

THE CHURCH AT LAODICEA

Rev. 3:14-22

INTRODUCTION:

We speak tonight about the church which was known for it's (luke-warmness). You have heard preachers refer to this in many different ways. Technically, if you had visited such a church as the one we are going to talk about tonight, those members probably would have shown you the buildings. They would have been very proud of the fact that they paid thus and so for the property. And they would tell you how much the church cost. They would tell you that whatever we want - we have. If we need a new building - we build it. If we want something else in the way of service, we have the money to buy it. And you listen to them talk and they would tell you that we really don't need anything. We have everything here for the work of the church. And they would emphasize the word "everything".

Now tonight, I want to divide up this study into four sections.

- I. A Divine Speaker - V. 14
- II. A Delinquent Church - V. 15-17
- III. A Detailed Remedy - V. 18-20
- IV. A Descendent's Throne = V. 21-22

I trust this will help you fix in mind the situation of this church.

Now the word, Laodicea is a compound word and means "the rights of the people". Could any other term more apply to the condition of church affairs. This is an era of democratic reign in both the world and the church. And masses of people are realizing their power as never before. And they began to say in their slogan - the voice of the people is the voice of God.

This is ringing throughout the world. The age of anarchy is almost upon us. It is not confined to unhappy Russia. It is making progress in all - statesmen and capitalists were never more nervous than at the present time. In the great war, we were told that our soldiers were fighting to make the world safe for democracy. In a little while the statesmen will be attempting to raise armies again to make the world safe for democracy. The authority of God and his word is rapidly be-^{ING}divided. The spirit of the age is the spirit of the large part of the church. Thus we have a corresponding likeness between this church and the church of today.

Laodicea was founded by Antiochus, II. He named it after his wife, Laodicea. It was founded because it was in a good place of industry.

We find the most interesting reference to this church and to other churches in Paul's letter to Colossae. For example, in speaking of Epaphras, who had evangelized them - he says, I bear him record that he hath a great zeal for you at Colossae and for them at Laodicea. Salute the brethren which are in Laodicea. And he suggests that when he is writing to Colossae that they read the message to the church at Laodicea. And they exchanged these letters.

Another thing by way of introduction about this church here is the geography of this country. There were hot mineral springs. And evidently the reference to this luke warm condition here that a person would really have a problem getting down in that luke warm mineral water. It would be ill tasting. So our Lord uses the background of these hot mineral springs - which when they would cool off, it would make you sick, just as well as when it was luke warm. Because you would not be able to swallow it.

I. A Divine Speaker - V. 14

It begins by speaking to the angel of the church. This is Christ speaking. And he says four things here about himself - this divine speaker. This is truly a fitting description of Jesus. First, the amen. Then Second, the faithful witness. Third, the true witness. Fourth, the creator of the church. Prov. 8:22, 27.

Col. 2:1 - In a day when faithful witnesses to God's truth are becoming fewer and fewer - the Lord addresses himself to this church.

And he says first that he is the amen. He is the establisher of all that God promises. Now in the original this means, (verily, verily). It means to certify something as a reality. It means (so be it.) When Jesus said that he is the amen - it is the sealing word to all of the Gospel. It has force behind it and it binds and is (like a pledge) that has been affixed. It is not changeable or doubtful or unreliable - but it is sure. Here is the divine speaker - the amen.

The true witness. The faithful witness. He makes known the purposes and the minds of God. John the Baptist will witness to Christ. So he is now here testifying to the whole family of man that they have depended upon him.

And that he is faithful - the complete fidelity that can be found - he cannot be mistaken.

The beginning of the creation of God - that is the living, active, and personal principle of the creation of God. That which makes the creation be. It is not whom he created first - but he who was the source of all of God's creation. Here is the source. And this creation had a beginning - and he says he was the beginner of it. The power that is back of all of this.

Now these are far reaching titles, of our Lord Jesus Christ. As he tells us that he is the amen, the equivalent of the Greek is verily. Divine certainty in other words. But the people may utterly fail to make good their promises but here is Christ who makes things secure.

He is the faithful witness. This is a true characteristic of Jesus.

II. A Delinquent Church - V. 15-17

V. 15 - I know what you are doing. Your deeds, your works - you are not cold. Nor are you hot.

I wish that you would cease this stalemate.

Jesus is saying to this church that you are a delinquent church. He is saying that here is absolute indifference to Christ. What can the Lord do with it. He says I know thy works. He searches the depths of a man's heart. And he reproves the church for its delinquent state. The church neither has burning zeal nor have they absolutely turned their backs upon him, the Bible and the Church.

Now this is (figurative language) - but it is not hard for you to understand. Cold describes a negative condition. Absence of heat. There is a coldness in the Christian life and their duties of their experience. And they are untouched by the power of his grace. There are very many people in this class who care nothing about religion, they pay no attention to it. They stand aside from the church and they do not fulfill their obligations to the church. People are cold. They really never have been warm Christians. This is not a state to which he is going to approve.

In the second place he noted that it was not hot - and that is the opposite of coldness. And so they might have been touched by the grace of God - but they really didn't warm up to his work and to his mission.

What he says is - they are lukewarm. This is a condition that was a partial answering of the call and the claims. They tried to impress him that they were interested in sacred matters. They must have been somewhat Christian or they would have had no warmth at all.

Now there is one thing to keep in mind. These were professed believers. They were baptized. They had accepted positions in the membership of the church. They professed Christ. Otherwise they would not have been rated as a part of the church. And so the thing that he is getting across to them is that he wants them to cease the stalemate.

V. 16 - He says I am about to spew thee out of my mouth. Now for this delinquent state - he cannot tolerate it much longer. And they were not up to standard in their zeal and devotion. Now there are many people who consider themselves Christians but they are quite indifferent to the doctrines they hold. Some say, if I am good - charitable, everybody will think that I am a religious person. But I think it is not this goodness. While there are other people who are very punctual. And they are very ready to suffer for their views. They really never come to the point of full surrender. Now Jesus said, I would that you were - one of the other. And the reason is very obvious here. Has he not taken up the cross - has he not confessed this. I think the thing is self satisfaction. They are not shocked about the wickedness in the world. And so he is going to spew them out. As this mineral water would turn one's stomach - there is so much half-heartedness and self-satisfaction even in the midst of a small amount of goodness. It is a mixture of half and half - they are neither one thing or the other. They are neither in it or out of it. They are neither with relief.

And thus the church is in a sad state - it has become weak. There is far more luke warmness tonight than there is hot or cold religion. Half worldly Christians - no liberal giving, no doing of honor and dignity to the church. No readiness to enroll and confess Jesus Christ and to do his work.

In other words the church did not come out strong openly for anything. They are like the man in a canoe who had lost his paddles in the stream. And he prayed, "Good Lord, help me. Good Devil, help me". That is the weakness of all characters. Trying to go both ways. And this is designed to show us how Jesus looks upon this - it is indifference. And it made the Lord sick. Perhaps what had happened - the church was sort of a garden club affair, or a civic betterment program, or we pay our debts and we don't kill anybody. And it made God sick because they were a bunch of delinquents. They did not know the truth, and did not even know the doctrine of God. You can stop any Christian today and ask him any simple question about God, the Bible, or the revelation of Christ - and he will have no idea what to answer you.

What does the church believe, what does it stand for, what does it teach. What is it's goal - what is the Bible anyway.

There was this lukewarmness with an indifference toward committment. They worshipped God and mammon at the same time. They worshipped Christ and the world at the same time.

It is like a lecturer who came to this country to speak on communism. He said he was over whelmed - he could not tell a Christian from a non-Christian. They both look alike to me he said. Now that is the lukewarmness of the church at Laodicea. It lives in the world, is a part of the world, it worships and loves the things of the world and what the world does. And you can't tell the difference between them.

There was delinquency concerning their devotion. They were spiritually lukewarm. Their enthusiasm about God and Christ, and about his work, just were not there. But that was some of the same crowd that could go to the football stadium and rock the stands from side to side as one team makes a touchdown. We are so enthusiastic about our entertainment. We are so advanced about our literature. And a thousand things. But when it comes to Christ, our religion, and the church - there is no enthusiasms, no zeal, nothing but deadness of soul and mind. How earnest this world is. Military armies and the Devil have a thriving business. The whole world is busy - but God's people are lukewarm. You don't have religion without enthusiasm. Religion is a fire in the bone. It is a moving in the soul. A stirring in the heart.

Now this bunch was lukewarm. They had persuaded that such good things as they had - they were rich. That they were increased in goods and that made them happy. That they really needed nothing at all. They were self-contained. We don't need God. We don't need man. We don't need a program. We don't need fellowship with the other churches. We are self-sufficient and we can do it ourselves. We don't need to pray to God. We don't need to repent. We don't need to turn from our back-slidden ways. We have all the answers from scientists. This is the great hitch in working for God today. People say we don't need anything. They were declared a delinquent church.

Anything and everything that is advocated seem to make the churches' popularity. The rights of the people alone are considered. The rights of the Lord Jesus Christ are not even thought of! We have come to a time when it was easier to get along without Christ than with him. It is easier to carry on religious programs without the Holy Spirit - than it is to work within his mighty power.

It is hard to conceive how these people could be so confident. We would think that persons so lukewarm and worldly would show some reserve of needing

something. But they were amply rich and they had a false opinion of their riches. They thought they were rich. They counted on the increase of these things and they persuaded themselves that they needed nothing. Dives was a rich man, clothed in fine linens. He fared well everyday. And in Hell he lifted up his eyes, being in torment. If only he had thought about the riches that he really needed. We entertain such false conclusions in our own lives. Now brethren, they were lukewarm - they were delinquent. And this is exactly what they thought of themselves. Rich and wealthy.

✓ But Jesus said, first, you are wretched. Second, you are miserable. That is pitiful, Third, you are poor. Fourth, you are blind. Fifth, you are naked. This is the complete reverse. When Jesus adds up in judgement there is extreme misery. They did not know this. What if this Sunday, the recording angel would come down and write on the blackboard in every church the true state of that church. I wonder if it would be the church with brotherly love, or would it be the church that is suffering, or would it be the church that is lukewarm. I suspect that our knees would shake as the king - when the handwriting of the Lord appeared on the wall in his castle.

Now this is not idol talk that Jesus is talking about here concerning this church. The church in England when John Wesley came forth and we found that Methodism was born - he launched a great movement. And here was a church that was in poverty in the midst of richness. They were wretched, pressed down, burdened, pitiful, miserable, poor, blind - devoid of vision, they were naked - no garments of praise or service. Jesus was sad about this. He was not just troubled about it. He was sad when he began to talk to them.

Now why did they neglect Christ and why were they so delinquent. They were engrossed in making money. Or was it sudden strong temptation. You know, if riches increase - quite often men set their hearts upon them. And they were

accumulating wealth in abundance. Col. 2:1,3 - tell us that they might have prayed for the truth, wealth.

III. A Detailed Remedy - V. 18-20

We've seen the divine speaker, Jesus - declaring that here was a delinquent church. And now he was going to give them a detailed remedy.

V. 18 - I counsel thee, I advise thee, I recommend to you. First, that you buy from me. Gold to make you rich,

White raiment to clothe your body, that is, your shameful nakedness.

Sauve to anoint your eye to enable you to see.

Now the Lord Jesus used three illustrations, in these three statements

First, it was a banking center for the region - great riches were gathered into the city. They were self-sufficient. You have gold - you have need of nothing. But now Jesus comes and tells them that they do need wealth.

Second, the second ranking business in Laodicea was the black wool market. The black glossie wool which was made into the finest garments anywhere. Now Christ says to them, inspite of this, you are naked. You need to obtain from me a robe that will cover and hide your exposed condition before God.

Third, the third thing was preparing an ointment used for the eyes. There was a medicine center there. And travelers with the sun and the sand beating in their eyes - would welcome this ointment as relief. But Jesus says you are blind. I will give you spiritual eye sauve that you may really see.

He possesses all that the church lacks. He is ready to bestow upon them all of this. And these three main characteristics - poverty, nakedness, and blindness.

It makes sense when you read about what he says about the goal and the righteousness they need, and the white raiment, and the eye sauye. To do his work, these so called church workers needed this most of all. And I counsel you - he says - knowing that these traders and large buyers would come - they needed the richest of Christ not the treasures of the city. And they needed more than the black wool garments of that country, they needed the white raiment that would prepare them for the new society. And they needed to recover their vision. And their right view of their own condition - they believed, they had membership in the church. But they were blind as to what they were supposed to do.

Now he counsels them in this remedy and gives them the details of it - to buy this from him. But the buying that he speaks of here is the same that is spoken of in Isaiah. Everyone that hath no money - come ye, buy, and eat. Ye, come buy wine and milk without money and without price. This is the thing that Christ encourages them to come. They are destitute. But come and buy it of me.

There is the secret. Not buy it of these other people - but buy it of me. No one can really give you the blessing here - but he says I can give it to you. You can go to the market and buy of these other folks. So this was a great banking center here.

They tell us there is a story of the life of Cicero who made an extensive trip through the East. He cashed his letters of credit in the great banking center of Laodicea.

And of course when he admonishes them to get white raiment to cover their sins and nakedness - the wealth of that city in part came from the garment industry of that city. They had a breed of sheep that they raised in that district that were different from all the others in the world. The wool of that sheep was

black and it's glossy color was beautiful. Beyond anything found anywhere else in the world.

And of course the ointment of the eye saue was a center in which they manufactured and exported this medical preparation in order to heal the ailments of the eye. And it is interesting in the church. What will the church be like when our Lord comes again. Some feel that the church at Laodicea is the last period in church history. They feel that here we have the representative - something of which the Lord is speaking about. That there was a lukewarmness and a delinquency in the church.

V. 19 - I love you. And then he tells them why. First he said I am going to reprove you. Second, I am going to discipline you. I am going to correct you as a father. Then he says, I want you to repent.

Now this seems to be the first step toward recovery. And he is making an appeal to them in this recommendation or remedy which he has given.

He says I have come to reprove, to correct, to convict - to show one's error. That is, in the Greek, to chasten. To teach and to educate by means of the rod. To punish for doing wrong or to set it right by scourging. It is like a father dealing with his child. It is a matter of discipline here to remove fault. The words may be painful - but it will not destroy. It will educate, develop, improve - and bring about goodness.

We know that when Able died, there were tears that were shed. And down to the latest sorrow in a home, the truth stands out, that Jesus still rebukes and chastens us. The Devil may promise us worldly prosperity. Now if we are chasten,

let us know that we are subject to his grace. For whom the Lord loveth, he chastens. Heb. 12:5-8.

Miriam was taught to leave off her rebellious murmuring and trouble-making when she was smitten with leprosy. Jonah was brought to his sense when he faced a storm at sea. David was recovered from his sin by the afflictions that God sent upon him. Paul was kept, he said, through the thorn in the flesh. Now these things may be profitable to us in dealing with the church here. As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten. When Christian people are over-taken with the misfortune of trouble, or because of some great sin, and they have sorrows - we are not to mistake all of this as punishment. Trouble does not come because Jesus has ceased to love us - but because he does love us, and is concerned to do the very best for us. There is no love where there is no rebuke. And there is no reason perhaps to count this a misfortune. What the Saviour wishes to do and what he wishes to bring about in these people is some kind of result.

Be zealous and repent. He wants zeal - he wants warmth. It is like wings to a bird - sails to a ship. Now this is not the zeal of a hypocrite. But this is genuine service - to serve God with all the heart and with all the soul. This is not to be an intolerable person. Or of proud conceit and to thank God that you are not as other men. But it is simply giving your heart in the whole service of Jesus Christ.

Now they had no real zeal. And this repentance was to change their mind, turn over a new leaf, begin again. Truthfully, they were supposed to change their idea about themselves. They were to become humble. You know that Paul said men would become lovers of themselves. Boasters. Lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God. High-minded. Denying the power thereof. Now it belongs to a man to feelings. The question is not whether or not you are going to have warmth - but whether or not your warmth is going to be for God and for Christ.

And we look in vain for those who are not busy and for those who are not earnest. There are those who anxiously turn their faces though towards promotions and riches. Everything else is earnest with them. But they do not think that being a Christian is worthwhile at all. And hence, they feel that they can have a divided heart about their ministry and service to him.

V. 20 - I stand at the heart first. Second, knocking. And third, I want to be your guest.

Now this detailed remedy will work even tonight. Just re-trace the steps. I counsel you to buy of me - to get what I can give you. Now, second, Jesus said I have done thus and so. I have reproved. And all of this is for repentance.

And finally in this detailed remedy, he gives to us - he addresses this delinquent church member. He is walking amidst the candlesticks. And here is the most tender appeal, I think made to any of these churches. The Lord is knocking at the hearts of the back-slidden. And he is trying to get in. He often rings a spiritual door bell at the houses of professing Christians - whose ears are quick to hear the calls of fashion, pleasure, ambition, or business. But they are so plugged up that they never hear him ring. But Jesus says that he patiently stands and he keeps on ringing.

Sometimes he rings by sickness. Sometime by financial loss. Sometimes by death in the house. Sickness, loss, death - are realized - but they do not recognize him as the calling of the Lord.

This is the pleading Christ. He is outside the church. Symbolically he has been expelled from the church at Laodicea - not intentionally - but by the course of their conduct. And on the outside, he says, behold - I stand at the

door and knock. Now this is a most common view of life. The door is closed. And he is trying to get in. He is trying to get admittance. He first knocks, and then he knocks again.

And in the last verse - he is going to speak. And he says if any man will hear my voice - the voice adds insistence to the knock. He also identifies Christ. Now Christ will not break down the door - man must open it. This is his attitude before the church. And he is standing here knocking with an uplifted voice. And this is the story of many of you who are listening to me tonight. I am not preaching about men and women who are not here. But to men and women who are here, so help me God. Let us hear what the picture suggests about Christ. If he is excluded, he is asking to come in. It is the old story of men believing that they know all is well. Christ wants room in your heart.

What does he want to do if he comes in. To give you gold instead of poverty. White raiment instead of shame and nakedness. Ointment for your eyes. What does he want to come in for. He tells you why he wants to come in.

He wants to be your host. He is asking for your hospitality. I will come in and sit with him, and he with me. This is a marvelous picture here. God has been robbed of one of his own homes - so long as he has been excluded out of your heart. Let me be a guest he says, let me come in. And let me dine and sup with you. Christ is on the outside of the door of the church. And he wants it open so he can be received. The last meal of the day before the dawn is ready. The supper. To eat supper with him. The next thing is the dawn. This is the coming of our Lord. The next thing is the new creation. He is on the inside. And he wants to be on the inside of the church. He is out there in sadness and tragedy that it is - people refuse him. He came unto him, and his own refused him not. John 1:11. But how sad, when he comes back to this earth again. Luke 18:8. When he shall come - he is pictured here on the outside. And

this is one of the most striking things said by our Lord to the churches is this. As he addresses the congregations and the ministers - he always appeals to the individual human heart. And he says, if any man hear my voice - I will come into him. And this is the counsel which he gives to you.

What is our responsibility to admit him - that is all. Halman's masterpiece and painting was criticized for not having a handle on the door. Said the artist, that is not a mistake - that door has no handle on the outside. It is inside. I will sup with him and he with me. I am responsible in this matter. If ultimately I miss the way - I can not put back the blame on God. I must open to admit him. And that door is your heart. Why don't you open that door. As Harriett Becher Stowe wrote a poem - Knocking, knocking - still he is there.

Waiting, waiting - wondrous fair.

But the door is hard to open.

For the weeds and ivy vine

With their dark and clinging tendrils

Every round the hinges twine.

Knocking, Knocking - what, still knocking.

What is the hour - the night is waning,

In my heart a drear complaining

And a chilly sad unrest.

His knocking disturbs me

Scares my sleep with dreams unblessed.

Give me rest

Rest, our rest, dear soul

He longs to give thee.

That wonderful poem concludes - still thy God is waiting there.

It is getting late and the night shades are falling - and he has pointed out the luke warm system. Now the matter is left in your hands.

IV. A Descendent's Throne - V. 21- 22

Just a word about this promise in V. 21. The victorious are going to have honors and second they are going to have a seat at a throne in Heaven. He says to him that overcometh - I am going to let him sit with me in my throne. The Lord here speaks and he admonishes those who have ears to hear what he has to say. ~~Hearing is always individual~~ - that is by a sermon or message. The address may be to the whole congregation - but the only way for you to get the message is to hear it through your ears. To him that overcometh - I am going to grant him to sit with me in my throne. There are two thrones - God's throne, the ~~father's throne~~ - the throne of the essential - the absolute. That is high above the Heaven and God sits upon that throne. And then there is Christ's throne - the throne of our Lord. Throne of him who became the son of Mary, the son of David, of Abraham, and Adam, and our brother - made in the likeness of men. With flesh, blood, and bone. He shall have a throne some day and he shall be our visible king - our reigning Lord. He says I will give to him to sit down with me as I also came and sat down with my Father at his throne.

Christ's throne is distinguished from the Father's throne. And the part of infinite power in which God originally intended ~~man~~ to occupy. And which Christ, the redeemer of man will occupy in the fullness of time. Hence we will come and occupy that throne which has been made possible through him which God had intended from the beginning.

V. 22 - You have ears - then listen. God has given us Jesus Christ - his revelation. He spoke through him. And this is his divine effort, to our hearts. And people have ears all across this world and they can hear what the spirit has to say.

Now this is for our instruction and our profit.

Let us pay attention to the contents of this message to this church.

Pastor "I'm busy" but they attend country clubs & watch the trivialities -
Let us wake out of these dangers of the Christian living which we are beset

of this world - in our attitude. And let us hear what he says to us about our own delinquency and let us seek the will of the Lord. And let us seek to fulfill it and to keep the things which are written to us.

Lord is walking up & down Aisle this church saying as he did to L - Behold I stand door

There is no greater incentive for overcoming could have been offered.

The glorified Christ standing in the midst of his church, seeing with piercing eyes, bringing his counsel - his warning, and his promise. It's truth can be applied this hour and we have no difficulty in finding the spiritual luke warmth that is about us. Nor do we have any problem in knowing that he that hath a ear - let him hear what the spirit saith to the churches.