

Remnant Life Church  
September 8, 2024  
**The Danger of Lukewarm**  
Revelation 3:14-20

If the book of Revelation was likened to a body of water, its depth would be like that of the ocean

- It is a book that can be very straightforward in its meaning
- While at the same time containing some of the most perplexing and thought-provoking imagery in all the Bible

As you know, it was written by John, the last surviving member of the original 12 disciples, hand-picked by Jesus

- He is imprisoned (banished) on the island of Patmos, a Greek island in the Aegean Sea about 35 miles off the west coast of Turkey
- He has been put there by the Roman emperor Domitian for preaching the resurrection and deity of Jesus Christ
- According to the first-century Christian writer Tertullian, John was exiled to the island only after he was plunged into a vat of boiling oil in Rome but emerged unaffected and unharmed
- But it was here, during the last few years of his life, that John received and recorded the visions that became the Book of Revelation

In the second and third chapters of his writing, the seven churches of Asia Minor are being addressed

- These were not the only churches in existence
- But they were the 7 closest to John at the time and had the best chance of receiving his writings
  - The ancient location of Asia Minor was located in modern-day Turkey
  - That is where John had been sent off the coast on the island of Patmos

**READ – Revelation 3:14-20**

The Situation

- The church of Laodicea had a problem and it is one that, unfortunately, is still prevalent today
  - They were lukewarm
  - Now that would seem to be a rather strange way to describe a problem
  - But it fit this church not only in a spiritual way but also in a very practical way that made its meaning unmistakable
- The city of Laodicea was established around 260 BC by the Greek king of the Seleucid Empire, Antiochus II Theos, and he named it after his wife Laodice
  - The city was located between two other prominent cities
    - Six miles to the north was Hierapolis
      - It was well known for its hot springs and fertile ground

- People would come from far and wide to soak in the warm baths seeking relief from arthritis, skin ailments and sore muscles and joints
  - Ten miles to the southeast was the city of Colosse
    - It was known for its cold, clear waters
    - People would also travel there for the invigorating, refreshing cold springs
- And because of its strategic location, being a midpoint between the two famous destinations, Laodicea became very wealthy and prosperous
  - But in one important way they did not share in the good fortune of the other two cities
    - The water of Laodicea was neither soothing like the hot springs of Hierapolis nor refreshing like the cold springs of Colosse.
    - Their water was filled with harsh chemicals and...it was lukewarm in temperature
    - It was so bad it could literally make the person drinking it sick
- Most people generally want their liquids either hot or cold
  - A hot cup of coffee
  - An ice cold glass of iced tea
  - No one ever asks for a refreshing glass of lukewarm, tepid water!
- By using this analogy, we learn that the Laodicea Christians, because of their wealth, had become apathetic, literally like the brackish waters of their town and had become spiritually good for nothing
  - To recognize this means that if they were hot, like the springs of Hierapolis, they could bring spiritual healing, restoration and comfort to people
  - If they were cold like the waters of Colosse, they could refresh and encourage people
  - But to be lukewarm was neither – it was sickening – and it would be spit out of the mouth rather than swallowed
- We also then come to realize that Jesus is saying to be hot is good and for God, but cold is not bad and against God, it is being lukewarm that is of no value to the Kingdom

How many churches, and by extension people, are of no value to the kingdom because they are lukewarm?

- How does a church become hot or cold for the kingdom?
  - By the people
  - And so it needs to be asked this morning: do you have an impact for the kingdom of God on a daily basis by how you live?
    - How you speak?
    - How you deal with and handle your emotions?
    - How you reflect the presence of the Holy Spirit in your life

But what is the true danger of being lukewarm?

- There are certainly plenty of people who say that they don't like to be extreme
  - They will say I'm more of a background person
  - Or I don't want to become known as a fanatic

- But to be lukewarm in your desire to live for God brings with it many dangers
1. The danger of pride
    - a. We see the outcome of pride in how the Laodiceans saw themselves
    - b. In 60 AD Laodicea, along with that entire region, suffered great damage in a huge earthquake
      - i. They refused financial aid when offered by Rome and paid for the rebuilding of the city themselves
      - ii. That was the depth of their wealth and self-reliance
    - c. But Jesus uses that event to make His point about their true spiritual condition
      - i. V 17a - *You say, 'I am rich; I have acquired wealth and do not need a thing.'*
        1. Their pride had hidden the reality of their need
        2. They did not need anyone or anything
        3. But Jesus saw them very differently
      - ii. V 17b - *But you do not realize that you are wretched, pitiful, poor, blind and naked.*
        1. The truth was far different than their prideful belief
        2. They had become so confident and self-reliant that they had lost their dependence on God
    - d. Spiritual pride is a very dangerous place to find yourself because it blinds you to the truth
      - i. What is the first indicator of that condition?
      - ii. Unteachability
        1. How do you handle when someone lovingly brings you correction?
        2. Do you embrace it in humility, or are you defensive and offended that someone would try and tell you how to...
      - iii. If your hot or cold for the kingdom, you welcome the opportunity to grow and have your blind spots exposed
  2. The danger of complacency
    - a. To be complacent means to be in a place of self-satisfaction and unaware of the dangers or problems around you
      - i. It was not enough that the church of Laodicea became aware of their problem
      - ii. They had to be willing to do something about it
      - iii. And the solution to the problem was provided
    - b. V 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.*
      - i. Their physical wealth was not going to be of any value to them
      - ii. It was going to require spiritual healing
        1. Jesus said buy refined gold – that would address their poverty of spirit
        2. He said to wear white clothes – that would address their spiritual nakedness

3. And put salve on their eyes – that would heal their spiritual blindness

God, in His perfection, prescribed the remedy for their spiritual problem in three ways they would clearly understand

- Because of their wealth, Laodicea was the banking center for the entire province of Asia
  - And that included a large and sophisticated gold exchange
  - But they were being told it was not to that exchange where they were to get their gold
    - It was from Jesus, and it was to be refined with spiritual fire
      - He was telling them that they were seeking their treasures from the wrong place
      - What they valued would not last
    - **Matt 6:19-20** - *Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moths and vermin destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where moths and vermin do not destroy, and where thieves do not break in and steal.*
- Laodicea was also a textile center in that day
  - They specialized in a glossy, rich black wool
  - They were woven into garments called trymata that were valued and prized in the Roman world
    - Jesus was telling them it was time to put away the black, dark clothes of the world
    - Instead, the white of purity would represent a complete change in their focus
    - Even their appearance will be different.
  - They are also told of their shameful nakedness
    - Nakedness is always used as an indicator of sin and spiritual immaturity
    - When Adam and Eve were in the earliest moments of living with sin in the Garden, the first thing they realized was they were naked
    - They immediately clothed themselves
    - They hid in their shame
  - But the white of God's purity would be in stark contrast to the darkness of their worldly clothes that did nothing to deal with their spiritual nakedness
- Third, Laodicea was the location of a major medical center
  - It was actually a school of medicine
    - They had developed an eye salve called Phrygian (*Fie-reh-gee-an*) powder
    - It was made from the grindings of a local stone and was called a miracle remedy for weak or infected eyes
  - The people of the church may have good physical vision
    - But they were certainly spiritually blind
    - We sing like we know the importance of that
      - *I once was lost but now I am found, was blind but now I see*
      - To have spiritual sight means that we can see the truth of what it means to live as a man or woman of God

- Jesus was in effect saying, I know about your eye salve, but it is not clearing the vision that is of the most importance
  - Laodicea, like many Christians and even churches today, can see what they are doing but they are blind to the things of the spirit
- And then, Jesus tells them what they must do
  - V 19 ...*be earnest and repent*
    - That repentance meant to change from what they were (lukewarm) and become useful to the kingdom (hot or cold)
    - To be earnest is to have zeal in what you do
      - Wouldn't it be great if we were as zealous and excited about the things of God as we were about our favorite team?
      - The noted American Christian counselor and author Larry Crabb wrote, The core problem is not that we are too passionate about bad things, but that we are not passionate enough about good things.

The final thing we will consider this morning is the promise that Jesus makes that allows us to throw off the uselessness of living as a lukewarm Christian

- V 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.*

(PICTURE)

- This familiar piece was painted in 1853 by Holman Hunt called *The Light of the World*
- It has been used for a wide range of biblical illustrations
  - But I want us to take note of one thing
    - There is no door handle
    - When the painting was first revealed to the public, critics thought that the artist had made a mistake by omitting a necessary element of realism
    - But the artist replied no, the door can only opened from the inside
- This is why Jesus says I am knocking – continuing to knock

It is our choice to open the door

- Just as it is our choice to become hot or cold, useful for the kingdom
- Or choose to be lukewarm and of no value
- Which are you?
  - Consider what the church would accomplish in our world today when we are no longer willing to be complacent in the truth of God's Word
  - Imagine what this church will accomplish for the Kingdom when we absolutely refuse to be lukewarm
  - And consider the impact you will have on your family, your coworkers, all those within your sphere of influence when you are not or cold for the Kingdom
- Jesus is standing outside the door of your life, ready to come in and make a transformative change in your life
  - It is your choice whether you will open the door from the inside or not