***~ INTRO ~***

AS WE CONCLUDE OUR STUDY IN REVELATION….

* I’ve titled today’s message…
  + *“Letters To the Church” (Pt. 3)*

MOTHER’S DAY…

* Is a special day we honor our moms…
  + And the institution God has given us…
    - Without them… none of us would be here!

IT SEEMS LIKE MOMS…

* Have an uncanny ability to notice things…
  + That others often miss…
    - Stephani has the gift of discernment …
      * She got it from Jodi!
* They can walk into a room of people…
  + And instantly know when something is wrong…
    - Or doesn’t add up.
* Mom’s can usually see past the faces & words…
  + To pick up on what’s really going on beneath the surface.

JESUS SEEMS TO DO THE SAME…

* As He speaks to these last three churches…
  + *Sardis* (5th) Looked fine on the outside with a good reputation…
    - But Jesus sees through it to a lifeless church
  + *Philadelphia* (6th) was small & weak…
    - But Jesus saw their faithfulness & opened opportunities
  + *Laodicia* (7th) Thought they were thriving / rich/ well off…
    - But Jesus saw their poverty & blindness.

SO TOO…

* Just like a mom who sees past the front…
  + Jesus sees into our hearts…
    - To give us an accurate account of where we’re at…
      * And lead us into His promises.

**~ IDEA 1 – Asleep At The Wheel (vv. 1-6) ~**

(v. 1)

THE FIRST OF TWO CHURCHES…

* That were given no commendation…
  + Regarding the works they had done.

JESUS GIVES THEM PERSPECTIVE OF HIS CHARACTER…

* By identifying Himself distinctly…
  + The Seven Spirits of God (Isa. 11:1-2)
  + The Seven Stars (Rev. 1:16)

**#1 A CHRISTIAN VENEER (ASSESSMENT)**

THE CHURCH IN SARDIS IS CONFRONTED…

* Because they thought they were alive and on the right track…
  + But Jesus gives a clear assessment…
    - They lacked authentic spiritual life!
* This church was not struggling from a scandal (clear difficulties)
  + They had a reputation of being alive…
    - But were falling apart on the inside.
* Others thought they were a solid church…
  + But Jesus reveals they have spiritually flatlined.
    - Religious movement without relationship!

JOHN GAVE SOME INSIGHT INTO…

* What this looks like in our lives…
  + (1 John 1) NLT
    - (v. 6) We lie to others with hypocrisy
    - (v. 8) We lie to ourselves with pride
    - (v. 10) We lie to God insincerity

IN DENTISTRY…

* There’s something called Veneers…
  + Thin shells placed over teeth…
    - To cover damage / staining / or imperfections.
* They make the outside look nice…
  + But it doesn’t change what’s happening beneath the surface.

(vv. 2-6)

**#2 WAKE UP & RE-ENGAGE (COUNSEL)**

AS JESUS ADDRESSES THE ROOT OF THE PROBLEM…

* He gives them a path to move forward on…
  + Instructing them to *“wake up”*

SARDIS…

* Had a reputation of being an unconquerable city…
  + Because it stood 1,500 feet above the valley floor…
    - And there was only one-way in & one-way out!
* However in 6th century BC…
  + They had been conquered by the Persians…
    - Because the guards had fallen asleep!

WHEN WE FALL ASLEEP AS CHRISTIANS…

* The only thing to do is wake up…
  + Be on guard again.
* (v. 3) We should receive the warning Jesus gave…
  + To be ready for His return…
    - Actively prepared for His return!
* Not coasting through our walk of faith…
  + Pretending to be religious…
    - Without a lively relationship.

IF THIS IS SPEAKING TO YOU TODAY…

* Don’t settle for image (past experiences of faith) …
  + Reputation doesn’t bring revival…
    - Repentance does!

SOME OF US LIVE THE CHRISTIAN LIFE…

* Like an auto-renew subscription.
  + (Illustration)
* It’s time to take action!

**~ IDEA 2 – A Model For Ministry (vv. 7-13) ~**

(vv. 7-8)

JESUS INTRODUCES HIMSELF TO PHILADELPHIA…

* By reminding them of His character…
  + Holy (set apart) / true (authentic) / holding the key (authority)

**#1 FAITHFULNESS OPENS DOORS (Commendation)**

THIS CHURCH HAD BEEN FAITHFUL…

* In spite of being *“little”*
  + Small of stature (Zachius)
  + Not powerful

BUT BECAUSE THEY…

* Have kept Jesus’ word
  + *“if you love me keep my commandments”* 
    - (John 14:15) NKJV
* Have not denied Him…
  + *“If you deny me before men I’ll not deny you before my father.”*
    - (Matt. 10:32-33) NKJV
* He has placed an opportunity before them…
  + *“He who is faithful in what is least is faithful also in much…”*
    - *(Luke 16:10) NKJV*

WHEN WE FOLLOW THE LORD BY FAITH…

* He leads us to the open door of opportunity…
  + That He desires us to step into!
    - (Prov. 3:5-6) NLT

**#2 WEAK BUT WILLING (Correction)**

THIS IS THE SECOND OF TWO CHURCHES (SMYRNA)…

* That receive no correction from Jesus…
  + Only words of commendation & promise.

(vv. 6-13)

**#3 A FUTURE WORTH FIGHTING FOR (Counsel)**

JESUS LISTS OUT SIX PROMISES…

* For those who would remain faithful…
  + Until the end.

1. *“I will”* defend you against those who antagonize you
   1. You don’t need to defend yourself
2. *“I will”* protect against THE hour of trial
   1. I’m coming quickly (motivation for our crown)
3. *“I will”* stabilize in the mist of suffering/chaos
   1. One day suffering WILL end!
4. *“I will”* give you My God’s name (think marriage)
   1. Depicts ownership/choice (tools)
5. *“I will”* give you My city’s name
   1. This speaks of citizenship (where are you from?)
6. *“I will”* give you My new name
   1. The fullness of Jesus Christ (the fullness of His character)

JESUS GIVES THESE PROMISES…

* To the church as encouragement to “Hold fast”…
  + And keep going!

HE’S NOT TALKING ABOUT A CASUAL GRIP…

* The Greek word means to seize it / cling to it /don’t let it go.
  + It’s a fight till the end!

JESUS TELLS US THE FUTURE IS WORTH IT

* He gives these promises to us today…
  + So we would not lose hope…
    - And fight to the end.

**~ IDEA 3 – Apathetic & Unaware (vv. 14-22) ~**

(v. 14-15)

THIS FINAL CHURCH…

* Receives the most chilling warning of them all…
  + And has the boldest implications…
    - Because it relates most to the church in the end-times. (Us!)

JESUS REVEALS HIS CHARACTER…

* With no words of commendation…
  + Only swift words of correction.

**#1 AN ACCURATE ASSESSMENT**

HE REVEALS TO THEM…

* A tepid spiritual condition…
  + With a metaphor that was personal…
    - To them in their city.

LAODICIA WAS A WEALTHY CITY…

* Known for three main things:
  + It’s strong banking system
  + Medical school that produced eye lotion…
    - Medicine used to treat eye conditions or ailments)
  + Booming clothing market…
    - Sold a specific black wool.
* Was situated between two cities with notable water sources…
  + Colossae – known for it’s cold & refreshing mountain water
  + Hierapolis - known for its soothing hot springs.
* When Laodicia piped water to their city…
  + It was tepid & riddled with disease
    - Useless!

JESUS REVEALS THAT THIS CHURCH…

* Had become spiritually lukewarm in their faith…
  + And completely useless in living out their mission.

(v. 16-17)

**#2 A NAUSEATING REBUKE (Correction)**

THEY HAD BEEN UNDER THE DELUSION…

* That they no longer lived in a place of need…
  + But Jesus gives them an accurate assessment.
    - Poor / blind / naked
      * Speaking to the areas of security in their life.

THE SAME IS TRUE IN OUR LIVES…

* When we become comfortable in the things of this life…
  + We become complacent to the thing of God.

(vv. 18-19)

**#3 A CALL TO COME BACK (Counsel)**

THEY’RE GIVEN THE REMEDY…

* Sprinkled with encouragement…
  + I love you!
    - (Heb. 12:6-7, 11) NLT

WHEN WE’RE BEING CHASTENED BY THE LORD…

* The only right response…
  + Is to fervently seek Him for the solution!
    - He is all they needed

(vv.20-22)

THIS REVEALS TO THEM…

* Jesus was on the outside of the church…
  + Waiting those who would let him back in…
    - For authentic fellowship.

GOD’S GRACE IS STILL EVIDENT…

* Even in this pointed letter of correction…
  + Because he’s still passionately pursuing THEM!
    - A knuckle scathing knock…
      * Frantically getting their attention.

***~ IN CLOSING (CALL WORSHIP TEAM) ~***

IT’S IMPORTANT TO NOTE…

* Jesus isn’t mad at any of these churches…
  + He’s showing great concern for real people that he loves!

JUST LIKE OUR MOMS…

* He’s taking a look past the surface level of our hearts today…
  + Past the veneer and reputation we have…
    - Past the self-confidence…
      * And lovingly calling us back to Him!

MAYBE YOU’RE HERE TODAY…

* And you recognize you’re like Sardis…
  + Outwardly fine… But dying on the inside…
    - Desperately needing a touch from the Spirit.
* And you’re like Philadelphia…
  + Have little strength…
    - And needing the emphasis of Jesus’ promises.
* And you see Laodicia in your life…
  + Complacent / distant / self-reliant…
    - And you realize how far you’ve drifted.

JESUS IS OFFERING YOU HIS GRACE THIS MORNING…

* Back to real fellowship & authentic relationship with Him…
  + He’s knocking on the door of your heart.
    - Amen!?