

Studying the book of Revelation (10)

Concord Community Church on (13/4/25)

Jesus' message to the church of Laodicea (Revelation 3:14-22)

The Lukewarm Church

Introduction:

Like the other churches, Laodicea was in the Roman province of Asia (modern-day Turkey). It was located at the crossroads of two major trade routes. It was built on the river Lycus. Its original name was "City of Zeus." Now the modern-day Turkish city of Denizli is in the same location and has about 640,000 people. The city was prosperous. And the people loved their leisure and games. Many theatres, stadiums, baths, and amphitheatres have been found. It was only a few kilometres away from Colossae and the church in Laodicea was likely started in part by Epaphras who ministered in Colossae. Paul asked that the letter to Colossians also be read out loud in the Laodicean church (Colossians 4:16).

Each of Jesus' letters to the churches begins with a description of His character. It highlights His authority and divinity reminding the listener who is speaking. The way He describes Himself to each church is different. He emphasizes certain aspects of His character which are especially important for that specific church to pay attention to. For most of the churches, He takes one piece of the description of Himself from Revelation 1. But for Laodicea, He doesn't do this. It gives us a subtle hint that His interaction with the church of Laodicea is going to be different from His interactions with the other churches.

We live in a world that rewards balance, compromise, and comfort. But when it comes to our relationship with God, comfort can be dangerous—and compromise can be deadly. Jesus doesn't want a halfway heart. He's not interested in casual Christianity. Revelation 3:14–22 brings us face-to-face with one of the most sobering and stirring messages in all of Scripture—the letter to the Church in Laodicea.

Let's look at what Jesus says to a lukewarm church and how it applies to us today. Imagine a church full of activity, reputation, and resources—but Jesus is on the outside, knocking to get in.

That's not fiction—it's reality in **Laodicea**. This final letter in Revelation 2–3 is the most piercing. It's not a message of encouragement, but of confrontation. Yet it is also one of the most hope-filled: Jesus knocks because He still loves.

This message is for every believer, every church, that has lost its fire.

I. The True Condition: Lukewarm and Blind

Text: Revelation 3:14–17

“I know your works, that you are neither cold nor hot. I wish you were cold or hot. So, because you are lukewarm... I will spit you out of My mouth.” (vv15-16)

Laodicea's Background

- Famous for **wealth** (banking).
- Famous for **medicine** (especially eye ointment).
- Famous for **textile production** (black wool).
- **But their water? Lukewarm.** Brought in from hot springs and cold streams—by the time it reached the city, it was tepid and nauseating.

Jesus uses this as a **spiritual diagnosis**: “You are just like your water—lukewarm. I'm not refreshed by you. I'm not moved by you. I'm repulsed.”

2 Timothy 3:5 – “Having a form of godliness but denying its power.”

Isaiah 29:13 – “These people honour Me with their lips, but their hearts are far from Me.”

The Deception

“You say, ‘I am rich and have become wealthy, and have need of nothing.’ But you do not know that you are wretched, miserable, poor, blind, and naked.” (V17)

They thought they had everything—but in heaven's eyes, they had **nothing**.

What's worse than being spiritually weak?

Not knowing you are spiritually weak.

Proverbs 14:12 – “There is a way that seems right to a man, but its end is the way of death.”

1 Corinthians 10:12 – “Let anyone who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall.”

II. The Loving Confrontation: Be Zealous and Repent

Text: Revelation 3:18–19

“I counsel you to buy from Me gold refined in the fire... white garments... and eye salve... Those whom I love I rebuke and discipline.”

Jesus Offers True Riches

Jesus invites the church to a divine transaction:

- **Gold refined by fire** – true spiritual wealth (1 Peter 1:7).
- **White garments** – the righteousness of Christ (Revelation 19:8).
- **Eye salve** – spiritual vision and discernment (Ephesians 1:18).

They thought they didn’t need anything—but Jesus says: *“Come to Me. Let Me clothe you, heal you, and enrich you.”*

A Rebuke Is a Gift

“Those whom I love, I rebuke and discipline.”

God doesn’t rebuke because He’s angry—He rebukes because He’s committed.

Hebrews 12:6–11 – “The Lord disciplines those He loves... for our good, that we may share His holiness.”

Proverbs 27:6 – “Faithful are the wounds of a friend.”

The Call: “Be zealous and repent.”

Lukewarm hearts are healed not by more religion, but by repentance. Repentance is not guilt—it’s grace. It’s the pathway to restored intimacy.

Acts 3:19 – “Repent... that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord.”

III. The Gracious Invitation: Jesus Knocking

Text: Revelation 3:20

“Behold, I stand at the door and knock...”

This verse is often used evangelistic purposes, but in this context, **Jesus is knocking on the door of the church.**

A Savior Outside His Own House

How tragic—to be doing church, living life, and yet Jesus is on the outside.

Song of Songs 5:2 – “My beloved is knocking... Open to me, my sister, my love...”

John 15:4 – “Abide in Me, and I in you...”

Jesus isn’t knocking in anger. He’s not kicking the door down. He knocks gently, persistently-- waiting for the heart to open.

The Promise: Fellowship

“If anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and dine with him.”

To **dine** in the ancient world meant intimacy, peace, relationship.

Luke 24:30–32 – Jesus broke bread with the two disciples—and their eyes were opened.

John 21:12 – After the resurrection, Jesus had breakfast with His disciples on the shore.

He’s not after performance. He wants communion. He wants you.

IV. The Ultimate Reward: Reigning with Christ

Text: Revelation 3:21

“To him who overcomes I will grant to sit with Me on My throne...”

This is overwhelming.

From being lukewarm—deserving of being “spit out”—to being seated on the throne with Christ!

Ephesians 2:6 – “God raised us up with Christ and seated us with Him in the heavenly realms.”

Romans 8:17 – “If we suffer with Him, we will also be glorified with Him.”

God’s grace doesn’t just forgive. It **elevates**.

But this promise is only for the **overcomers**—those who respond, who repent, who reopen the door.

V. The Urgency: Hear What the Spirit Says

Text: Revelation 3:22

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

This message is not just for Laodicea.

It’s for **every generation**, every church, every heart where passion has cooled.

Hebrews 3:15 – “Today, if you hear His voice, do not harden your hearts.”

CONCLUSION: Jesus is knocking.

Not just on the heart of a sinner—but on the hearts of saints who’ve grown cold. He doesn’t give up on lukewarm people—He calls them back to fire.

Don’t settle for lukewarm faith when Jesus offers burning fellowship.

Don’t be content with external appearances when Jesus offers eternal intimacy.

ACTION is required:

1. **Examine your heart.** Where have you become spiritually indifferent?
2. **Repent and be zealous.** Turn from apathy (unconcern & not interested) and turn toward Christ with fresh devotion.
3. **Open the door.** Let Jesus take His rightful place at the centre of your life.

PRAYER: Jesus, we confess we have grown too content, too casual. We’ve pushed You to the edges of our lives. But today, we hear You knocking. We open the door. Come in. Dine with us. Change us. Restore our fire, our passion, our first love. We don’t want to be lukewarm anymore. Amen.”