

Sermon #9 (Stirred, Not Shaken)

3/17/24

BREAKING THE ICE

- What impacted you most about this week's message?

UNDERSTANDING THE TRUTH

Read the Passage (Rev. 3:14-22)

Devastated by an earthquake in AD 60, Laodicea chose to “pull itself up by its bootstraps” rather than seek imperial assistance like its neighbor, Philadelphia, had done. Located on an important trade route, Laodicea quickly became one of the wealthiest cities in the region. Additionally, it had become the major banking center in Asia Minor. Money flowed freely through the streets. The city's wealth was reflected in its buildings, in its high standards of dress, and in its church. Laodicea was also known to produce a medicinal powder known as Phrygian. When mixed with water Phrygian created an ointment or salve that was used to treat ailments of the eyes. It no wonder then that Jesus' message to the church in Laodicea refers to their wealth, their clothing, and their healing ointment (3:17-18).

Despite its great wealth, Laodicea had one major problem. The city lacked a supply of good water. Located on a high plateau, Laodicea was forced to pipe its water in through stone aqueducts. Upon arrival, the water was always tepid and often bitter or chalky. The water supply was neither hot (like its neighbor Hierapolis), nor cold (as in Colossae) but merely lukewarm. Jesus' rebuke of the Laodiceans was that He rather they be either hot or cold spiritually, not tepid ... and without their repentance, He intended to spew them out of His mouth (3:15-16).

SEEING JESUS CHRIST

1. In evaluating the works of the Laodiceans, Jesus considers their deeds to be “lukewarm.” Read James 2:17-20. How are faith and deeds connected? Why is this important? How does this relate to us today?
2. Why is being spiritually “tepid” or “lukewarm” considered worse than being hot or cold? What damage does a lukewarm believer inflict on the gospel of Jesus Christ?
3. Why do you suspect that Jesus chose to leave Laodicea as the last of the churches He addresses? How does their evaluation compare with the other six churches?
4. What do you believe Jesus means when He says, “Those whom I love, I reprove and discipline (v.19)?” How does Jesus discipline His children today? What was He seeking from the Laodiceans (and in us today)?
5. Read 3:17 again. This verse highlights the specific nature of the self-indulgent lifestyle of the Laodiceans. They were reliant on their wealth and began to consider God as unnecessary. How is the church in the United States similar? How might you be similar?

6. What does Jesus offer as the remedy? What is required of the Laodiceans to receive Jesus' remedy? How does Jesus affirm His love for His church (see vs. 18-19; Prov. 3:11-12; Heb. 12:7-11)? What is the outcome of God's discipline when we willingly and humbly receive it (Heb. 12:11)?

MAKING IT MATTER

Let's take an uncomfortable moment to turn the magnifying glass on ourselves.

1. The Laodicean's thought they were prosperous because of God's blessing, but they were spiritually poor.
 - a. Do you spend more time thinking about your financial future than about your spiritual future?
 - b. Do you give regularly and generously? Or do you only give after you're confident you will have enough for yourself?
2. The Laodicean's thought they were self-sufficient and in need of nothing, but spiritually they were wretched and bankrupt.
 - a. When struggling with temptation or sin, do you attempt to conquer it all on your own, or do you seek the help of others?
3. The Laodicean's thought they were fully aware of their spiritual condition but were sadly mistaken.
 - a. Do you tolerate "small" sins, allowing them to linger because you want to believe they're harmless?
 - b. When you believe no one is looking, are comfortable doing or saying things that you wouldn't want anyone else to know about?
4. The Laodicean's thought their lives were clothed in good deeds, but they were spiritually naked.
 - a. Are you satisfied with simply having faith without a changed lifestyle to accompany it?
 - b. Do you have a "persona" you wear around others at church that is significantly different than who you are when you're not at church?
5. What is one or two things you feel convicted to change in the days ahead?
6. What is your next measurable step toward making this change.
7. How can others in your small group be helpful to you as you instigate this next step?

PRAYING FOR GOD'S POWER

"This is the confidence we have before him: If we ask anything according to his will, he hears us. And if we know that he hears us, whatever we ask, we know that we have what we have asked of him. (1 John 5:14-15).

When we pray according to God's will it engages the power and guidance of God to bring about our transformation. If we apply these things in our own strength, then it is just legalistic

obedience. But, when we humbly ask God to change us and empower us according to his will and by his Spirit, it becomes transformational AND glorifies God.

Group Leaders:

I am providing a second document that you may use as a handout for your group members. This handout will summarize the seven churches, their commendations, and their condemnations. It also prompts your group members to look at their own spiritual journey, to identify what they would like to see change, and to take action.

I encourage you to be sensitive as you lead. Some in your group may feel God's conviction and that may feel very uncomfortable.

The discipleship team will be praying for you this week as you prepare to lead.