Laodicea seemed to be that their physical needs, WERE their needs.

- Listen to what the Bible says in 1st Timothy 6:3-5 – "If any man teach otherwise, and consent not to wholesome words, even the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, and to the doctrine which is according to godliness; He is proud, knowing nothing, but doting about questions and strifes of words, whereof cometh envy, strife, railings, evil surmisings, Perverse disputings of men of corrupt minds, and destitute of the truth, supposing that gain is godliness: from such withdraw thyself."

*Note – Remember what we said at the beginning about the Laodiceans rejecting Roman help. They treated God the same way that they treated the Government.

2.) – Jesus said, "thou sayest . . . but thou art"

*Note – You ARE whatever Jesus says you are. – He said to them, they were wretched, miserable, poor, blind, naked,

- Listen to the Lord's piercing words
 - to the Financial Center – You are Poor
 - to the Medical Center – You are Blind
 - to the Clothing Industry – You are Naked

*Note- This is that long standing ever-present problem that men refuse to turn from – that of using God's Words but their Dictionary

- Laodicea said, "We see" – Jesus said no you don't.
- Laodicea said, "We're rich!" – Jesus said no you're not
- Laodicea said, "We've arrived" – Jesus said no you haven't

III. The Truth from Jesus They Needed to Know

*Note – Look in verse 18 - "I counsel thee to buy of me" – Isn't it awesome that even to unfaithful, undone, and uncommitted believers, Christ still has counsel for them. He still has instructions and plans for a way out.

- furthermore, Jesus says "buy of me" – "Don't come to church for church, come to church for Jesus! – When you are unfaithful to church, you are unfaithful to Christ! He started it, and He said for you to be here not just with your hands and feet, but with your head and heart.

- But does He say they need . . .

A. Riches that are Real – "Gold, tried in the fire."-real faith- that is the only saving faith in Him, not assumed "rightness"

- Righteousness, and Rightness are not the same. – The Pharisees were "right" about the Law, but they were not "righteous."

- an allusion to their "banking" pride
- wealth that comes from having faith that has been tested faith, tried faith, pure faith.

B. Robes that are Righteous

- 1.) White raiment – "gifted righteousness"
 - an allusion to their industrial pride

- He speaks of the "shame of their nakedness" –

*Note – the only way that any human being in the history of the earth will wear the white robe of the Lord Jesus will be through His gift!

- These people didn't think they needed to be gifted anything –

*Note – How do you buy a gift from someone? I didn't say how do you buy a gift for someone, I said how do you buy a gift from someone? – You pay the price. – What's the price? – It costs you, your pride, your self-reliance, your trust –

(Laodicea was saturated with self-confidence, social standing, and pride in needing nothing.) – Jesus said, I'll take all of it – and in return I'll give you a white robe of my righteousness.

They were a proud people that should have been an embarrassed people. They took honor in what should have been humiliating.

C. Sight that is Sure – "Anoint thine eyes with eyesalve that, thou mayest see."

- this is to see things through His Words

*note – Their blindness was evident by the fact that they didn't see about them what Jesus said about them.

- When "they said" and what Jesus said weren't the same thing, the problem wasn't that Jesus was wrong, the problem was they were blind.

- He alone is light, and He alone is sight, and He alone is right, and all other "wisdoms" are nothing but foolishness.

Conclusion: - vs 19 – "As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten: be zealous therefore and repent."

- *Note – I am often reminded of the people who reject the Bible, reject the message of a good God, and reject the people

of God because all they hear is “judgment, judgment, judgment.”

- “All I see is a God of judgment in the Old Testament”
- “All I hear is don’t do this, don’t do that.”
- “All I hear is this is sin, that’s a sin – Your God’s against everything, and everything I hear from you, is how wrong we are, how evil we are, how sinful we are. . . .”

*Note – Do you know what it means when someone has that attitude? – They’ve got the facts – but they are not willing to hear the Truth.

- What did Jesus say – “As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten.”
- Today, People have the idea that “If you love someone, you’ll comfort, and encourage, and enable them to be all they were born to be.”
- Jesus said, “I love” and because I love, I don’t comfort you in sin, and encourage you in your ways, and enable to you to be all you want to be – I will rebuke you, and chasten you, and tell you to repent.