

Revelation 3:14–22

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Preacher: Arthur Jackson

[0 : 00] Please stand for the reading of God's Word.

Revelation chapter 3, verses 14 through 22. And to the angel of the church in Laodicea write, The words of the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the beginning of God's creation.

I know your works. You are neither cold nor hot. Would that you were either cold or hot. So, because you are lukewarm and neither hot nor cold, I will spit you out of my mouth.

For you say, I am rich, I have prospered, and I need nothing, not realizing that you are wretched, pitiable, poor, blind, and naked.

I counsel you to buy from me gold refined by fire, so that you may be rich, and white garments, so that you may clothe yourself, and the shame of your nakedness may not be seen, and salve to anoint your eyes, so that you may see.

[1 : 11] Those whom I love, I reprove and discipline, so be zealous and repent. Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come into him and eat with him, and he with me.

The one who conquers, I will grant him to sit with me on my throne, as I also conquered and sat down with my father on his throne. He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.

This is the word of the Lord. Thanks be to God. You may be seated. Good afternoon to you.

Let's pray together. Lord, thanks for your goodness to us, and your blessing that makes rich that we have experienced even this day.

And thank you for those who have gathered to hear your word. And I do pray, Lord, that they would hear your word even through me this day. We trust you for these things, and we ask them all in Christ's name.

[2 : 20] Amen. For many of you in our Revelation series, there have been some things that have been strange.

Today, perhaps there's some good news in this regard, that we come to a verse, particularly chapter 3, verse 20, that many are quite familiar with.

Some of you perhaps have memorized Revelation 3 and 20. We come to this familiar verse this afternoon, and let's look at that verse initially.

Kevin has already read it. But I would like to start there and eventually return there. Listen again what it says.

Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and eat with him and he with me.

[3 : 35] A familiar verse, but a very heart-wrenching scene. Familiar verse, heart-wrenching scene.

You say, well, what's so pathetic about it? Here you have the resurrected, glorified Christ on the outside of the church that he purchased with his own blood, chapter 1, verse 5, or Acts chapter 20, verse 28, wanting to gain entry to his church.

You and I would have to admit there's something wrong with that kind of picture. There's something wrong with that kind of scene. Picture with me a homeowner on the outside of his house.

He's designed the house, built the house, paid for the house, but is locked out of that house.

Imagine children changing the locks and not allowing their parents access. What a strange prank.

[4 : 53] Of course, none of you would ever do anything like that. But that's very absurd, isn't it? For the children not allowing parents, the protector, the one that watches over them and provides for them access.

Here's a really silly one, but I've got to say it. Think about passengers that won't let the pilot on the plane. Huh?

They're unable to get off the runway, but if they get off the runway without the pilot, they won't be in the air very long, will they? Huh? Imagine the late Dave Thomas on the outside of a Wendy's restaurant trying to get in.

Dave had the vision. Dave had the vision. He started the business. He built the business by his expertise. You know, that's sort of absurd.

But similarly, we have something like that in this particular scene. The one who wanted to enter the church was the glorified Christ.

[6 : 08] Well, you say, well, Pastor Jay, that's not Christ. It's maybe a lookalike Christ, but it can't be Christ shut out of his church. Well, look at verse 14. It's him. As a matter of fact, you see the description of what I would call the all-sufficient Christ.

The resurrection of the resurrected Christ is described in terms there that speak of his truth, his faithfulness, his reliability, and his supremacy.

In verse 14, these are his credentials. And just as he has revealed himself in ways that befit the need of the previous six churches, so he reveals himself in a way that fits the need of this particular church.

We see him as the Amen. This speaks of him as being the true one.

And as such, he is perfectly trustworthy. He is the eternal rock of Gibraltar. Speaking of him in those kinds of terms.

[7 : 21] The one who is the true one. That Amen is explained further by what we see next. The faithful and the true witness.

Again, this speaks of the reliability of his witness. His words, his counsel, they are reliable. None could be more trustworthy. None could be more genuine.

None could be more obedient. None could be more obedient. To this particular church. And in a sense that has him on. The outside. He's the beginning of God's creation.

This designation indicates. That all things had their origin in him. Both in old created order. As well as in new created order. The church.

The community of the redeemed. He is supreme over all things. Both the old and the new creation. There is none greater.

[8 : 23] Than him. But if we look further in verses 15 through 18. We see. That the words of the all sufficient Christ.

Amount to an indictment against a self sufficient church. That's the kind of church that we see. In this seventh church.

His words reveal his knowledge. Of their true condition. And his desire. For their usefulness. And their effectiveness. As a church.

There are scores and scores of churches. More. Than you can count. I think about even on. The west side of Chicago. Where I ministered for years.

And perhaps here on the south side. There is a similar kind of thing. You go up and down the street. And you can see. Church after church.

[9 : 24] Storefront after storefront. People are meeting with regularity. But the question is. How useful. And effective.

Are those churches. That exist. And they even may have a sign. That they're doing business in his name. But in reality. How useful. Are they?

Huh? What was the true condition. Of this church. In that ancient city. Huh? The true condition. They were like the water.

In their city. Huh? As with the other churches. The Lord knew. The condition. He knew the real deal.

Beyond. Beyond. The surface. Beyond. Beyond. Beyond. Their reputation. Beyond. Their name. He knew. Them. And so today. The Lord knows.

[10 : 19] You as a believer. And he knows. Us as a church. And he knows. What's the real deal. He knows. Beyond. The appearances. He knows.

Beyond. Our. Sunday smiles. He knows. Where. Pain. And the ache. And the spiritual. Kind of. The lack of equilibrium.

In our lives. And even. In our church. As with the other churches. The Lord knew their condition. Think about it. Would you. Say you're running.

Up and down. The lakefront. Or downtown. You've got your water bottle. On. And you. All out of your. Pure water. How many of you. Would go to Lake Michigan.

Or the Chicago River. And just put your bottle. In. Fill it up. And take a. Swig of. Water.

[11 : 16] From that. Huh. Huh. The judgment. Of Jesus. On this church. Was that. It was. Useless. They were not hot.

They were not. Cold. They just were. Huh. They were existing. But not for. The Lord's ultimate purposes.

Is for them. And for the Lord. Just existing. Listen to this. It's not. Enough. Huh. They had the essential.

Properties. Of water. But other things. Were included. That made them. Bad water. Useless. Water. Useless.

For the essentials. Of both. Bathing. And. Drinking. I mean. I would have to even. Be desperate. To take a bath. In Lake.

[12 : 10] Michigan. And definitely. The Chicago River. Particularly. Around St. Patrick's Day. When they put that green stuff. In there. The term.

Used in the passage. Is lukewarm. And lukewarm. Is sort of synonymous. With good. For nothing. It's just like salt.

That loses. Its saltiness. Is good. For nothing. Water. That was neither. Hot. Or cold. Or pure. Was likewise. Useless.

While. The Laodiceans. Had certain things. They had certain things. Going for them. Their water. Was not one of them. Drinking. Their water. Was not like. Sipping from.

The bottled. Water. Of our day. That kind of water. Could be found. Ten miles. East. At Colossae. Water. There was cool. Pure. Refreshing.

[13 : 09] It had come from. Nearby. Mountain streams. Huh? I think of. In traveling abroad. And many of you. Who have done that. One of the things. That they. Caution you about. In going. In particular. Into third world.

Countries. Don't. Drink. The water. Huh? Yeah. I remember. When we go to Kenya. I mean. Even for brushing. Our teeth.

Forget the bottled. Water. Huh? The waters of. Laodicea. Were not. Drinkable.

Within themselves. Furthermore. Six miles. To the north. In Hierapolis. Ninety five. Degree. Water. From hot springs. Could be found. Now. What about that. In a hot tub.

With some jets. In that. Ninety five. Degree. Water. Huh? These waters. Were known. For their medicinal. Value. But. Laodicea.

[14 : 01] Lacked. A usable. Water. Supply. One writer. Says that. It was murky. Muddy. Nauseous. And. Undrinkable. Huh? It was unusable. And the church. At Laodicea. Similarly. Was unfit.

For. The purposes. Of. The Lord. For that reason. The glorified Christ. Speaks.

He spoke to them. It's likely that their murky. Mixed condition. Rendered them. Ineffective. Useless. In the service. Useless. And their witness. For Christ. They may have been going.

Through the motions. But they were ineffective. For. The mission. Along within my own heart. To be.

[15 : 00] Useful to the max. For Christ. And. My search for. Being that kind of. Individual. And. Boy. I see myself. Where I fall. Short. Short of that. I mean. It's been a 40. Plus. Year. Journey. Do you hunger. Do you long.

To be used. Individually. And for. The cause. Of Christ. Does this. World. Have a way. Of its. Value. Dimming.

And diminishing. For. You. Perhaps. For me. It's because. How. Lord willing. Will be 60 years old. This year. Oh. But.

I long. For. A. Greater. Degree. Of. Usefulness. For Christ. More. Than. Just. A. Coming. On.

[15 : 53] Sunday. Or. Whenever. It is. Or. Simply. Going. To the office. I long. For. Effectiveness. For the cause.

Of Christ. And. Pastorally. We long. For that. For our. Congregation. Not. Simply. To exist. In name. Only. But.

To be used. Significantly. For. The Lord. Huh. How. Does. A church. Become. Useless. How. Do. Christians.

Become. Useless. And. Simply. Go. Through. The motions. And. Where. They're not. Concern. About. The mission. Huh. Huh. Huh. We find.

Ourselves. Compromising. With. Our. Humanistic. Materialistic. And. Hedonistic. Kind. Of. Culture. We.

[16 : 47] Become. Complacent. As a matter of fact. One. Writer. Mike. Slaughter. In the book. Momentum. For Life. He. Describes. Christian.

Culture. As sort of a. Soft. Secular. Culture. Listen. To what he says. About that. So the worldview. Most. Most predominant.

In churches. Is soft. Secular. People. With a soft. Secular worldview. Believe in God. And claim. A faith. Identity. Jewish. Protestant. Or Catholic.

Yet God. Is secondary. A secondary. Value. Or belief. They may. Confess. Jesus. But trust. The values. Of secular. Culture. Putting. Their trust.

In material. Possessions. To provide. Rather than. Trusting. God's. Promise. Of provision. They make. Religious. Donations. Listen. To this. Rather than.

[17 : 39] Life. Sacrifices. It is. Difficult. For the. Soft. Secular. People. To make. Significant. Time. Or financial. Commitments. To their. Churches. Even though.

They believe. In God. God. Is not. In their. First. Priority. Or passion. They live. Comfortably. In two. Spheres. Sacred. And secular. But when. Press. For time.

They. They. Their default. Always. Goes. To the. Secular. They. Bring. Jesus. Into their. Worldview. Instead. Of converting. To his. Worldview.

Doesn't. That. Characterize. Us. A. Little bit. Of Jesus. And he. Gets. A little. Bit. Of us.

Perhaps. That. Was. The condition. There. In. Laodicea. Not. Only. Were. They. Like. The. Unwholesome. Water. In. Their. City. They. Mimic. The. Self-sufficiency.

[18 : 34] Of. The. City. Jesus. Words. Amounted. To. An. Indictment. Against. Their. Prideful. Independence.! And. Self-sufficiency.

Look. At verse 17. It. Makes. It. Very. Clear. How. They. Felt. About. Themselves. For. You. Say. I.

Am. Rich. I. Have. Prospered. I. Need. Nothing.

Huh? Wow. Self-evaluation. I'm doing pretty good. Not bad. Give myself.

I'm. Okay. I am rich. I've prospered. They said. Jesus said. You're. Wretched. Pitiable. And poor.

[19 : 29] They said. I don't have need of anything. I've got it all together. No need. But Jesus says. Not only are you.

Wretched. And pitiable. And poor. You're also blind. And naked. Huh? They were neither poor in this world's goods. Nor were they. Poor.

In spirit. Huh? To the point of recognizing their need. These people. These were not humble kind of people. If you will. Huh? Why should they have been? The self-sufficient attitude of the church.

Paralleled. That of their prevailing culture. If there was anybody. Any church. Any city. That had it going on. It was Laodicea. If there was anybody.

That knew anything about pulling themselves up. By their own bootstraps. It was Laodicea. Huh? Roughly 30 to 35 years before the writing of this letter. An earthquake had come.

[20 : 27] And destroyed. Laodicea. Palacios. Palacios. And Hierapolis. These three cities in the Lycus Valley. And then. In comes. The Roman government says.

We want to give you. Some federal aid. We want to help you rebuild. This. The. Your city. You know what they told Rome. Sort of like the people of Myanmar today.

Thanks. But no thanks. We'll do it to our. We'll do it ourselves. And guess what? They did it. Huh? They did it of their own.

With their own resources. They built the city again at their own expense. Huh? Huh? At the time of the writing. Laodicea was one of the richest commercial centers in the world.

It was noted for their banking and manufacturer of cloth garments from black wool. A medical school was there that specialized in our self.

- [21 : 26] Huh? But Jesus lets them know. Said just because you have these things going on in the culture. Doesn't mean that they transfer cleanly into your life of faith.
- Did you know that self-sufficiency can be a curse? Huh? It can be. And it can lead you and me to spiritual impotency.
- Huh? And one of the greatest challenges that you and I have is to be people who are counter-cultural. Huh? Now the world applauds self-sufficiency and independence.
- But self-sufficiency and spiritual potency, effectiveness, they are incompatible. Huh? Huh? Self-sufficient people in churches are spiritually powerless for the purposes of God.
- Huh? Self-sufficiency robs us. It robs us by keeping us from the source of true riches, the Lord Jesus Christ himself. In fact, turn with me to Jeremiah chapter 2, verses 12 and 13.
- [22 : 33] Look there with me, page 628. How many people have been robbed of true dignity and honor? Pride and self-sufficiency.
- This was the Lord's indictment against Judah. Jeremiah chapter 2, verses 12 and 13. Be appalled, O heavens, at this.
- Be shocked. Be utterly desolate, declares the Lord. For my people have committed two evils. They have forsaken me, the fountain of living waters, and have hewn out cisterns for themselves.
- Broken cisterns that can hold no water. Self-sufficiency robs us of what we could have if we put our utter trust and dependency on the Lord.
- It robs us by keeping us from the source of true riches. But also, it blinds us from the true source of provision and deceives us into thinking too much of ourselves.
- [23 : 51] And fill us with spiritual pride. You know the story of the rich fool in Luke chapter 12. You know, he had done well.
- All his stocks and bonds had come in, cast in on them. Oil was up, and he cast in those commodities.
- Notice here, in that particular story, he had done well. He said, this is what I'll do. Since my boat has come in, I will tear down these barns, and I will build greater.
- And then the Lord says to him, he said, you thou fool, this night. Your soul is going to be retired of you. And then what are you going to give?
- What's going to happen to those things that you laid up for yourself? It blinds us. It robs us. And our potency, our effectiveness in the Lord's work is not in our self-sufficiency.
- [24 : 50] Not in our ability to mimic what the world has to offer. It's not in playing the world's games on the world's terms. It's not in outdoing those in our culture.
- But it's being countercultural. That's where in our hope lies. Look at verses 18 and 19. The counsel of the all-sufficient Christ to a self-sufficient church.
- He counsels them where to go for riches. You see that there in verse 18? He says, I counsel you to buy from me gold purified by fire so that you may be rich, and white garments so that you may clothe yourself, and the shame of your nakedness may not be seen, and salve to anoint your eyes so that you may see.
- The reality that there is poverty and nakedness and blindness apart from Jesus. No true life. And just Jesus offers here what I would call one-stop shopping.
- The invitation to shop from the right source at the right place is the Jesus center. There he offers true riches for poverty, true clothing for nakedness, true vision for blindness.
- [26 : 15] You know, we pride ourselves in labels, don't we? Gucci, Versace, and the like. Oh, Jesus says the true label that you need on your lapel is the Jesus designer brand for you and me.

Huh? That's what he wants for his people. And what Jesus says here mirrors his invitations in other texts of scripture. He's the true bread, John chapter 6.

He is the water in John chapter 7. He's the true liberator in John chapter 8. He's the sight giver in John chapter 9.

He is the true shepherd in John chapter 10. The resurrection and the life in John chapter 11. Wash up anywhere else. When everything that you and I need is found in Jesus.

Notice this counsel. Get back on track. Be zealous and repent, he says. The Lord pursues us because he loves us.

[27 : 20] He chastens us as his children because he loves us. He sends his word and other means of discipline in order to get us back on track. Look at verse 19. He says, those whom I love, I reprove and discipline.

So be zealous. And repent. He does disciplines us so that we may be most effective for his.

Calls. Look back at verse 20. There you see the all-sufficient Christ in pursuit of his self-sufficient church.

He's outside. Rather than being outside the church, the proper place for Christ is to be exalted in the church and among his people. And this verse shows Jesus knocking at the door of a lukewarm, poverty-stricken, naked, blind church.

But you know what? That's just like Jesus, isn't it? To what degree do we picture that kind of church today? Israel in the Old Testament is described as a stubborn people.

[28 : 34] Yet the Lord knocked and knocked through the ministry of the prophets. The Bible says he's rising them up early and sending them out into the nation to return.

Return to a place of usefulness and effectiveness designed by God. Exodus chapter 19. There were people who were to be in covenant and they were to be priests to the nations.

We see the Lord constantly knocking and knocking and knocking. You remember Stephen's message in Acts chapter 7. He spoke about how the Lord sent the prophets.

And you do always resist the Holy Spirit just like your fathers did. Jesus coming to the nation was like coming to a den of lions. The nation as represented by her religious leaders was wretched and miserable and poor and blind and naked.

Yet he knocked. And he continues to knock to get the attention of his church. For her to fulfill her role as his witnesses in the world.

[29 : 41] The knock of Jesus today. And as in the days past, it's a knock of grace and a knock of mercy and a knock of love. So the all-sufficient savior presents himself to a self-sufficient church.

As one who graciously and passionately pursues her for intimate fellowship that will extend into eternity. Look at verses 21 and 22.

The one who conquers, I will grant him to sit with me on my throne. Just like you see fellowship pictured in verse 20 in eating and dining.

So that fellowship that begins on earth will continue on into eternity. I will grant him to sit with me on my throne. Heirs of God, co-heirs with Christ.

And as I also conquered and sat down with my father on his throne. We see a great principle here.

[30 : 41] But I want to close. With a picture, I believe, of what we see. Here in Revelation chapter 20.

And I want you to turn with me to Luke chapter 24. In order to see that. You'll find that on page 885. Here we have the resurrected Christ.

After his resurrection. Not fully revealed to his disciples. But there he has two walking on the Emmaus road.

We see what happens there when individuals and churches extend a welcome and invitation to Jesus. Jesus had been raised from the dead.

Yet some did not believe the report. So Jesus then, verse 13 and follow, comes alongside the two of them as they walked from Jerusalem to Emmaus.

[31 : 49] Emmaus. He strikes up a conversation with them. Oh, what a great conversation it was. And as he began to explain to them the Old Testament scriptures about himself.

They arrive at the village and he acts like he's going on. Look at verse 29 there. Well, start at verse 28. As they drew near to the village to which they were going, he acted as if he were going further.

But they urged him strongly saying, stay with us. For it is toward evening and the day is far spent. So he went in to stay with them at their invitation.

Then something wonderful happens after this stay with us invitation that they urged him. That's what he wants. He wants this kind of invitation, this kind of welcome.

He went in to stay with them. He said, if you let him, there will be fellowship there. And that's what happened. And he went in to stay with them. That's what happened.

[32 : 52] He reclined. And then this is what Jesus did. Jesus goes from being the guest to being the host. He was the guest, but the guest turned into the host.

He's the one who took the bread and broke it. He's the one that blessed it and began to give to them. That's what happens when Jesus is sincerely welcome.

He comes in and he takes control. That's what Jesus does when you're invited in. He gives you the true bread. He said he would anoint eyes.

And that's what he did here. He does this and their eyes open and they recognize that it's him. They see him. And not only that, after they are fed with the bread and their eyes come open, guess what they do?

They are energized. When Jesus came into them and the same men that went, they were sluggish in their going, they turn around and they are energized and they share the mission of Jesus.

[33 : 58] Having been energized and quickened by Jesus himself. And all of this was because they welcomed him. They invited him in.

We see this picture. So what are we to ponder from this text? Lukewarm people make for a lukewarm church and we need to be aware of these signs of lukewarmness.

Indifference toward things that really matter to God. Being insensitive and inconsiderate about those things that are really and truly on the heart of God.

Spiritual and religious pride like the Pharisees. Having a form of godliness but denying its power. A lack of graciousness.

These are signs of lukewarmness. Without genuine care for one another in the family of God. Spiritual sluggishness and dullness.

[35 : 04] Indifference toward spiritual counsel. These are signs of lukewarmness. No appetite for spiritual things. And those folks over there need it, Lord, and not me.

Okay? The Lord knocks. And he continues to knock.

He patiently, persistently, and graciously longs for his church to seek him and find in him absolutely everything that they need.

The self-sufficiency of the church must give way to the all-sufficiency of Christ. And when such is the case, spiritual intimacy that raises us for spiritual impact in accord with the Lord's purposes for his church.

Will be the results. Will be the results. In our lives and in our church. Pray with me, please. Lord, we love you.

[36 : 10] And we bless you. And we give you the praise. And I pray, Lord, that as we reflect on the words of the song that we are about to sing.

I pray that from this passage and from these words might be mirrored, Lord, your clear message to us.

I pray that you would be glorified in us. And we pray these things in Christ's name. Amen. Even as we sing, the stewards are coming and they're going to receive an offering for the Annis family.

In the meantime, stand with us and sing Rock of Ages. And I want you to particularly look at verses 2 and 3 as we sing them.

As we think of our condition and our need before our great God.