

Jesus speaks to His Church - Be earnest and repent

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[0 : 00] Again, nice to see you. We had a brief sojourn into Habakkuk and now we're finishing off the Revelation series before we go into the summer break and family services.

But first what I thought we'd do is just have a very, very, very brief overview of what we've done so far. So next slide, please. I don't know whether you've realised that when a preacher says a very, very brief, that's never true.

It's just one of those poetic licences that you're allowed to say when you're up here. Seven letters to seven churches, seven letters with grave warnings, grave words, serious stuff.

And we have had quite a series on it. So if you haven't picked them all up, do have a look online on YouTube and goodness knows what else to try and pick those sermons up because they're well worth listening to.

But the seven churches, Ephesus, worked hard but forgot their first love. Forgot their first love. Forgot their love for Jesus.

[1 : 26] Smyrna commended for their spiritual wealth despite material poverty. They were doing all right that lot. Pergamum mostly held the sound doctrine but got into compromise.

Thyatira grew in maturity but some involved in idolatry and false teaching. Sardis appeared alive but were spiritually dead.

Philadelphia, faithful in the face of trials. And now today, Laodicea, lukewarm faith, about to be spat out.

You can't read these letters without thinking, oh crumbs. There's some stuff in there, isn't there? There's some stuff there that we need to be mindful of.

And we need to say to God, search my heart. And show me what displeases you. And not only show me but help me.

[2 : 32] Bring me back to that central place that you want me to be. Bring me to a place where I am in relationship with you.

In right relationship with you. Let's read from Revelation chapter 3. To the angel of the church in Laodicea write, These are the words of the Amen.

The faithful and true witness. Ruler of God's creation. I know your deeds. I know your deeds. You are hot.

Cold. Now the water. It says on. Oh. This one.

Makes me feel like a pop star with that one. Oh.

[3 : 35] These are the words of the Amen. The faithful and true witness. The ruler of God's creation. I know your deeds. I know your deeds. That you are neither hot.

Cold. Nor hot. I wish you were one or the other. So because you're lukewarm. Neither hot nor cold. I'm about to spit you out of my mouth. You say I am rich. I have acquired wealth. And don't need a thing. But you do not realize 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 clothes to wear. So that you can cover your shameless nakedness. And salve to put on your eyes.

[4 : 36] So that you can see. Those who I love. I rebuke and discipline. So be earnest.

And repent. Here I am. I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice. And opens the door.

For I will come in and eat with that person. And they with me. To the one who is victorious. I will give the right to sit with me on the throne.

Just as I was victorious. And sat down with my father on his throne. Whoever has ears. Let them hear. What the spirit says.

To the churches. The spirit this morning. Is knocking. On the door.

[5 : 33] For each of us. He always is. He always does. The wonderful thing about the Holy Spirit. Is he's active. And he works.

And he wants to be in relationship with us. And he wants good things for us. So he's knocking on the door. So as you hear what I say.

Please hear the words from heaven. Not my words. Please allow what I say. To be sanctified by almighty God. And make changes. And challenge us.

Because God's knocking. Very briefly. Laodicea in western Turkey. It was on an important and prosperous trade route. And because it was on an important and prosperous trade route.

They were rich. They had all sorts of. They had a school of medicine. Apparently. And they had all sorts of stuff. All sorts of stuff going on.

[6 : 30] And big. Impressive. Imposing. Buildings. Temples. And other things. It was a wealthy city.

A city which had made it. They were very, very successful. They were doing very nicely. Thank you. We're okay.

And the Laodicean church. Reflected. All of this. The church reflected. Its community. Laodicea was doing nicely.

Laodicea was doing well. Laodicea was prosperous. Laodicea was successful. The church thought that they were too. And there's something there for us, isn't there?

About let's not get too smarty pants. That's the Andy Lloyd version, by the way. I hope very much that there is a Loch Ness Monster.

[7 : 31] I hope very much that there is an abominable snowman. Not because I care particularly about yetis and Loch Ness Monsters. But because I like it very much when we realise we're not quite as smart as we thought we are.

And that God holds mystery in his hand. And the danger of the Laodicean church is that they thought they'd cracked it. They thought they knew all truth.

And they thought that they didn't need anybody else. And of course we know, as we read on, how dangerous that is.

Jesus is talking directly to the church in Laodicea. Jesus is talking to the church in Laodicea. The words of the Amen. Yes, so be it.

Jesus is the ultimate affirmation of the truth of God's promises. These are the words of the truth of all that God says to us.

[8 : 41] Of all God's promises. The words of faithful and true witness. Jesus is reliable and is trustworthy.

If you watch any sort of television drama that has court activity in it. If it's a police drama or a detective drama or a whatever drama.

And you go into court and you see a witness who is not being completely honest. And you think, ooh, look at that. They're telling pork he's in court.

But Jesus is the true and faithful witness. What Jesus says is always true.

He always speaks of what he sees. He always speaks of what he knows. The ruler of God's creation, Jesus has authority over all things.

[9 : 47] Why is that important at the beginning of this letter? Because they're in a pickle. And they can't get out of this pickle themselves.

They need Jesus. They need the authority of Jesus. To absolutely come and speak the truth into the situation.

And rescue each of us. Rescue us from wherever we are at. Whatever we are struggling with. I know your deeds, says Jesus.

I'm going to come back to this, but I know. I looked up the Greek for I know. It means I know. An amount of research went in, but not very much.

I know your deeds. And that is the most wonderful promise.

[10 : 54] It's also quite scary. But Jesus looks at each of us. Jesus looks at you this morning and says, I know.

I know about you. I've seen it all. I am the true and faithful witness to you. And all your deeds. And the wonder is, he doesn't turn away in disgust.

He doesn't say, well, I know and really that's your lot. He says, I know. I love you. And I love you. And I have good things for you. But there are some things we need to talk about. Okay. Next slide, please. I tried to work out whether lukewarmness is a word. I've decided it is. If it isn't a word and it offends your grammatical sensibilities, I'm sorry.

[11:56] But I've adopted it for the day. Lukewarmness. You say, I'm rich. I've acquired wealth. I don't need a thing. But you don't realize that you're wretched, pitiful, poor, blind and naked.

Distressed and beggarly. What a desperate state to be in. You're neither nowt nor summat.

And Jesus says, I wish you were one or the other. If you were cold, I could do more work. If you were hot, it would be wonderful. But you're nowt.

You're lukewarm. And there's nothing worse on these hot days. When you take a drink from the tap and it's lukewarm.

Have a cup of tea. Hot. Have a drink of squash. Cold. Have a lukewarm. Blah. Blah. It's not satisfying.

[13:00] It's not fulfilling. It's just a bit and out. A dreadful condemnation of the church.

Lethargy. Carelessness. Pride. Arrogance. Self-sufficiency. Self-satisfaction. I need nothing.

I've got all the money I need. All the possessions I need. All the friends I need. All the church I need. Everything. It's all got it sorted. I don't need God.

And I don't need others. I'm my own person. And I can do what I want. I don't need you to worry for me because I'm alright.

I don't need you to tell me it's time to come home. I don't care what you say anymore. This is my life. Go ahead with your own life. And leave me alone. Billy Joel.

[14:09] Okay. Frank Sinatra said something very similar. Didn't he? I don't need you to tell me. I've got it sorted.

That is a human condition. That is where the human condition will take us. Self-satisfaction and smugness. And contentment knowing I've got it cracked.

But God knows what a mess they're in. Both as a church and individuals within the church.

And look at those words there. Wretched. Pitiful. Poor. Blind. And naked. There's nothing to recommend that condition.

Wretched and pitiful. Slumped in a corner. People pass you by. Because you don't even worth.

[15:20] They don't even seem to be worth speaking to. No money. No resource. No resource. Blind. Spiritually, emotionally, physically blind.

Naked. Utterly exposed. And embarrassing. Jesus isn't holding back here.

But these aren't people who have rejected. These are people who are saying, Sorry. Not bothered.

In fact, Jesus says, I'd rather you rejected me.

Than we're ambivalent. And what's the consequence? I'm going to spit you out of my mouth.

It's one of those times where it's not difficult to understand scripture. There are things which are complicated to understand. This one's not. Because you're lukewarm, I am going to literally vomit you out of my mouth.

[16:34] Dreadful words. Powerful words. Powerful words. And that's where the Laodicean church were heading. Now, if you get to that point, you think, well, this is not going to end well for the Laodicean church, is it?

This is not going to be a helpful place for them to be. We've somehow got to, I don't know, give up. Worry. Go and buy some more people saying how marvelous I am. I don't know. But it's not a good story to the point where we're in. And then, let's have a think about what happened.

But just the next slide first. Romans chapter 2 and verse 13. For it's not those who hear the law who are righteous in God's sight. But those who obey the law who will be declared righteous.

A call from Paul. But a call from God. Just because you know the law, don't add up to a hill of beans.

[17:52] Are you doing it? It's easy to understand this verse. Because I know very well that in this country we drive on the left-hand side of the road.

That's kind of what we're told to do. That's the law. I know it. But actually, I'm rather minded sometimes to drive on the right. Because you get a better view that way.

And there are fewer cars behind me. Quite a few coming towards me for some reason. I know that's a silly illustration. But that's what Paul's saying.

You can know it all you want. You can read it all you want. You can declare it all you want. Are you going to do it? Are we going to do it, church?

Are we going to do it, individuals? Or should we rest in the knowledge that we know stuff? Rest in the knowledge that we're okay.

[18 : 56] Because we're pretty smart. No, no, no. Let's avoid that. Next slide, please. And yet there is hope.

This is the most wonderful thing in this terrible passage of verses. There's always hope. God never gives up on you.

God never gives up on you. Therefore, I counsel you to buy from me gold refined by fire. So that you may be rich.

And have white robes to clothe you. And to keep the shame of your nakedness from being seen. And salve to anoint your eyes. So that you may see.

I'll come to the final point in a minute. Jesus is saying, this is terrible. I'm going to spit you. I'm going to vomit you out of my mouth.

[19 : 57] Oh, but by the way. Not quite yet. Not quite yet. I'm going to offer you some counsel. Now this is quite a strong word.

It doesn't really mean counsel. It means sort of instruct. I'm going to instructively invite you. You'll never get an absolute force.

But you are invited strongly. To turn to Jesus. Come and buy gold from me.

Refined by fire. I was thinking about this. How do you buy gold when you've got no money? Come to me. All who are thirsty. And I'll give you a drink.

You don't need to buy it. You can buy gold for free. From Jesus. Not good. Not a nice thing to happen.

[20 : 57] But what are you going to do with the gold? Well, I'm going to put it in a shell. In a drawer. Just in case we have a bit of a financial crisis. Buy three things.

Robes. Robes. Well, first of all, you can be rich. It's nice. Buy robes. Robes of cleansing.

This isn't about robes. And this isn't about eye salve either. This is about our richness. Our spiritual richness. With Jesus. Buy robes.

To keep you from the shame of your nakedness. Buy white robes. Clean. Pure. Sanctified robes.

The robes of priesthood. The robes of being part. Of who we are. In the kingdom of God. Come and get them.

[22 : 03] Come and get them. And then this idea about salve. To anoint your eyes. Not massively up with salve.

I'm sure it's very nice. It's not. I don't use a lot of cosmetics. No, no, really. I don't. It's true. No. I know that surprises you.

I look this good on my own. Why do we want salve? So we can see. The point of this is very clear. The point. I can't move around.

The point of this. Is that. We're blind. Or at least we're not seen clearly. I was watching some cricket. I think yesterday.

And I realized that I could see the cricket match. And I could see what was happening. But when they put the statistics up. I couldn't read it all. Because I need to go and get some stronger glasses.

To wear it when I'm watching the television.

[23 : 01] All right. I need to be able to see better. Jesus is saying to us. Jesus is saying to each of us. You need to see better. You need salve for your eyes.

You need to be able to see. The truth. And the wonder. And the astonishing. Truth. Of what Jesus is saying to us.

Cover your shame. With the clothes of righteousness. Open your eyes. To the truth of Jesus. Be purified.

Have restoration. And clarity. And then verse 19. Those whom I love.

I rebuke and discipline. A teacher once said to me. As he was preparing to. Beat me. Because I hadn't done my homework.

[24 : 13] Which is of no surprise to him or to me. He said. This is going to hurt me. More than it's going to hurt you. And I thought.

No it ain't mate. No it ain't. And I was right. Those who I love. Those who I love.

I rebuke. I rebuke. And discipline. And I suppose there's a question here. A question that we need to wrestle with. And a question that we need to take seriously. Am I willing to be rebuked and disciplined by God?

Because he's saying that's what's going to happen. Because lukewarmness is so dangerous. Because apathy and smugness and self-satisfaction is so dangerous. So am I willing to be rebuked and disciplined by God?

[25 : 15] Because he counsels you that you should be. And it might hurt. It might hurt.

But you know what? That's why God put us in community. One of the reasons. That's why churches exist.

So we can hold each other. When things are tough. But the worst thing is. If I say I am unwilling to accept.

The discipline of almighty God. And we don't have time. And I don't particularly want to go into how that can happen. But I suspect a number of us here.

Many of us are here perhaps. Have received and experienced the discipline of God. When you've said. Show me. The things that displease you God.

[26 : 18] And he starts to show you. And you think. Well that was a bad question wasn't it? Except it's absolutely the right question. Why does he rebuke and discipline you?

Because he loves you. And we have to keep coming back to this. However much. We walk this walk of faith. Never lose sight of the fact.

That a fundamental truth is. That God thinks you're fantastic. God loves you passionately. And he wants the very best for you.

And he cares. When it's not going well. And he cares. When I make bad decisions. And goof it up. And find myself in a pickle. And he cares.

Because he loves me. And he cares. Because. He can do no other. Hear the counsel of God.

[27 : 27] Cover yourself. Away from your. Embarrassment and shame. Allow your eyes to be opened. To the truth.

Of who. Jesus. Is. Psalm 86. 11. Teach me your ways Lord. That I may rely on your faithfulness. Give me an undivided heart.

That I may fear your name. Teach me. Oh Lord. That's a wonderful heart's cry. That you might want to choose to use this week.

Even if you can't remember the rest of the verse. Teach me oh Lord. Teach me your way. Show me. Teach me.

Let me understand. Next slide please. Be earnest and repent. Repent. Turn around. Turn around.

[28 : 27] Stop it. Behave differently. Think differently. Speak differently. Be different. Because that's what God wants you to do.

And that's who he wants you to be. I'm here knocking. Will you let me in? If you let me in. I will be intimately involved in your life.

I will eat with you. And have fellowship with you. Sharing food together. Breaking bread together. Is intimate. And I think that probably in the West in 2025.

We forget. We forget. How important. How important. The act of eating together. Was then. And remains. It's a very visceral thing to do.

Very powerful. Personal thing to do. To share food together. And it's so easy. We've got so much food. And it's dead easy to call in for something.

[29 : 38] Or whatever. But God is saying. If you let me in. I'll come and break bread with you. I'll come and eat with you. I'll come and be with you.

As you meet one of your basic needs. And I'll have fellowship with you. We'll share together. About the goodness of Almighty God. That's what happens.

That's what happens. That's the promise. When God. When you answer the door. To God's knock. To the knock of Jesus. On your life.

If you let me in. I'll have fellowship with you. To those who are victorious. He says.

Just a reminder. We're in a battle. This is not the easiest thing to do. The whole of the. The letters to the churches. Talks about. And sometimes refers to.

[30 : 40] This idea. We're in a battle. It's not an easy thing. We can't just say. Oh yeah. I'll do that then. That was a nice sermon.

We'll do one of those. This is personal. This is intimate. This is me and God. This is how it works.

We're in a battle. We can only win the battle. With Jesus. On our side. But the battle belongs to the Lord.

And when you're victorious. There's a prize. A wonderful reward. Waiting in heaven. For us. If you are victorious.

When you are victorious. And you repent. If you're earnest. And repent. I will give you the right. To sit with me on my throne. Just as I was victorious. And sat down with my father.

[31 : 42] On his throne. We get to sit next to Jesus. In heaven. It must be quite a big seat. But heaven's clever.

Like that. We don't have to worry. But the prize is there. You have the right. To sit next to Jesus. On his throne. Just imagine. Just allow your spirit. To take you there. Is it worth it?

Oh I think so. That's the prize. Not like bullseye. Look what you could have won. This is what you've got waiting for you.

This is what's waiting for you. I rebuke those who I love. I discipline those who I love. Okay. But if you let me do that.

[32 : 44] If you become the people I want you to be. There's a prize. Waiting for us. In heaven. And it's pretty good. Next slide please.

As I was preparing. I just was turned. To this half a verse. Part of Ephesians 5.10. Find out what pleases the Lord. I always find that verse slightly challenging.

How do I find out what pleases the Lord? Ask him. Ask him. Ask each other. Ask each other. But the truth is. What pleases the Lord for you. Might be different.

Because you're different from me. There's the big stuff. Be faithful. Be decent. Obey things. Don't do things. That's fine. But what really excites God about you?

And the answer is you. He loves it when you do the things. That he wants you to do. Because there are some things in this world.

[33 : 49] That only you can do. There are some people. And only you can have that conversation. Because only you are well placed to do it. That's what pleases God.

Find out what pleases the Lord. And then do it. Okay, Josh. Next slide. Final slide, I think. Lessons to ponder on. God knows all about you.

And this goes back to the very beginning. I know. I know. God knows all about you. And that's wonderful. But it's also a bit scary. Allow yourself to relax into the truth.

That God knows you intimately. Don't be smug. But do be grateful. Watch out for lukewarmness. In yourself. In the church. And in each other. It is a grave responsibility we have. To counsel and encourage each other.

[34 : 55] And a grave responsibility we have. To ensure that Whitby Christian Fellowship. At Westcliff Church. In July 2025. Don't become smug.

And don't become lukewarm. Be earnest. Be earnest. And repent. Accept God discipline in your life. And with all the letters. To the churches. Listen up. This is important.

Not what I've said. What God said. If you've got ears. Listen. I'm looking around. The vast majority of you have got ears.

If you haven't. We'll have a chat later. I said. If you haven't. Listen up. This is important stuff.

[35 : 57] These letters aren't just. Postcards from abroad. They're God saying. To us. Today. You've got to hear this.

And you've got to take it seriously. Amen. Amen.