

The Church in Laodicea

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[0 : 00] Well, so we're reading in Revelation chapter 3 and verse 14. So to the angel of the church in Laodicea write, These are the words of the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the ruler of God's creation.

I know your deeds, that you are neither cold nor hot. I wish you were either one or the other. So because you are lukewarm, neither hot nor cold, I'm about to spit you out of my mouth. You say I'm rich, I have acquired wealth and do not need a thing. But you do not realise that you are wretched, pitiful, poor, blind and naked.

I counsel you to buy from me gold refined in the fire so that you can become rich. And white robes to wear so that you can cover your shameful nakedness.

And salve to put on your eyes so that you can see. Those whom I love, I rebuke and discipline. So be earnest and repent.

[1 : 18] Here I am. I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in and eat with him and he with me.

To him who overcomes, I will give the right to sit with me on my throne. Just as I overcame and sat down with my father on his throne.

He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. It seems a shame that the final church that we're thinking about tonight is the one church that there is very little encouragement for in terms of what the risen Christ says to it.

Criticism is, as we'll see, biting relevant, but rather anxiety creating, I would think, in the recipients of that letter.

And you remember, those of you who were here last week, that I explained probably far too briefly for you. What is the dispensationalist framework of the letters to the seven churches?

[2 : 41] Dispensationalists are people who divide the history of the church up into certain eons, periods of time. And of course, I mean, it may be instructive, but there is not a huge amount of kind of evidence for them to do that.

I think it's a kind of framework for trying to understand. And the dispensationalist framework of the letters to the seven churches, rather conveniently, is it has, there are seven churches and there are seven eons, periods of time.

And so we find in Laodicea, if we can have to slide up James, just go through the lot, will you?

Thank you. And we get to Laodicea. It's the apostate church.

And that's a word that may be familiar to some of you, but will not be familiar to many of you.

Apostasy means abandonment.

It means abandonment of a previous loyalty or defection. And in relation to the church, it is sometimes used in terms of politics.

[3 : 52] People talk about our party being apostate. But in the church, it generally relates to a change in teaching or values that moves the church away from its kind of stated, inherited beliefs.

So the apostate church, if you know your Bibles, you will know that St. Paul spends quite a bit of time trying to make sure that churches remain faithful to God rather than unfaithful to God.

And I think there are three, sorry, two big questions that the apostate church brings to us, which seem to me to be biting relevant in the 21st century.

The first question is, how do you engage with a subculture without surrendering to its values? I think this has been a central kind of problem for missionaries, certainly throughout the 19th century and into the 20th century, and particularly in the 21st century.

I say that question, how do you engage with a subculture without surrendering to its values? I say subculture because I think now in most of the communities in which we find ourselves, though there

very likely will be one dominant culture, at the same time there will be lots of smaller subcultures.

[5 : 31] And Jesus encourages us in Matthew chapter 28 to go into all the world. Actually, the word that we translate world in Matthew 28 is actually the word *ethner*.

It means cultures. Go to all cultures and baptize them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit and teach them all I have commanded you.

So we have a mandate as the people of God to engage with all these cultures. And the idea behind that, I assume, is that when the church engages with a culture, the idea is that our Christian culture will kind of remodel, remake, influence the culture that we're seeking to engage with.

It seems to be, since probably the middle part of the 20th century, that in fact exactly the opposite has happened.

That we've tried to engage with these cultures to the point where I think in many churches we've almost given up on that. But more sadly, we've allowed the cultures to influence us more than we've influenced the cultures.

[6 : 55] Second question is, how do you decide which parts of the Bible's teaching are a product of the prevailing culture of the time, and how much of them are unchangeable truths?

And you say, well, I'm a Bible person. I don't compromise anywhere on that. And, you know, if that's your position, I have a great deal of respect for it. But I think more main line is we do recognise that there are some cultural issues in the New Testament, which probably we don't feel a great need, most of us, to adhere to.

For instance, the concept of women not entering a church without covering their heads. That seems to be more a product of the culture of the time than it does an unchangeable truth, which if you didn't put a covering on your head when you entered the church, it would seem a little harsh for you to be condemned to eternal damnation.

So we do recognise there are bits of the Bible which we can kind of reinterpret in a kind of culture. But there are truths that are unchangeable.

You will, some of you will remember, made headline news that a bishop of Durham, who was called David, what was his name?

[8 : 25] Jenkins, thank you. Terrible thing, age, isn't it? You know, you can't even remember who you're talking about. So David Jenkins stood up and basically declared in Durham Cathedral on Easter Sunday that the physical resurrection of Jesus never took place.

And he referred to it, he actually said this, we cannot believe in a conjuring trick with bones. Now, you have to make your own mind up about that.

But what I would say to you is, in my Bible, I would suggest that is surrendering what is an unchangeable truth to modern culture.

David Jenkins, I should explain, and sort of slightly in his defence, was a philosopher rather than a theologian and was trying to grapple with how did he influence the philosophy faculty of the University of Leeds for the Gospel.

And his idea was to engage with it in a way which I think surrendered too much ground. The third thing, I should have said, sorry, it's because my slides were split to keep the type big enough.

[9 : 39] The third thing I wanted to say about the apostate churches, the third question that arises is, how do you ensure that all God's people are biblically literate?

And the answer is, you do it by teaching. I realise in saying that to you lot, I'm kind of preaching to the choir. But the bottom line is, certainly in the church that I've served for 50 years, the level of biblical literacy amongst your average member is pretty low.

When a lady comes up to me and says, what was it Jesus said, a rolling stone gathers no moss? You know you're in deep water. And there's only one way that, and we've dropped a lot of those incredible ways that we used to learn by.

I mean, I remember in my church, you know, it's common in young people's groups, so I wasn't converted to the Christian faith, I was in my late teenage years.

And even then, on Sundays in my church, we were given a memory verse every Sunday. All the adults had to learn it. We'd go back the next week, and we'd all repeat it like parrots. And, you know, was that a bad thing?

[10 : 57] I don't think it was, to be quite honest with you. So, you know, it's where we are kind of thing. But generally speaking, and of course the way this plays into the apostate church is if somebody says something very outrageous about the Christian faith, trying to unstick the sowing

of a timeless truth, if you are not biblically literate, you would not even realize that you may be dealing with somebody who's uttering a heresy.

There's a principle in English law, I hope I've got this right, there's a Valenti non... Sorry, I'm saying the wrong quote from the law. There's a quote in English law which was ignorantist, non... something excuse at. In other words, ignorance of the law is no excuse. You can't kind of punch somebody's head in and then say, I didn't know that was wrong.

The law makes it wrong. And I think that the same's true in a way in our walk with God. You know, it's not that we're saved by our knowledge, but my goodness, knowledge of the Bible is going to help us.

And the fourth thing is, how do you challenge in a way that can be heard dangerous ideas that arise within your culture? I think one of the big issues for the church today is, I don't know if it's a courage issue or whether we've lost a way of appropriately challenging some of the wrong-headed ideas which prevail in our society today.

[12 : 46] But by and large, it seems that churches would rather engage with issues that they feel comfortable with rather than those issues that make them really uncomfortable.

I picked up a book a couple of weeks ago which is somebody who's researched very carefully the impact of therapy on children.

and actually it's a rather condemning piece. And she is an American and so you're talking primarily about American culture but one of the things she says in her book which incidentally is the book has been kind of endorsed by some of the best minds in the circles in which she moves.

one of the things she goes on about in that book is so some of the therapists have told children to go home and spy on their parents and write up you know the things that have been said in the home and then to write down what you felt about what you heard your parents say or what they said to you.

I don't know what you make of all that and I'm not qualified enough to kind of pass erudite comment on the subject but I would suspect that most parents wouldn't want their children going back to school and saying my dad said to my mum today I don't think they'd like that and is it doing the child any good?

[14 : 27] It's kind of almost franchising the kind of area of their life and one of her things in the book it's a woman called Abigail Shreer incidentally one of the things in her book is that she finds talking to the therapeutic community that the kind of default is that all children are traumatised and a lot of that trauma is laid at the feet of their parents bad behaviour so how do you challenge ideas like that in a way that can be heard so you can shout and my problem with people when they're angry is I usually try and stop people in their tracks you know when I was doing the bishop thing mostly the kind of attacks that I received were I wonder if any of the church leaders in the room recognised this but the one thing I used to really hate was a letter handwritten pushed through my door at midnight with shaky writing on the front

I knew it was going to be an exocet missile in a conqueror envelope but occasionally people have come tearing up to me and have a real go at me I used to say hang on you know you're shouting and all I get from you when you shout is your anger I'm not really listening to what you say I'm just responding to your anger so let's try and turn down the volume a bit and see if we can get to the bottom of what seems to have upset you so to go to the church in Laodicea what do we know about Laodicea has anybody been there by the way I've been there John Angle has been anybody else been there it is an amazing site it has to be said archaeologically and I think is reckoned to be one of the most unexplored archaeological sites there is they have on us two theatres in Laodicea by theatre it means coliseum like buildings and I remember the first time

I went there we had a clergy person who had a very strong Cockney accent and he went down onto the stage of the amphitheatre there stood and sang my old man's a dustman and it brought the Turkish people in the place to a standstill and they loved it and I don't know whether this is true but I had been told in these brilliant amphitheatres that they built back in the day that somebody could stand on the stage and whisper and a person on the highest row of the terracing could hear what was being said I went to the old Vic in Bristol the other day I won't tell you what I thought of the performance but I went there and everybody there is mic'd up like I am I still couldn't hear some of it I'm like you know bring back the amphitheatres so what we do know about Laodicea was it's in the region of

Phrygia and was the wealthiest city in that area it was an important commercial centre on three coinciding trade routes in AD 61 it was destroyed by an earthquake and unlike the other cities that were destroyed by earthquakes which as you know not uncommon the city of Laodicea was able to pay for its own rebuilding without any money from the Roman Empire it was that wealthy wealthy it was a banking centre and it was known for its deposits of gold there was a strong linen and wool industry there and it was a medical centre insofar as anybody was a medical centre back in the day and they mixed the paste up of the alluvial mud that was in the two rivers which bounded Laodicea and made a paste out of it which was said if it was put on your eyes as a poultice would bring healing to your eyes a bit hard to believe that's what it was called cholerim what we'll see incidentally in a few moments I hope is that when we get to the charges that the risen Christ made against the church in Laodicea we will understand that the character of the city played a large part in the kind of condemnations of the risen Christ the charge against

Laodicea next slide please and note that there is no commendation whatsoever for the church there it is all hard going for the people of Laodicea and the only hope in the message of the risen Christ is that he gives them the opportunity to repent and I like to think that the opportunity to repent is open to anyone in any period of history any time it amazes me that more people don't take up the offer to repent but it is there and what that means is the Laodiceans could have repented could have come back to Christ come back to the things that were important and the risen Christ would have welcomed them so the risen Christ lays the charge that they are lukewarm in verse 16 of chapter 3 you're neither hot nor cold because of that I will spit you out of my mouth

[20 : 42] Nick Lucas always says at that point that he remembers when he was a boy and you know his parents were trying to broaden this kind of diet darkness and he said I put things in my mouth that I wanted to spit out immediately but he said I was also taught by my parents that public spitting is not the done thing but that's the strength of the risen Christ condemnation I will spit you out of my mouth now the reason why this charge has a particular focus is that in order to supply Laodicea with water there was an aqueduct aqueduct is a thing that carries water usually to heights some of it was underground to the city and by the time it got to the city the people all complained not only was the water loaded with minerals which you had to get kind of used to but it was lukewarm so charge of the risen

Christ you're lukewarm these people knew what lukewarm was they didn't have a fridge back then the water was lukewarm the second thing about these people is that they show us by their charges of the risen Christ that they were totally deluded verse 17 you say I am rich I have acquired wealth and do not need a thing I mean that kind of autonomy that kind of self satisfied view of life we've got everything we need you see if you've got everything you need where's God going to fit into your life you know the Bible is not I know I've got some Christian socialist friends who would differ with me on this I don't believe Jesus ever taught that wealth was intrinsically wrong what I think Jesus taught was that wealth is not good for most of us because it's a distraction in our faith journey with God I am very clear honestly and if you knew my mum you'd understand the import to this comment I am I know why God didn't allow me to become a wealthy man because he knew it would take too much of my attention in fact I have a confession to make to you when I retired I'd never lived off a pension before and I found in the first six months of retirement I couldn't think about anything but money haven't been like that all my life but I know that if I had been wealthy I would have been distracted by it and the only way this is terrible news for you the only way the Bible knows that you can break the hold of mammon in your life is to give it away which is a shattering truth isn't it especially in a time where we feel you know the days are economically uncertain these people thought they had it all deluded talked about delusion before you know how it's such a kind of sad thing when you meet somebody who's deluded

I mean the trouble is delusion is very easy to spot in another person a bit less obvious in ourselves you know George Bernard Shaw it was a wonderful quote of his said that you can tell when an Anglican churchgoer likes a good sermon because he thinks it'll do his neighbour good I mean if you ever thought that you might be in the club called deluded the self satisfaction of verse 17 is almost well it's just really sad but here are three further indictments that the risen Christ charges Laodicea with they're poor this was a banking city with great reserves of gold and the risen Christ says to them you're poor second thing is you're naked so they weren't naturalists but the reason why this charge has such a poignancy is that

Laodicea have these still do today in fact when I went there I saw a great flock of these black sheep with this wonderful silky wool which they used to shear and make this wonderful cloth out of black cloth and to say to a town that regards itself as a kind of you know the front runner in textiles you're naked was biting and the third thing he said is talked a little bit about this you're blind this was the place that thought they had the answer to people's eyesight problems all right it was a bit primitive smearing mud in your eyes there isn't Christ says to you you're blind I think there's a kind of note of brilliance in the way the risen Christ expresses himself to the church in Laodicea actually taking what they thought were their strengths and turning it upon them you think you've got everything and I think the most indicting phrase in this is where the risen

[26 : 37] Christ says to them you say I'm rich I've acquired wealth I do not need a thing and go back to if you don't need a thing where's God going to fit into your life do we see some of that in today's church largely criticized for its kind of middle class ethos etc etc have we learned to live with that kind of compromise and delusion and the risen Christ in the light of these condemnations says this one come and buy from me your traders risen Christ is saying don't get caught up in the world and it's trading but come and buy from me I take it what the risen

Christ means that's an invitation to do something which I think the risen Christ would probably say to many of us include myself in that comment and that is dear people you need to reframe your priorities I don't know whether you know it worries me about our world today that it's so fast moving that you know we have little time to kind of sit down and think about serious things and even those of us who are retired always sound like we're busy either that or bored and watch daytime television but do we ever think about you know is the Lord asking me to reframe my priorities I wonder if you've ever asked yourself that question it might be some decent homework for you then there is in crisis if you're going to come and buy from me first of all you need to buy some gold which has been purified well the bottom line is you can't get gold without heating it up to big temperatures and removing all the elements in it that would rob it of its values that's how gold is refined in the refiner's fire interesting phrase buy gold from me that's been through the refiner's fire

I think the risen Christ thought that the people of Laodicea needed to go through the refiner's fire second he said wear white clothes you make all this lovely black cloth but actually in the kingdom the wearing of white robes we've talked about this is very significant it speaks of purity of people who've been through the refiner's fire who know what it is to be faithful and to follow God faithfully and then he says buy salve for your eyes from me so that you can see I mean I don't think he was referring to the people who got eye issues when he charged them with the people who couldn't see I think these people had lost their vision for what they were in Jesus Christ and I think they lost their vision for what God intended for his church it couldn't be anything more sad than that you know on the one hand people who just kind of lost their vision and

I'm not one of those who thinks that you know the work of the church is finished once you've got your vision statement I don't think that at all but I do think that we do need our eyes opened by God and I don't think that just happens once I think I have had to have my eyes open on several occasions to my inadequacies to my sin to the things that are wrong in my life so the risen Christ then goes on and says to those whom I love how about this I rebuke and discipline see see if you go to church and all you hear about you know is God's a kind of love thing you know San Francisco 1967 the problem is you will never understand that the

God who loves you might need to discipline you occasionally you ever thought about that it's not my idea that's what the risen crisis to this church is ratified in Hebrews twice chapter 12 and verse 2 the Lord disciplines those whom he loves and if you think that's a kind of mad idea how would anybody who is loving ever discipline me then if you're a parent if God has blessed you with children say that through slightly clenched teeth God has blessed you with children you know that you don't discipline your kids because you hate them you discipline them why because you love them and what you want to do is I mean your hope is that they will grow up to be some kind of responsible

[32 : 20] Christ loving human being it's an unbelievable assignment isn't it when you think about that and you know with my own children five of them I mean I think all bar ones had a serious time in the wilderness but I'm pretty sure that you know they've come back and most of them are involved in their local churches and I just feel that's such an act of grace because I know that there are many people some of them are you who've got children who've rejected the faith that you sought to teach them and you're feeling terribly guilty about that and my heart goes out to you and you know often times it's not you know it really isn't your fault and I think it gets harder and harder

for parents if I might say so because of the intrusion of social media

I mean we had peer groups to influence to deal with social media now has kind of amplified that in a massive way so to those whom I love we have to hold on to the idea that occasionally God might need to discipline us I was a chap came to see me years ago now and he said I'm getting very worried he said why is that he said my PA and I have started catching the same train every morning into the city of London he said we had been talking together and we had been out for lunch a couple of times and I'm starting to worry that I'm having feelings for her that are not godly he said to me do you have any advice

I'm like it didn't take me a second change trains change trains one secondly you've got three children at home you start monkeying around with another woman you think of the impact on those lives started to cry and off he went thought I'd done a reasonable pastoral job next thing is wife comes to town he says he's leaving me for a younger model no stretch marks whatever I rebuke and discipline this man was found hanging by the neck in his garage three years later before that he'd been found many many times sitting in his car because he lost his job used to get a suit on every day pretend he was going to work and sit in his car in the car park in

Amersham hoping that no one would see him with a bottle of vodka now would it be helpful for me to go and personally say to him well it's your fault I wouldn't be like that I really wouldn't but I can't help seeing when people's lives fall apart like that I can't help seeing that maybe this is the Lord trying to bring him back why because he hates him no because as this verse tells us the Lord loves us and that's why he feels the need to rebuke and discipline us to those whom I love the risen Christ offers the timeless and universal option of repentance you know if there's something going wrong in your life now

I mean it's holy wheat for crying out loud if this isn't a time for repentance I don't know when would be not just saying sorry to God but turning away from the behavior that's pulling you away from God and seeking seeking the cleansing power of his holy spirit that he might remove from your heart the temptation to do wrong 1st John chapter 1 John writes if we say we have no sin we deceive ourselves same old thing delusion deception if we say we have no sin we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us but if we confess our sins God is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness you think you've got a habit that you cannot break you need to repent and then there's this amazing thing

[37 : 43] God says that if we have no sin we deceive ourselves the truth is not if we confess our sins God is faithful and just to forgive us then what and to cleanse us from every kind of wrong see I know a lot of people and I wouldn't be you know I'm not a gambling man but if I was I wouldn't mind a wager that some of you will be like this you want forgiveness but you don't want cleansing don't put your hands up but have you found yourself going back to God and seeking his forgiveness and doing the same old stuff according to a book I read you can't help it it says this book I don't believe that for a minute those whom I love God offers the timeless and universal option of repentance listen up this is holy week this is a time to really get right with

God I told the ladies and one gentleman at the midweek communion service that in the early church you could only get baptized on Easter Sunday morning once a year at dawn imagine and the season of Lent was used in two ways firstly it was used as 40 days of preparation for the catechumens that is those people who were going to be baptized on Easter day and the second thing was imagine this if you committed a serious sin in the early church you had to stand up in front of the whole congregation and tell them anybody else glad we don't do that anymore it's a time of preparation and in holy week you would be challenged by the leaders of the church have you reordered your life can we let you back into communion on

Easter Sunday what triumph that would feel if we could think like that again and then there is in crisis I'm going to come and eat with him you can't read this I don't know how many of you know Holman Hunt's famous picture two of them one in Westminster Abbey which is quite a large painting on a rear dos behind the Lord's table and the other one is a much smaller effort which is in the chapel of Keeble College in Oxford and they're virtually identical but what the risen Christ is saying here is incidentally some of you may have some of you will know that that verse behold I stand at the door and knock has been used evangelistically very often in summer camps to kind of challenge people to open the door of their heart to Christ and let him in and been a big discussion against amongst certainly evangelical theologians as to whether that's a justified use of it

I'm like if it brings somebody to Christ praise God behold I stand at the door and knock if anybody would open there I'm going to come in I'm going to eat with him eating had a massive significance in ancient culture it wasn't just about you know it'd be nice for you to come around and have steak and chips at ours this was an ultimate statement of the risen Christ wanting to share fellowship with individuals who'd repented to him who overcomes says the risen Christ they will have the right to sit with me you remember that in scripture we're told that when Jesus ascended into heaven he took his seat in heaven at the right hand of God I can't quite imagine how this works whether Jesus was saying come and sit on my knee but what

Jesus is saying is come and share in the fullness of the presence of God in Christ I really love that I love it because I can't quite imagine it but I imagine to meet the risen Christ in heaven would just be an amazing thing and to those of you who are just holding back a little bit because you know stuff's gone wrong in your life you feel like you've you know your life's been somebody put it like this you know you feel like you've been dealt a tough set of cards through your life and you don't know why and you would love to understand it why and you might go to your grave worrying about what you don't know about and probably can't know about one day says 1st Corinthians 13 you will know as you are fully known you'll be welcomed into the presence of God to sit in the honoured guest seat as Jesus did get a little more of that in Hebrews about

[43 : 17] God sitting on the right hand of God so here's my advice to you and that is tune your spiritual antennae in two directions firstly I think some of us need to hear from God say well that's never happened to me before it doesn't mean because it's never happened it can't happen now it can't happen tonight tune your spiritual antennae that you might hear what Jesus has been saying to you in these last few weeks but there's another direction that God wants to hear from you I mean is this the moment been together now for seven weeks

I can't believe it can you people keep saying to me you must be glad I'm like no I'm sad I'm very sad because I think you know just to be together with the people of God sitting around God's word is such a blessing blessing and maybe all this is working up to either you hearing from God something you need to hear about your life or God needs to hear from you maybe repentance and maybe God's calling you to a different kind of future never forgotten my friend Mike another Mike quite a few of us who worked at Bentall's the big store in Kingston in Surrey and if any his family kind of went to church occasionally he didn't really go with them or anything like that he's kind of been around in his background a bit and he went out to buy a sandwich at lunch time and it started to pour down with rain so he dashed into

Kingston Parish Church just across the road from Bentall's and in a moment God called him to ordination and when he told me the store I said you know did you have a bit of a job persuading the bishop and his honchos you know that this was some authentic deal no God changed the course of his life because for the first time in his life he listened to God oh still small voice of calm I love that I need that and there are times when God needs to hear from me to say I turn away from my sin and I want to walk with you that there will be a day when you will come in metaphorically and eat with me listen

I have loved these seven weeks and I'm still slightly well totally humbled and slightly confused that you come back in such numbers week by week it makes me think you know is there a need for this and I'm not saying you know need to listen to my cue I'm just saying a need for us to kind of try and get to grips with scripture and I hope you know we'll have some more conversations with church leaders in town and see if we can kind of do something that scratches you where you're rich maybe a little later in the year and if we did it would be lovely to see you so let me end by praying with you and then Julian will come and lead us in a song together and then my friend Martin suggested this we might just leave a little time for anybody to say anything they wanted to

I don't want eulogies you know I really don't but I mean you know asking questions making suggestions how we could make it better etc etc so let's let's pray anyway our gracious Lord we we lament what we see in the life of that church in Laodicea and father the indictment that these were people who thought they had everything but in your eyes had nothing father that's a challenge that in our generally material culture cuts us to the heart and father we pray that through this teaching lord through the ministry of your holy spirit we pray lord that you would show us where we need to return to you and give us the strength and the courage to do so and lord here are people who in their delusion that they had everything couldn't really find the right space in their lives for you and father

[49 : 16] I pray for any brother or sister in the house tonight who knows that's true of them lord that they might hear your hopeful gentle call to repentance lord to recalibrate lives that are dedicated to you perfect submission all is at rest lord give us the faith to believe that if we submit to you we will find that rest of which your word speaks so father we thank you for this time together thank you for those who've made it possible and lord thank you for those who faithfully pulled up here week by week and lord as i pray your blessing upon them this easter i pray lord that they may be blessed and lord that your blessing in them might spill over to the people around them father god we pray that you would come down and minister to us and lord that those of us who need to speak to you lord that you would hear from us tonight maybe whenever in your time lord in your time through jesus christ our lord and the people who agreed said together amen