

The Church of Laodicea

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: 07 January 2024

Preacher: Wayne Thiessen

- [0 : 00] Good morning. Welcome to the service this morning. And a blessed new year to each of you. As we have our first service of 2024.
- We have to learn to write a new number, right? And as we switch years, it's a natural way for us to pause and to reflect on God's faithfulness in my life.
- And to give glory to God for His faithfulness. And as we look back at 2023, each one of us here this morning would have a different story to tell.
- We would all have our own story of the things God allowed in your life. But there would be a common thread, God's faithfulness through all of it.
- Amen? That is whom we serve. And we are privileged.
- [1 : 29] And so with that, wishing you a blessed year ahead as we continue to walk with God. To serve Him. To trust Him.
- As we do not even know what tomorrow holds. Never mind next month and the end of the year.
- We don't. But God does. And we trust Him. Thank you, Brother Willie, for reading the Scriptures for us.
- As we look at the seventh letter to the churches. The letter to the church of the Laodiceans.
- And we are going to try to finish off this section of Revelations this morning. So Jake, can you bring up the picture or map?
- [2 : 28] I'll just point that out again. Again. So we have Laodicea here.
- And again, this is modern day Turkey. Back then it would have been Asia Minor. And we started with the first letter in Ephesus.
- The early church. The church that had left their first love. Remember that. And then we went on to Smyrna.
- The persecuted church. And then to Pergamos. The church that compromised. That gave in to the world's enticements.
- And then Tyreterra. The Roman Catholic Church represented there. And then Sardis. The next one.
- [3 : 28] The Reformation Church. The awakening. Breaking away from the Catholic system and coming back to life. And then Philadelphia.
- The revival church. And which marks many of our theologians. And many of our famous preachers in the last several hundred years lived in that era.
- In the revival church. And then today we have Laodicea. And it's called the worldly church. The worldly church.
- And so some have proposed that that between all seven churches the whole of the church age is represented.

They each represent a segment. Again that is not in scripture. But there are definitely some relevant applications that way.

[4 : 33] And so we have to hold that loosely. And so they would say that the worldly church Laodicea would be the year 2000 or sorry 1900 onward.

Till present. Is the dates that they would put in there. So we have the church to the Laodicean. Thank you Jake.

As we begin the new year.

What would you say was your spiritual temperature? Do you have a spiritual thermometer?

Is that food for thought?

[5 : 40] Minus 60. There's hope for you brother. We would probably all have a different answer, right?

But do we stop and think? Am I on fire for the Lord? What is my temperature? And then with those thoughts.

How do I gauge? How do I measure? My temperature. The doctors point a little unit at your forehead and get your body temperature.

Or on your arm. But how do I get my spiritual temperature? That's also worth thinking through. Is it?

Is it by comparing myself to others? If it is, then we're in trouble.

[7 : 06] Is it? By how many works I do? Bill just talked about works a little bit. And we had it in Sunday school. That works are the evidence of our faith.

So can we gauge our spiritual temperature by our works? Yes or no? Depends?

To a degree? There is definitely a relationship there, is there not? And as much as we may or may not want to admit that.

But ultimately, how does God measure it? How does God measure it? And as I pondered on these things, the only answer I could come up with is that we can measure our spiritual temperature by the intimacy of my relationship with my Savior.

Should I say that again? We can measure it by the depth or intimacy of my walk with Christ. Which leads to good works.

[8 : 34] Always. And the primary principle or teaching in this letter is that the church has become lukewarm.

And we want to talk about that a little bit this morning as we work through this. So keep that in mind. Spiritual temperature.

Laodicea. The seventh, I guess, city of the seven mentioned there.

It was a banking center. A very rich town or city. Many very wealthy people living there.

Had a very well-known medical school. Was very famous for eye medication. Ointment for the eyes.

[9 : 50] And they also manufactured rich garments of wool. Black wool. And were known to have mineral streams nearby that they used as well.

And so a little bit of background on Laodicea. We have no evidence that Paul was ever there.

But Paul mentions this church in his letter to the Colossians. Colossians. And why don't we turn there as an introduction.

Colossians. Colossians chapter 2. Verse 1.

It's Paul writing. He says, For I want you to know what a great conflict I have for you and those in Laodicea.

[11 : 05] And for as many as have not seen my face in the flesh. So Paul is opening up here and saying, I want you to know the great conflict or turmoil in me regarding the church in Colossae and in Laodicea.

And that then he says, You have not seen my face in the flesh. I have not been physically with you. So Paul is burdened for this church. And in chapter 4.

Verse 15. He says, Greet the brethren who are in Laodicea and Nymphos and the church that is in his house.

And now when this epistle, that would be the Colossian epistle, is read among you, see that it is also read in the church of the Laodiceans. And that you likewise read the epistle from Laodicea.

And from this verse, we would assume there was a letter to the church of Laodicea. Or Paul had written to them.

[12 : 25] We don't know any more about that. We know it's not in Scripture. But he does mention here a letter written to the Laodiceans. And please read that in the church in Colossae as well.

So that's about all we know there. That Paul was burdened for this church. Back then already. So that's a little bit of background there.

And then as Jesus introduces himself, he says, And to the angel of the church of the Laodiceans write, These things says the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the beginning of the creation of God.

What does the word Amen mean? Does anyone know? So be it.

Yeah. I agree. I'm in full agreement. And it's a reference to Jesus Christ and to his sovereignty and the certainty of his words.

[13 : 39] So be it. It will be. And what he is about to write is reflected. So be it. And so Jesus' words are always true and will always come to pass.

His promises. So it's in the title here, The Amen. So a description of our Lord Jesus Christ. The faithful and true witness.

Very self-explanatory. He is faithful and he is true. And then lastly, the beginning of the creation of God.

And out of this, some have twisted Scripture to teach that Jesus is created. And that is wrong.

Jesus is eternal as part, one of the three people of the Godhead, three persons of the Godhead, of the Trinity. He has been forever before.

[14 : 51] In fact, Scripture is very clear that God created through Jesus Christ. And all things that were made were made by Jesus.

And in Genesis chapter 1, we read that God spoke and it was. Jesus is the Word and it was.

Jesus created. And so hence we have here the beginning of the creation is the more that Jesus is before all creation.

Or as the Young's Living Translation says, He is the chief of creation. He's behind it.

He's over it. And so hence, that is the thought here that Jesus is before the creation. And then He introduces the content of the letter to this church.

[16 : 07] and He says, I know your works that you are neither cold nor hot. I could wish you were cold or hot.

So then, because you are lukewarm and neither cold nor hot, I will vomit you out of my mouth. let me ask you a question.

Does God desire for you to be cold? I see a lot of nods going, no.

And this passage, this verse is not suggesting that God desires for you to be cold, but He would rather that you did not profess Christ than profess Him and have no life to it.

You were either on fire for the Lord or were admitting I'm not a believer. God does not like straddling the fence.

[17 : 33] there is no power in the life of someone who claims to be a believer and there is no power there.

There is no victory. Lukewarm. And God says, I hate it to the point that I would vomit it out.

me call that dot. It makes me nauseated. The illustration that is often brought in is that that the hot springs, the mineral springs that were outside of this town, the water of those hot springs heavy with minerals were piped in to town and by the time the water got to the city it was lukewarm and when you drank of that mineral water it made you nauseated.

It made you want to vomit. Whereas if you went to the spring to the source and you drank the hot mineral water it was good. That's a physical application that these people might have understood as they received this letter.

the spiritual meaning of course is to our walk with God hot or cold.

[19 : 39] It's interesting this church has no praise of the seven letters this is the only church that Jesus has nothing positive to say about.

That's reason for concern is it not? But as we go through this I want to bring our attention to one factor that all seven churches have in common.

Does anyone here know what that is? What do all seven have in common? Anyone venture?

Sure? It overcomes? Yeah, that's in all seven.

one. My reference is down a little bit different line. I know your deeds. They all are a lamp on a lampstand.

[20 : 54] Jesus in chapter once as he walks among the lampstands.

And so the church in Laodicea still has a light that is burning. There are true believers there.

Otherwise, like one of the letters says, I will come and remove your lampstand if you don't repent. This lampstand has not been removed. And so hence, we have to look at this letter.

These, he is speaking to believers here that are struggling. And they become, many of them at least, lukewarm in their faith.

what is lukewarmness look like in our lives?

[22 : 10] Can you help me out? What does it look like when I'm lukewarm? No care for the lost.

That would be one aspect. Mediocre. Happy go lucky. Flav.

shallow. Lack of spiritual disciplines. Would you have an example, Trudy?

Prayer and Bible reading? Any more? You guys are doing it better than I could.

this is real stuff. Is it not? And so it's anything that hinders me from a healthy walk with Jesus Christ.

[23 : 35] Ultimately, that's what it boils down to. it keeps us from maturing in the faith.

It keeps us from being useful to God during our time here on earth as we're not maturing in our walk with Him.

and it does affect, like was mentioned, our works for Him. Our spiritual temperature. Let's turn to Hebrews chapter 5 for a moment.

Let's read a few verses here. Hebrews 5 verses 12 through 14. He says, for though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you again the first principles of the oracles of God, and you have come to need milk and not solid food.

For everyone who partakes only of milk is unskilled in the word of righteousness, for he is a babe. But solid food belongs to those who are of full age, that is, those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil.

[25 : 21] What was your temperature gauge when you first became a believer? was that red bubble at the top?

More so? Many, if not all of us, were on fire, excited, peace, joy.

Wow, what God has done in my life. And where is it today? Has it cooled off?

Where does God want it to be? See, in Hebrews, the audience is being admonished for their lack of spiritual growth.

And he says by this time, and we're not sure how many years have gone by, but this time, you ought to be teachers. You ought to be skilled in the word of God, able to discern, to teach others.

[26 : 38] But by reason, let me read that again, by reason of use, have their senses exercised. And so, what he is saying is that solid food belongs to those who have put it to use and who have spent much time in God's word and have learned to discern good and evil.

But to the audience in Hebrews, he says, you're still babes. You need to be taught again the elementary principles of coming to faith.

And so, I can't help but think the Laodiceans would fit in here. And to the author of Hebrews, whether it's Paul or someone else, but he is appalled by this and disappointed.

He's disappointed. And so, Paul was human. How does God look down upon this?

And surely, the disappointment is greater. As he looks at us, what does he see? Lukewarmness.

[28 : 15] I could wish you were hot or cold. Cold or hot. And because you're neither, I will vomit you out of my mouth.

And by saying that, I think, if you do not repent, I would remove your lampstand. hand. Verse 17, because you say, I am rich and have become wealthy and have need of nothing, and do not know that you are wretched, miserable, poor, blind, and naked.

What a contrast. You say, I'm rich and have become wealthy and have need of nothing.

I don't think there is in history ever an era, a time period where people have physically all their needs met like today.

And we just went through celebrating Christmas where we often exchange gifts, and you wonder, what should I buy the guy because he has everything.

[30 : 00] Is it true? There's a danger there. There's a danger there.

When that attitude sets in, I have everything. I don't need to rely on God. My physical needs are all met.

I don't need God. Yes, I confess God, and I go to church, but in real life, I don't need God because my needs are met.

That's the description we're reading here. Lukewarmness. But in reality, Jesus says, you don't realize that you are wretched.

What does wretched mean? In low German, it's miserable yet.

[31 : 20] In miserable yet wrak. like a filthy rag. Yeah, something down that line. You don't realize that you're wretched, miserable, poor, blind, spiritually blind, and naked, referring to being clothed with righteousness.

So, there's a deception that's represented here, that we think we have it all together, we have it all made, we're self-sufficient, and we don't realize our true condition.

This is writing to the church of Laodicea back 1900 years ago. Close to 2000 years ago.

A church that existed back then was struggling with this. And prophetically, I think it nails where many, many believers in the world are at today.

So, it's cause for us to ask some questions on our spiritual temperature. Jesus gives counsel, and he says, I counsel you to buy from me gold refined in the fire that you may be rich, and white garments that you may be clothed, that the shame of your nakedness may not be revealed, and anoint your eyes with eye salve, that you may see.

[33 : 30] Three, three different recommendations in this counsel. Buy from me gold refined in the fire.

Isaiah 55 verse 1. Let's turn there. I can't, can't quote it accurately.

Isaiah 55 verse 1. He says, Ho, everyone who thirsts, come to the waters, and you who have no money, come buy and eat, yes, come buy wine and milk, without money and without price.

Why do you spend money for what is not bread and for what does not satisfy? buy. It's an invitation to come to the Lord Jesus Christ.

It's an invitation to faith. And he says, come and buy. And Jesus says, buy from me gold refined in the fire or faith.

[34 : 45] secondly, and white garments that you may be clothed, that the shame of your nakedness may not be revealed.

gold. When is the last time you felt shame about something you did or thought? It might have even been this morning.

At least recently, as all of us are humanity.

And when we fail our Lord, we feel shame. But the righteousness of Christ covers that shame. And to be clothed in his righteousness, to recognize that without him, I stumble and I fall and I do things that I'm ashamed of.

And Adam and Eve, when they took of the fruit, what's the first thing they did? They felt shame and they realized they were naked and they made clothes for themselves.

[36 : 16] It's symbolic of our need to be dressed in righteousness. The righteousness of Christ. So Jesus says, come and by.

Come to me. He is our righteousness. And thirdly, eye solve that you may see.

Anoint your eyes. And this would have hit them right where they lived because they were world famous for their eye solve, for their medical abilities.

And Jesus says, I've got better stuff. I've got stuff that works. Come to me and your spiritual eyes will be opened and you will come to life.

And so that is the counsel that he brings upon them. as many as I love, I rebuke and chasten.

[37 : 26] Therefore, be zealous and repent. And so he is speaking to the church in Laodicea, those that I love, those that are mine, I will rebuke and chasten.

That's directly out of Hebrews chapter 12. And whom the Lord loves, he will discipline and bring back to him.

And he says, if the Lord does not, it means you are not a son. You can read that for yourselves in Hebrews chapter 12.

And so he's repeating it here, as many as I love, I rebuke and chasten. Therefore be zealous and repent. Recognize, recognize the state that you're in.

I believe a lesson for us is that as we live in our society, wherever the Lord takes you, we tend to adopt and integrate into the world around us.

[38 : 53] God's love. God's love. That's what I see happen here. And I think that's the danger to us, that we gradually become like them, lukewarm.

And we learn not to depend on the Lord, but rather on our wealth and all that we have, self-reliability, reliance.

Verse 20, Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come into him and dine with him and he with me.

This has commonly been used as an evangelistic verse and may have that element, but in the context here, he is speaking to believers and he is saying, I want to fellowship with you.

I want a depth of relationship with you. And he says, I'm outside knocking to come in to dine with you. This is the context.

[40 : 24] Jesus coveting, desiring intimacy with each of his children. And he's very bold here, very direct.

And maybe some of the people in Laodicea have been shocked at the words of Christ. But I am a believer. I do profess your name.

But what is my walk like? Is Jesus jealous? You know, for those of us that are married, I'm going to pick on the marriage here this morning.

If there's a breakdown in fellowship in your marriage, what happens? I think we all know, right?

It cools off. Our marriage struggles. And we're finding ourselves drifting. And if one spouse is pursuing a deeper relationship and the other spouse would be more cold or off, standing off, that spouse that's desiring a deeper relationship covets it with all our heart or with all his heart, it takes two to make that relationship.

[42 : 12] Jesus says, let me in, let me fellowship with you, let me in your life to dine with you, a means of fellowship.

To him who overcomes, I will grant to sit with me on my throne, as I also overcame and sat down with my father on his throne.

And as the Lord Jesus was faithful here on earth, going through with the cross, and he sat down at the right hand of the father.

Here, we are promised, we will sit with him on his throne, in other words, we will rule with him. The two sons of Zebedee, James and John, they asked Jesus, just before the cross, selfishly, Jesus, can you ask the father, make sure that we have two seats reserved, one on each side?

Here, we're promised to sit on his throne with him. He who overcomes, what a privilege that will be.

[43 : 38] He who has an ear, let him hear what the spirit says to the churches. What is what the spirit says to the churches? heaven? heaven? heaven? As we close this morning, as we reflect, maybe even on the past year, what is my spiritual temperature like?

what is my time with the Lord like for all good works must flow out of relationship with God and not the other way I'd like to end this morning a bit different if you are struggling and your spiritual temperature is not where you know it should be and you would like prayer I would invite you to stand up and come to the front so that we can pray over you as we acknowledge where I'm at before God and step over to the front and ask questions ■■■ian