The Church in Laodicea
Welcome to Harvest Community Church
Series: Seven Churches
Text: Revelation 3:14-22

Jesus called the church in Laodicea the lukewarm church. Nowhere in scripture does God use the level of harsh language to address these people. Many identify this church with the current church age and dispensation that we are in. We would be wise to listen to these words, understand the instructions and take them to heart in our own life. Jesus did not offer even one word or praise to this church.

The city of Laodicea was wealthy because of wool used to make fabric. Because of this the church was well off and well to-do. This church had been lulled to sleep because of their prosperity and they had become apathetic. This letter was a wake-up call. There is nothing subtle about it. This church had become little more than a social organization instead of a lighthouse pointing people to Jesus.

Originally the city of Laodicea was called Diospolis which means "City of Zeus". Antiochus II built on top of the ruins and named the city after his wife Laodice. Laodicea was located six miles from Hierapolis to its north and nine miles to the of the city of Colosse to the southeast. Hierapolis was a large military city with a church founded by the believers in Colosse. It was known for its hot mineral springs. Colosse was a smaller resort town known for its refreshing cold waters that flowed from the snow melt off the mountains surrounding it. If people needed rest and healing, they would go to Hierapolis and if they needed refreshed, they would go to Colosse.

Laodicea was the richest town in the region. It was a banking center and a hub of the textile industry producing expensive black sheep wool. It had amazing architecture, two theaters and a stadium that could seat 60,000 people. It also had a marketplace with over 4,500 shops. It was also known for its medical school that specialized in eye diseases.

Jesus Reveals Himself to this church in several significant ways - **Revelation 3:14**

- The Amen - He is not just AN amen, He is THE Amen. The word 'Amen' describes something final and firm. It means 'let it be' or the 'last word'. Something that is settled. He is the One with the final say.

- The Faithful and True Witness – 'witness' in the Greek is where we get the word martyr. It describes someone who is summoned to testify in a court of law. They are charged to speak only what is true. As a witness they were required to tell the truth regardless of the possible retribution that might be carried out against them by those who wished them to suppress the truth. A witness required that person to have the highest integrity and commitment to the truth. Jesus is not just any witness but THE Witness. He paid the ultimate price for being Faithful and True.

The word 'Faithful' means reliable, full of faith, one who kept his faith; one who is worthy of trust; one who can be relied upon. Again, Jesus is not just A faithful One, He is THE Faithful and trustworthy One.

He is also THE True Witness. True means - genuine, indisputable and authentic. He is not just A truth but THE Truth. **John 14:6** If you put the meaning of the words together it could read this way.

~ Theses things says He who is THE witness, The faithful and reliable One who is absolutely trustworthy, THE One who is absolutely true and indisputable….

- The Beginning of creation **Genesis 1:1, John 1:1-4, Colossians 1:16, Hebrews 1:2** He is not just a Beginning but THE beginning. He is the initial starting point, the originator. He is the Originator of the creation of God. The word creation refers to that which is created out of nothing. What Jesus is reminding these people is that as the Creator of everything He is in control.

Jesus tells this church I know your works. **Revelation 3:15-16** This is one of the most well known and scary words ever written in scripture. He said I wish you were cold or hot. You are neither, you are lukewarm. You are right in the middle. Today that is our cry for balance and moderation. We condemn people for being too extreme.

Hot and cold isn't an issue of good or evil, right or wrong or even heaven or hell. Both Hot and Cold are what Christians are to be. To those who need healing we are to be hot, to those who need refreshing we are to be cold. Jesus said you are neither of these, and you make me sick. These people weren't on fire for God any longer but they also didn't reject God outright. They just lived somewhere in the middle.

The church of Laodicea was just like the city, stuck in the middle. The hot waters of Hierapolis and the cold waters of Colosse were both piped to Laodicea by aqueducts. By the time the water from either city reached Laodicea they were lukewarm. This is the only place in scripture that the Greek word for lukewarm is used in the Bible. It describes something tepid and indifferent. People didn't go to Laodicea for healing or refreshing they went for business or entertainment. The same was true for that church.

Not only that, the water had been compromised, and so had the church. It had lost its temperature and the minerals were gone and the clay conduits had changed the taste and the water become putrid and contaminated. Jesus was saying you have lost any value just like the water. Jesus was telling the church you have become disgusting just like the water. This was a compromised church. Notice that the water didn't have to travel far. Only six or nine miles. It doesn't take long to be compromised. (Let that sink in)

The Laodicean church was a conceited church. **Revelation 3:17** This wealthy church had a high view of themselves and Jesus gave them a reality check. God measures things differently than we do. This church's main sin was their pride.

When we are wealthy and financially well-off, we can become blind to our spiritual need and spiritual state, still believing that everything is good simply because we are prospering. **Matthew 19:16-24, 1 Timothy 6:9-10**

This city had gone through great _expense_ to build the infrastructure to bring the water from the other cities to them. They had great expectations and were disappointed with the results. This is how Jesus felt about the Laodicean church. Could that describe many churches in America and Europe?

What was the reason for their lukewarm condition? BECAUSE "you say". Just because you say something does not make it _fact_ or true. The Laodiceans had deceived themselves. Jesus said …because you say… you allege… you believe this opinion about yourself. Because you say… _I am_. Those two words point to self-reliance, self-focus, self-centeredness and even self-absorption. They said I am rich, wealthy and in need of NOTHING. WOW… They believe that they had arrived and made it. They had become the _center_ of their world and not _Jesus_.

The Church in Laodicea is a picture of what happens to a person or a group of people who enter into pride. They become the center of their entire world, and their self-centeredness causes them to become _arrogant_ and self-reliant and no longer dependent upon God. When we are walking in the blessing, favor and abundance of God we need to keep in mind where it all came from. **James 1:17, Proverbs 30:7-9**

When we become conceited, we lose sight of who we really are. **Revelation 3:17** Jesus said… You don't even know your true _condition_. Those words – "do not know" mean a total lack of _comprehension_. He was saying you do not see, perceive or understand what you really are.

Jesus said they were five things:

1) _Wretched_ - Jesus got right to it. To be wretched is to be awful, horrible, rotten, to be of poor quality just like the water. It also carries with it the meaning of being calloused and unfeeling. This would be a slap in the face to people who had such a high opinion of themselves. The only righteousness that they had was _self-_ righteousness.

2) _Miserable_ - To be miserable is to be deserving of pity. Jesus was saying that they were in such terrible shape that they should be pitied. He felt sorrow for them. They were calloused to God and to people. Many times, the most conceited of people are really the most miserable and unhappy of people.

3) _Poor_ - This word in the Greek describes someone who the poorest of all. This was the lowest category of all poor people. These people had worldly wealth and nothing else. They were the poorest of the poor.

4) Blind - This doesn't just depict a person who cannot see but someone whose eyes have been deliberately removed or gouged out so that they are blinded. They don't even have any eyes to see with. Jesus was saying you are blind because Satan has intentionally blinded you and you don't even realize it. **2 Corinthians 4:4-5**

5) Naked - This is simply what it means… completely naked. What Jesus was saying is you are walking with pride when you should really be ashamed. You think you are like someone who is dressed all fancy when really you don't even have anything on.

Jesus wanted them to have a realistic picture of who they really were in His sight. This was an act of love as well as a statement of rebuke.

Jesus Prescription – **Revelation 3:18-21**

1) Buy gold that is refined in the fire. Jesus said I want to counsel you. I want to get straight to the point. To counsel is to work with someone so that things can get corrected and get better. I want to bring healing to your miserable condition. I want you to buy gold. Spiritual wealth that has been through a purification process. Jesus wanted to refine them and burn off everything that is robbing them of value. He was saying let me burn away everything that is worthless. Let me take away the pride, arrogance and self-reliance. This will bring you to a place of true abundance. **1 Timothy 6:17-19, Matthew 6:19-21**

2) They were also to buy white garments that would cover their spiritual nakedness and shame. These people were walking around like the Emperor in Hans Christen Anderson's story "The Emperor's New Clothes". White garments are known as the Robes of Righteousness. **Revelation 19:8** The Laodicean church had no righteous acts. Nakedness in scripture is a metaphor for defeat and humiliation. The Romans used to make their conquered victims march in a parade naked. (Remember Jesus hung naked on the cross) Those clothed in white were said to be clothed in victory over their enemies.

3) Anoint your eyes with eye salve - remember that Laodicea was known as a place that brought sight to the blind. The command to anoint is the instruction to take action that will bring healing in order to return spiritual sight.

4) Be zealous and repent - notice that Jesus call to repentance is an act of love. **Hebrews 12:6-13** Verses 12 -13 remind us to stop feeling sorry for ourselves because we were disciplined. Straighten up and get moving. Real love will rebuke and chasten. Love is always the motivation behind Christ's correction. The Greek for love here is not agape but Philo. It means to have a fondness and affection for someone.

   Rebuke is a word that means to convince someone of something. I am speaking to you so directly that you understand that I am communicating something to you in order to see you change because what you are is not good.

   To chasten means to teach or to train using discipline in order to help someone mature. It means to assist someone in reaching his or her full potential.

5) Open the door **Revelation 3:20** This is not written to unbelievers but to people who are supposed to be Christians. Jesus said I am on the outside wanting to come in. Jesus was saying I am not even in the church there in Laodicea. How many churches are doing "church" without Jesus? This church was closed to the presence of Jesus.

   When a door is opened it provides access to that which is normally restricted. An open door represents opportunity and access. Notice Jesus wasn't just knocking He was speaking through the door. …"If anyone hears my voice." So, Jesus is literally banging on the door of the church and calling out to come in.

   Jesus offers the opportunity for intimacy and relationship to any who will open their life or church to Him. Those who are invited to dine were at the late day meal. It was a full banquet reserved for family and close friends. It was here that family and friends really get to know one another, enjoy time together, discuss deep things and share life in a setting that is familiar, safe and relaxed. Jesus was saying let Me in so that we can do life together. Those who are self-sufficient never really let people in, including God. They keep people at a distance. Their hearts are closed. Jesus is saying you can shut me out but I am here persistently knocking to come in.

While Jesus WAS disciplining this church He wasn't trying to punish this church for Him being outside. His focus was on restoring relationship.

The Beautiful promise – **Revelation 3:21-22**

The word overcomer describes a champion, a conqueror and a victor. It is a picture of someone who is consistently victorious in their life. God is calling us to live our lives in constant and overwhelming victory.

I will permit (allow) you to sit with me on My throne. Jesus is saying that all of those who live in obedience to Him will reign WITH Him. **2 Timothy 2:12, Revelation 20:6, 1 Corinthians 6:1-3** Jesus said this is what I did when I overcame. I sat down on the throne of My Father.

He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.
Jesus ends His messages to the seven churches with a question – ARE YOU LISTENING?