

You make me want to throw up

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 16 August 2020

Preacher: David Calderwood

[0 : 00] There's an old saying, the secret to good living is to show moderation in all things. If you're a high age or thereabouts, you'll have heard that lots of times.

My father will live by that up to a point. Don't go overboard. Don't go to extremes. Don't become obsessive. Don't become overly invested in anything.

Show moderation in all things. In lots of ways, it makes sense, doesn't it? The question I'm going to put you now is, can we abide to our commitment to Christ?

It doesn't work in the church. So what are the rest of the words with this? Alcohol is fine. Just don't get wasted.

Getting fit and looking good is important. Just don't become a gym junkie or obsessed with your appearance. Fast food is good. Just don't have it all the time. Fine to be passionate about your hobby or gaming online, but just don't let it take over your life.

[1 : 08] But is that good enough when we talk to our commitment to Jesus? About our commitment to the body of Christ, this local church that we are over here?

I suspect that it does describe how a lot of Christians think you live. And so you hear things like this. Well, it's absolutely essential for me to have Jesus in my life. To know His forgiveness, to know His acceptance, to know the promise of heaven. Following Jesus is an absolutely important part of the agenda of my life.

It's great to be involved in the church. It's great to be involved in this church. With like-minded people. People with like-minded children. So my children can live with your children.

All those things are really good. But we need to remember it's also important not to go overboard. Sometimes Christians just go overboard.

[2 : 16] Becoming too obsessive about all this talk about hearing God's word. Constantly talking about growing and maturing by addressing sin and pursuing holiness.

Constantly pushing us to speak the truth in love to one another. And not to exist with broken relationships. Pushing us to be a distinct counterculture with our family and friends and neighbors and workmates.

Yes, it's all good, but sometimes it can just be too obsessive. Moderation in all things. Well friends, I want to say to you this morning, the words of Jesus cut through this comfortable, lukewarm view of commitment to Him.

As He says to His church in Laodicea, and wait for it, brace for it, You make me sick. The old versions have vomit. You make me want to throw up.

You make me want to spew. However you look at that word, that's a very strong word. It's not a language we would normally speak to people. And here's the challenge this morning.

[3 : 34] This is something we need to consider personally. Is it a possibility that that is what Jesus might be saying to you this afternoon?

Is it possible that Jesus might think of our church as a unit together? I'm going to pause now and just pray so that we might be able to proceed with these confronting words.

Let me pray. Lord, your word always challenges us. It burns us. And particularly now, Lord, we need your help.

We pray that we might genuinely be able to sit under it. Begging you, Lord, even as we face these confronting words, to expose ourselves to ourselves. So we might see ourselves as you see us.

And that we might be able to turn to you and make corrections as they're necessary. Help us to hear. Help us to thank you, Lord, for pursuing us and pointing out where we need to be corrected.

[4 : 40] And I pray in Jesus' name. Now, as I normally do, and have done through these seven letters, we need to do some revision just to bring us up to date and get fresh again what we're trying

to do in this series, this Church Reset series based on Revelation 1-3.

And the aim of the series, you might remember, is to get us thinking primarily. Thinking about what? Well, thinking about our strengths and weaknesses as a church. Thinking about how we think about church.

And where necessary, making changes in either our own thinking or our practices to get it here. So we might bring our thinking and our practices into line with what Jesus wants and demands of his church.

And we said that revelation is, by definition, the word means, is a revealing of the events of our world from God's perspective. And we said right through, it's a real eye-opener.

It's a real eye-opener to see how Christ thinks about his church. Even now, as he rules the world from heaven, as Lord of this heaven and earth, the church is central to his attention.

[5 : 49] It's his passion. It's his passion. Always has been. Always will be. It's central to God's purposes and salvation. And then it was a real eye-opener on top of that.

In these seven letters, remember we said that seven symbolizes completeness? And so Jesus is writing to his church in all generations. He's died for community, resurrection community, in local churches like this one.

And what does Jesus demand? He demands that local churches like this reflect his passion. My passion is this, says Jesus, and I expect to see it reflected in churches.

And so these seven letters together, as I've said over weeks now, have become a diagnostic snapshot of the health of our church and churches generally.

And they've been confronting, haven't they? Jesus demands that we maintain our first love, our passion for them, and that we don't give our hearts away to somebody else.

[6 : 58] We don't allow someone else or something else to steal our hearts. We've got to be committed to serving Jesus, even if it means feeling the hatred and exclusion of this world.

We've got to avoid creeping compromise, things that would just generally knock the edges off our distinctiveness as Christ's people.

Challenging words, exposing words. But the beauty of these letters is that Jesus doesn't write us off when our failures are exposed. Rather, in each of these letters, he generously and graciously calls us back to himself.

He calls us back into that struggle to be faithful to him. And he does so with the promise of help and healing through the power of the Holy Spirit within us.

And he does so with a wonderful encouragement of being with him and being like him in heaven.

The letters all end up in the same place. There's everything to gain from hearing the words of Jesus and responding to them.

[8 : 09] Now, without sort of introduction and a bit of revision, let's jump into these verses here now at the church at Laodicea. And ask the question, what on earth is it that would make Jesus say that he wants to throw up?

It's not language used to people, is it? The answer is very clear here. It's given right before us.

What makes Jesus want to throw up? Insipid or lukewarm Christians. Verses 15 and 16. Now, as with every one of these letters, Jesus starts by saying, I know.

Jesus clearly knows every thought, every action, every attitude within his church. And more than that, he knows the local situation.

He is, after all, the Lord of the universe. And he uses the detail of the local situation. Once again, we've seen it every week, to reinforce his point. So, this hot and cold thing.

[9 : 16] Well, the city of Laodicea had a problem with water supply. On the north side of the city were some very, very famous and well-used hot thermal springs.

The water was laden with lime. Beautiful to bathe in, but everybody knew that if you tried to drink it, you would immediately vomit. Hot, laden with lime, looks sparkling, looked delicious.

But it would make you throw up. Those springs were very close to the city. Their drinking water, however, had to come about 10 kilometers from the south of the city.

And it was piped in earthenware pipes. It came from a mountain spring. And as it left that spring, it was cold and clear and fresh. 10 kilometers later, it was tepid.

It was lukewarm. Refreshing when it starts. Satisfying, but by the time it got to the city, it was no longer either satisfying or refreshing.

[10:28] In spite of how it looked. So, what's the point here that Jesus made? Well, I think it's really important to say that Jesus is not just trying to find something positive to say.

It's not as if he's saying, well, okay, here's the comparison between there's cold here and there's hot here and in between you're lukewarm. And so what I really want to say to you is that lukewarm is better than being cold, but it's not quite as good as being hot.

So I want you to move that way a bit. I don't think that's the comparison at all. I don't think that's the comparison at all. He's not encouraging them to think moderation. What he's doing is he's calling them out because they were insipid.

They were nothing type Christians. They were neither refreshing nor were they therapeutic or healing. Neither refreshing and satisfying to Jesus nor healing and soul refreshing to their city. They were just there, but they were nothing. So what are the symptoms then of being lukewarm Christians? Well, again, we don't have any details of what actually was going on in the church, but the picture stands very clear without that.

[11:52] Clearly, again, like some other churches, they had lost their distinctive, they had lost their shape as Christians. They'd lost their gospel identity.

They seem to have lost a distinctive Christian lifestyle. And it seems to me that they're neither clearly identified with and shaped by Christ and the gospel, nor are they sort of clearly stepping away from the gospel and being shaped by their society.

It seems to be a little bit of this, a little bit of that. Moderation. Trying to do both. And it was expressed in sort of cool indifference and half-hearted commitment to Jesus.

Moderation in all things applied to the church. And so I think, as I said in my introduction, we can say this about the Christians at Laodicea. They were moderately committed to Jesus.

Moderately influenced by Jesus. Moderately committed to his body, the church. They were quick to identify as followers of Jesus, but not interested at all in a whole of life, wholehearted response of obedience and loyalty to the mercies of Christ.

[13:19] The sort of response that Paul speaks about in Romans chapter 12. They were happily identifying with Jesus, but careful not to do or say anything that would open up a gap between them and their non-Christian friends or their workmates.

Or their neighbors. Or their neighbors. Or their wider family. Or their wider family. They're having to make a lot of it being part of the church. Yeah, this is a really good church. But then you've got to understand that, well, if there's a family event on, a biological family event, then that really always needs to take priority.

You see how it works? And I suspect you'll find it very familiar. And I suspect you'll find it very familiar.

They were moderate in terms of their commitment to Jesus, but he's far from moderate in his response to them. I'm trying to think of an illustration to ram this point home, and this is the best I could come up with.

You can deal with what you like. But it's as if Jesus is saying, look, I'm not going to be that little puppy dog that everybody admires, everybody pats, but nobody really takes seriously.

[14:37] To be treated like that, says Jesus, really makes me sick to the pit of my stomach. Really sickens me. Let's make it personal.

Really personal. And I assure you I've been doing this for myself in the last 10 days as I've been thinking and preparing this. If you're a Christian, and most of you here this afternoon would say gladly you are a Christian.

If you're a Christian and you're happy to come to church, happy to talk about Jesus, but won't be all in with Jesus, giving them your heart, giving them your time, your energy, your resources, in obedient service and ministry.

If you want to say that, but hold back, then it's likely Jesus will be thinking of you, boy, you make me sick.

Why? Because it's the opposite of what Jesus died for you for. He died for you to make you passionate in commitment to him.

[15:53] So we need to do the taste test. And you should do it for yourself.

Ask yourself, well, what do your neighbors think of you? What would your neighbors think if you asked them, you know, tell me, what do you see in me? What would your neighbors, your wider family members, your workmates, your school friends, your university mates, or wherever you have

relationships?

What would they say if you give them the opportunity to say, well, what is it you see that identifies me? What is it you think shapes me?

Would they say your identity and meaning and purpose and focus on life? Would they say your lifestyle and orientation? Would they say the way that you use your money and your leisure time? Would they say any of those or all of those as being significantly different from what they do? Or they think? Or would they see you and say, well, actually, no, I think you're pretty much like me. You've accumulated all the same sort of toys as I've accumulated here.

[17:07] You show the same sort of evidence of where you spend your money, where you spend your time, how you view life. I recognize that you do have some different lifestyle choices.

I know you go to church and I understand that you don't swear and you don't get drunk and you don't tell dirty jokes. But apart from that, yeah, I think you're pretty much like me. Wow.

That would be a terrible conclusion, wouldn't it? If this is you and I tell you again, I've been considering this a lot over the last two weeks.

If this is you. It sickens Jesus. Because he died to free you from this empty way of life.

Remember one Peter chapter one, this empty way of life handed down to you from your forefathers. He died to free us from that. And it would sicken him to say that way he has died for people that for whom he paid such a high cost.

[18:17] I've just strayed back into that. He died to make you passionate for him. Another symptom of being lukewarm is comfortable self-sufficiency.

Look at verse 17. And just feel how familiar this verse is, these phrases are. I mean, it just hit me between the eyes as I was preparing.

For you say, right? Remember there's a contrast here of what Jesus says and then what they say. Or the other way around, what they say and then what Jesus says. For you say, I'm rich.

I've prospered. I've done well for myself. And I'm sitting pretty. I need nothing. Life's good. I Salad. It's a reality to go.

Aninho. Stunning words, aren't they. It was a famous banking center and it was reported to have massive quantities of gold bullion stored in vaults around the city.

[19:44] It was also famous for the manufacture of high quality clothing, sort of stuff that was highly desirable, fashion stuff, locally grown black wool.

It was also famous for a medical school where they had come up with an anointment to offset the development of glaucoma.

It was a pretty advanced city. It was a very prosperous city. It was a self-made city. There was also a strong Jewish community in the city, apparently about 20,000 of them.

And it worked like this. They, that is the Jewish community, attributed their wealth to God's special blessing of them.

And the wealth of the city, by derivative means God blessed the city because of them. In other words, they looked around and saw their comfortable security as evidence of God's blessing.

[20:48] But in their comfortable worldliness, they were totally blind to the real condition.

And now we hear what Jesus says. Not really realizing you're wretched, pitiable, poor, blind, and naked.

They'd worked hard, these people. Genuinely worked hard. They'd built their nest egg. Life was good. They were secure, comfortable.

All the creature comforts they wanted. And because it's a banking sector, then I can say that they had invested in all sorts of securities in their city, in their culture.

And perhaps that was the problem because you see then maybe Jesus was just another investment. To expand their portfolio. To spread the risk, as investors talk about.

[22:04] Or perhaps even to add in a surefire life insurance policy. So they invest here, and they invest here, and they invest here, and they invest here, and they invest in Jesus.

And Jesus is scathing in response to them.

Rather than being rich and respectable, Jesus calls them bankrupt and pathetic. Rather than being healthy and having good eyes to see life as it is, Jesus calls them sickly and blind.

Rather than being well dressed and fashionable in their black wool and garments. Jesus calls them shameful, naked.

Friend, is that you? Busy building your treasure by investing in Jesus. Now, don't doubt that for a moment.

[23 : 11] But just as passionately building your treasure in the security and the currency of the world. And Jesus says that sort of self-sufficiency just makes a monthly throw up.

Why is there a lack of passion for Jesus? Because there's a lack of need for Jesus in their lives and in their thinking.

So how do we reset our spiritual thermostats? The situation in Laodicea is extreme, but far from hopeless. Verse 18. Verse 18. As in all these letters.

Jesus then speaks to them and begs them to turn around. Turn things around. Verse 18.

So how do we reset our spiritual thermostats?

[24 : 46] Well, first is to desire Jesus alone. He's the currency that never devalues. People turn to gold in times of trouble.

That's happening at the minute through the pandemic. Price of gold soaring. It seemed to be secure. Well, in ancient Near East, it wasn't always secure because there's a lot of impurities in gold.

And you could be buying something that wasn't really what you were buying. Jesus says he's pure gold. Absolutely pure gold. You're getting your money's worth in Jesus' way. And again, the history of the text is, the history of the city is written into the text.

Because Jesus really said to them, hey, you guys, your security for the future is not in gold bullion in vaults in this city. It's in me. It's in me.

The true treasure. So it's as if Jesus is saying to them, hey, guys, be passionate in doing business with me.

[25 : 52] Invest everything you have in me. Come to me for gold. Come to me for treasure. And you'll have full restoration into close fellowship with Jesus forever.

These last verses are all about fellowship and being with Jesus and the promise of being like him forever in heaven. So Jesus is saying, look, if you want to hoard currency, hoard my currency and you'll be truly rich.

Make it your desire to be dressed by me in white garments, which we said over the last few weeks is the cloak of justification, acceptance by God.

Righteousness. Come to me and be dressed by me, says Jesus, and you'll be dressed in righteousness that will never go out of fashion, never wear out. Will never leave you embarrassed or ashamed.

Apply my ointment and genuinely take away your blindness so you can see the world as false treasure and you can see it as false intimacy and see me as the real treasure and lasting intimacy.

[27 : 10] So the point is very simply, when they assess themselves in physical terms, they genuinely could say, I need nothing. But once they realize their spiritual bankruptcy, their helplessness, their offensiveness towards God, then they were in such dire straits that they could no longer be half-hearted towards Jesus.

They needed to throw themselves on his mercy. They needed to respond to his mercy and say, wow, I've been chasing security here when all the while it's been here.

Passionate to hoard what only I can give you that's worthwhile, says Jesus. Be passionate in that. And the second thing then is nurture life-shaping relationship with Jesus.

That will do more to reset our spiritual thermostats than anything else. Verses 19 through to 21. Those whom I love, I reprove and discipline.

So be zealous and repent, says Jesus. Behold, I stand at the door and knock.

[28 : 35] If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come into him and eat with him and he with me. Just as Jesus' threat to spew them out was incredibly severe, so his promise of restoration is incredibly generous.

But it requires thoughtful, genuine repentance, including decisive commitment to start listening to the voice of Jesus in verse 20.

Now this verse 20 has been in trouble for Christians over the years. The picture is often that there is a door, Jesus is standing outside, meek and mild, unable to do anything, until somebody on the inside happens to open the door to him.

I don't think that's the picture at all. The picture is this, that he's there banging loudly on the door, not begging admission, but to get your attention.

I was really interested. I didn't say this this morning, but when I was pondering this verse, a guy turned up, a poster, one of those Star Trek guys turned up at my office door.

[29 : 47] And he said, oh, I was just about to leave, and then I saw you in there. I've been ringing the doorbell, I didn't hear. I was banging on the door to try and get your attention. And I thought, that's it? Jesus is banging on the door, not because he's somehow or other stuck, but because he wants the attention of his people.

Because it goes on then to say, behold, I stand at the door and knock, if anyone hears my voice. In other words, I'm there, I'm trying to get your attention, and if you'll give me your attention, if you'll hear my voice, then I will come in, in other words, I'll come in and restore fellowship with you.

And it will be rich fellowship, as it's spelled out there in those two verses. What's the voice of Christ? What's the word of the gospel? What's the word of the gospel? Being shaped by the gospel.

And being shaped by the gospel brings a full measure of God's blessing. Now we go back to verse 14, which I skipped over, because we'll see now why Jesus introduces himself in the terminology, which he does introduce himself to this letter, to this church.

He's saying, listen to my voice. What sort of voice is it? Well, listen to the words of Jesus. What sort of words are they? Well, the words come from the beginning of God's creation.

[31 : 09] What was the start of God's creation way back in Genesis 1? God said, God's word brought order and structure out of chaos and nothingness.

God's creative word is there to recreate his people, if only we'll hear and ask. When do we say amen?

We say amen at the end of a prayer. In a sense, that's the last word, isn't it? Jesus is going to say the last word in our universe, the last word which will bring to completion God's purposes in salvation.

So we've got the creative word of Jesus, powerful and renewing, and we've got the saving word of Jesus. And in between those two events, the first and last words into our universe, we have the faithful and true witness, the one who will speak the truth in love into our lives.

It's his word. That will renew us. That will turn us around. That will reset our spiritual thermostats. That in itself will give us the passion he calls us to have.

[32 : 21] Friends, Christ invites you to hear his words this afternoon. And as I said this morning, whatever you hear today, please don't go away thinking to yourself, oh, the preacher was just having another whinge, trying to get us more involved, more commitment, and trying to gee every day out.

That might well be the result of what you hear today, but that's not my motivation and it's not the pathway. If that's the result, then so be it, providing you've gone and done business with Jesus. This is Jesus begging you to invest your heart, your time, your money, your physical and emotional resources, everything you have, invest in me, says Jesus.

And the dividend you'll get for that investment will be eternal and limitless. So finish enough with your money idea.

We're very familiar with scams these days, aren't we? I get three or four phone calls a day. It just drives me nuts. But Jesus is saying, don't get sucked in by the massive scam, which is the investment package offered by this world.

[33 : 35] It says satisfaction, happiness, fulfillment, the good life. Come to Jesus for his, and take on his investment package.

Because remember, that's exactly the scam that Jesus died to free you from. As I was saying this morning, two weeks ago I was perplexed because I couldn't understand why we were just on the cusp of resuming physical churching and a couple of infections, a few infections here, meant we had to push it back two weeks and I couldn't quite understand why, Lord, why all that effort seemed to be gone to waste.

And in the middle of the night last night, I woke up and I thought, well, I don't know why I thought it, but anyway, I just thought, well, maybe, maybe the Lord has done that because he wanted to hear, he wanted this letter to be the first thing we heard as we come back together as physical churching. I don't know, I can't read God's problems, absolutely, but it does fit. So let me pray. Lord, as I prayed at the start, I pray again because we will have trouble hearing your word in this.

It seems, potentially seems so harsh. And yet, Lord, it is coming from the depth of your love that you pursue us. You reprove us, you discipline those you love.

[35 : 02] You tell us here in that very letter. Lord, help us to be disciplined. Help us to hear that word of challenge. Help us to ask the hard questions of ourselves individually and of our church family as a unit so we might bring ourselves back into line and be passionate for you and in the service of you in a way that would delight you, not cause you to feel ill.

And I pray in Jesus' name. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.