



river west church

Jesus at the Door
Revelation 3:14-22
Pastor Guy Gray
1.23.2011

Laodicea – Last of the Seven Letters

Jesus knows us. He knows our hearts, our lives and our church. The more you understand the seven letters to the churches in Revelation, the more you understand this. In each of the letters, Jesus uses language specially chosen to relate to specific situations in each of the cities. This pattern is especially on display in His letter to the church at Laodicea.

Laodicea was an extremely wealthy city. They were famous for their riches and for the reliability of their banks. They were also famous for the wool produced there and the “high fashion” that resulted from their woolen mills. Medicine was another strong point at Laodicea, and the city was famous for an eye ointment they produced there.

All of this is relevant, because when Jesus speaks to them, He uses words that are especially meaningful to their experience. In this letter of harsh criticism, Jesus speaks to them of true spiritual wealth, white garments to cover their spiritual nakedness and eye ointment that will open the eyes of their hearts to Jesus. Jesus knows them through and through. He knows where they are failing and He knows what they truly need. He knows US too.

Laodicea was a city without a good water supply. Their water was filled with nasty minerals and came from a hot spring. The distance it traveled from its source to the city allowed it to cool only partially, meaning their water was lukewarm and nasty by the time it got to them. Jesus uses this local feature to speak to their condition. They are lukewarm and sickening. What a sad, horrible description of the spiritual state of this church. It seems like there was a direct connection between their material wealth and their sad spiritual state. The obvious parallel with the condition of the church in the U.S. has often been made. Ouch.

Loving Words of Jesus

In this, the most severe of all the seven letters, we also find a word of incredible comfort. Jesus says, “Those whom I love I reprove and discipline” (3:19). This is a word we desperately need to hear. Jesus cares. That is why He reproves. Jesus has a high calling and purpose for His church and for each of our lives. His love moves Him to correct us. Jesus’ words are designed to light a fire under us. This is why He says, “Be zealous and repent” (3:19). To be zealous means to be “hot”, to be “fired up.” This is exactly what the church at Laodicea was missing. Do you hear the voice of Jesus speaking to your heart through this letter? Will you let the words of Jesus light a fire in your heart and ignite your faith?

The Magnificent Promise

Revelation 3:20 is a very famous verse, and rightfully so. It contains a stunning request and a magnificent promise. Jesus stands at the door and knocks. But how can this be? How can the Lord and King of the universe be on the outside making a request that a door to be opened to Him? Isn't it in His authority to push right through that door? Look again at the description of Christ in Revelation 1:12-18. John saw a vision of Jesus and was so overwhelmed that he fell at his feet as though dead. And THIS SAME JESUS is the one who is now standing outside the door and knocking. Amazing!

Then Jesus gives the magnificent promise, “If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and eat with him and he with me.” After all the intensity of reproof, after all the sin and failure of His people, Jesus still reaches out in gracious love and Gospel promise. Yes, there is still time to turn fully to Jesus. Yes, there is still hope. Yes, this is personal – spoken to the whole church and yet

directed at the response of individual hearts. So now the voice of Jesus calls for our response. Will you open the door? To have fellowship with Jesus, that IS the magnificent promise. I pray that each of us will hear His voice and open the door to Christ. This is the victory of faith and it is the most important thing in all of life. It IS life! Amen.