

The Church at Laodicea
The Lukewarm (Disgusting) Church¹
Spilman Memorial Baptist Church, Kinston NC
Dr. H. Powell Dew, Jr.
May 26, 2024

Text: Revelation 3:14-22

Purpose: The Laodicean Church was compromising, conceited, and Christless. But Christ was still calling them to open the door and allow Him to come in and give them the needed prescriptions. They were wretched, miserable, poor, blind, and naked. Just as Laodicea was lukewarm, so are many churches today.

There's an old sea story in the Navy about a ship's Captain who inspected His sailors, and afterward told the Chief Boson that his men smelled bad. The Captain suggested perhaps it would help if the sailors would change underwear occasionally.



The Chief responded, "Aye, aye sir, I'll see to it immediately!"

The Chief went straight to the sailors berth deck and announced, "The Captain thinks you guys smell bad and wants you to change your underwear. Pittman, you change with Jones, McCarthy, you change with Kwiatkowski, and Brown you change with Schultz. Now get to it!!"

THE MORAL: Someone may be promising "Change," but don't count on things smelling any better! ²

In light of the current political campaigns and political promises ... Remember this: Just because someone is promising “Change,” don’t count on things smelling any better.



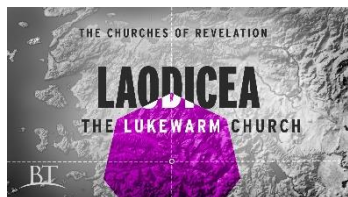
I think I have said enough about politics for now.



Let us turn to the last of the seven churches listed in the Book of Revelation. This church was one of the most disgusting churches of the seven we have examined. It

was a lukewarm, indifferent church. In some of the churches we have examined Jesus was angry with them because they were allowing apostasy to come into their midst. But with the church at Laodicea, the church actually made Christ sick. In verse 16 it says, “I will vomit you out of My mouth.”

Laodicea was one of three cities listed in Colossians that were near each other. The other two were Colosse, and Hierapolis. Under Roman rule, this city became a very wealthy city, primarily producing woolen cloth. In church history, this city represents the last days in which we are living in. Every age feels their generation is the one living in the last days.



A Look at a Compromising Church

In the New Testament, we find a person’s heart can be burning as in the case of the men on the road to Emmaus (Luke 24:32). Matthew 24:12 speaks of a man with a cold

heart. In this passage of scripture it speaks of a church that is lukewarm.



brought in by an aqueduct from Hierapolis.

Cold water was piped in from nearby Colosse. By the time the water arrived at Laodicea, the hot water was warm, and the cold water was warm – and they did not taste very good.



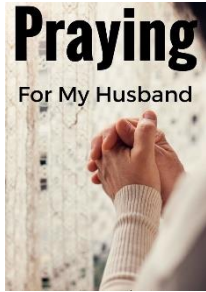
What was it that made these believers there in Laodicea so disgusting to the Lord? They were considered to be lukewarm because they had compromised their faith. They were no longer fervent in their spirit (Romans 12:11) or in their prayer (Colossians 4:12).



They were afraid to take a stand for fear of offending someone. They led the congregation by consensus according to what pleased the most people in the church.

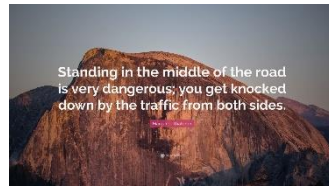
If a pastor or congregation becomes so focused upon pleasing man, instead of the Lord, then they will find they have become displeasing to the Lord. But aren’t we so comfortable the way we have things now? Our church looks good, our activities are progressing on schedule. Our calendar is almost complete with activities for the year. Our budget is moving along fine. Our giving may not be

where it should be, but we are doing alright. We are simply content.



It reminds me of a woman that prayed for her husband to become a Christian. She prayed and prayed for this man to turn to the Lord. One day he asked Christ to become his Savior and he got on fire for God. When he told her about his decision, he told her that he was going to join the nearby evangelistic, Bible-teaching church down the road. That woman didn't rejoice, she said, "I didn't want you to get *THAT* saved!" For that wife, she wanted him to adopt her middle of the road, respectable religion.

The only problem with standing in the middle of the road is you get hit from both sides!

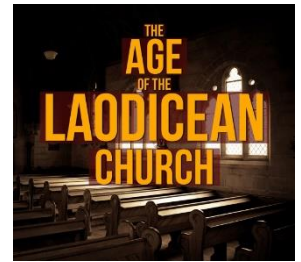


What the world calls radical, fanaticism, the Bible calls commitment.

Many churches have lost their zeal for the Lord. They have lost their sense of urgency for the lost in their community. They don't win souls and don't care if they don't win souls. They once may have bussed kids in, now they are only concerned about looking respectable.

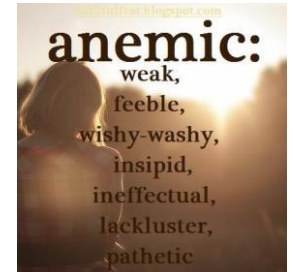
How about us here at Spilman Memorial Baptist Church? Have we lost our zeal? Have we lost our interest in learning God's word? Have we lost our interest in winning our community to Christ? Or are we content with "our four and no more"?

Some churches have sought to increase their zeal through the use of various modern entertainment models. The use of PowerPoint, loud music, performance-based worship is not a substitute for genuine, heartfelt love for God and love for your neighbors. We have become lukewarm about the things our Savior died for. We need to repent and seek Gods' face.



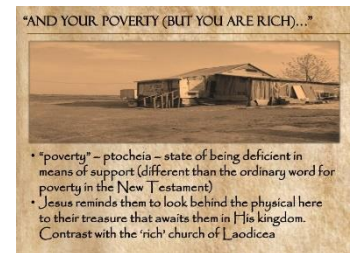
John Stott said this about Laodicea.

"The Laodicean church was a halfhearted church. Perhaps none of the seven letters is more appropriate to the twentieth-century church than this. It describes vividly the respectable, sentimental, nominal, skin-deep religiosity which is so widespread among us today. Our Christianity is flabby and anemic. We appear to have taken a lukewarm bath of religion."



A Conceited Church

Not only was Laodicea a compromising church, they were also conceited. When we looked at the church of Smyrna, they were "poor." The church at Laodicea was just the opposite. They were wealthy, but the Lord called them "*wretched, miserable, poor, blind, and naked.*" It was a banking center and perhaps that cultural attitude crept into the church.



David Wilkerson, the author of the book, *The Cross and the Switchblade*, had some strong words to say about the church at Laodicea.

“Jesus warned that a church would evolve in the last days of civilization that would boast that it was rich, growing, increasing in numbers, and self-sufficient. In other words, a church with great influence, gaining in visibility, and power, while refusing all correction or scrutiny.”

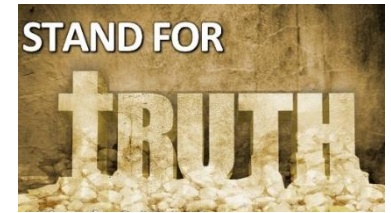


He goes on to say ...

“I have heard pastors of large churches boast, ‘I am going to build the biggest church in America because numbers mean power and influence, and we must have a church big and powerful enough to force morality and the will of God in our nation and our communities.’ This proud, rich, arrogant church now covets power, not the power of God, but political power. It covets the White House, Congress, and the Supreme Court. Since we have failed to bring about a Jonah like revival of repentance and a change in the hearts of men, we will according to some, take over the reins of government and legislate righteousness.”

We have forgotten that the faithful believers in Jesus Christ have died standing for truth instead of leading from the helm of government. Godly saints have been beheaded, chased and hunted down like animals, burned at the stake, drowned and thrown to the lions. Jesus told His disciples that the world first hated Him, and the world will surely hate them.

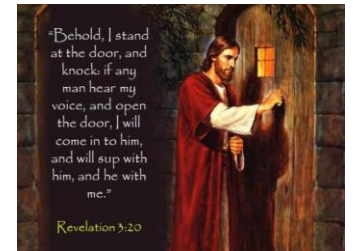
When you stand for truth and justice, morality and God’s word, people will shun you, ignore you, refuse to do business with you, and may even persecute you. The truth about the Laodicean church was they were naked and shameful. These words by David Wilkerson are as true today as they were when they were first written.



The power of the gospel is not found in the voting booth, in the size of our church, or the amount of financial resources we have. It is found in the Spirit of God that dwells in those believers that are committed, with all their heart, to Jesus Christ.

The Christless Church

One of the most famous passages of scripture often quoted by pastors, ministers, and evangelists is the one found in Revelation 3:20. “Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and dine with him, and he with Me.”

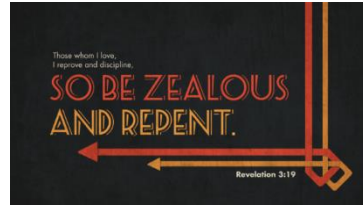


Christ is outside the church of Laodicea, knocking on the door wanting to be invited into the church. He is outside the church, not inside. The church of Laodicea is Christless. It is sad to think at the end of the age, the church has shut out Christ! All he wants is to come in and dine with them. That word “dine” means to share the last meal of the day with them. Jesus was not sure what He would find during those last days. In Luke 18:8 he said, “When the Son of Man comes, will He really find faith on the earth?”

It is too late for Laodicea. Their time has ended. But for churches that live during these last days, Christ has advice, or counsel for the church. He has a prescription for their ailment.

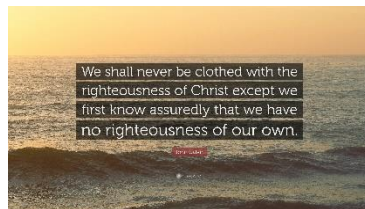
Council from the Lord

The first prescription the Lord has for the church addresses the issue of the spiritual compromise. Jesus said, “be zealous and repent.” This is the same word he gave to Ephesus (2:5) and Sardis (3:3). They need to repent from the compromises they have allowed in their church and become zealous for the Lord once again.



The second prescription the Lord addressed is the issue of spiritual poverty. Even though they are rich by the world’s standards, they can receive gold, refined by the fire of suffering. If they only come to him and truly repent, He will make them rich beyond their material wealth. David Jeremiah said this of Laodicea, “They need to move from the gold standard, to the God standard.”

A third prescription addresses their spiritual nakedness. The people of Laodicea may have owned some of the finest clothes that money could buy. But all the finest clothes will not cover the nakedness of sin they were displaying. It was as if they were walking around naked. Jesus tells them He will give them white garments. The garments believers have is



not their own righteousness, it is in the righteousness of Christ that we are able to be clothed in white garments.

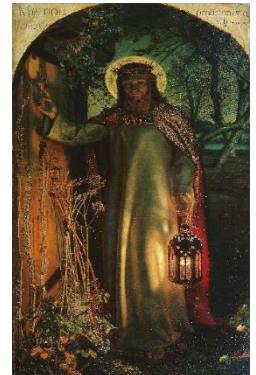
A fourth prescription addressed their spiritual blindness. If the church at Laodicea would only take the salve for their eyes, their eyes would be opened to their sinfulness. One of the other businesses in Laodicea was a product called “Tephra Phygia.” It was made in pill form and when crushed it was used as an eye salve throughout the Roman Empire. The people knew how to heal the eye, but they were actually spiritually blind.



Once the people of Laodicea accepted the salve offered by Christ, then they would have open eyes. This was only obtained by submission to Christ.

The fifth prescription addresses their Christlessness. That verse in Revelation 3:20 is often used as an evangelistic appeal to accept Christ. Christ calls both churches and individuals to open the door and let Him in. You can see it here in this copy of the painting by Holman Hunt.

Maybe you have seen this photo before. This painting beautifully illustrates how Christ comes to us. You can barely notice on your copy, but the door is overgrown with vines. There is no door knob or handle on the outside of this door. The beauty of this illustration is that we have the opportunity to open the door and allow Christ to come in.



The question for this hour is ... will we?

“He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.”

LET US PRAY

Notes:

¹ Outline from David Jeremiah's *Escape the Coming Night*

² Mikey's Funnies, August 19, 2009, forwarded by JR Whitby