

Sermon #7: The Church at Sardis

03 Feb 24

BREAKING THE ICE

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

UNDERSTANDING THE TRUTH

Read the Passage (Revelation 3:1-6)

Sardis was a wealthy city, whose citadel rested atop a long, difficult to reach, ridge on Mount Tmolus. As such, it was proverbial for being an impenetrable city that could not be conquered. Yet, its history (and legend) records at least two significant, rapid defeats it experienced due to its apathy of thinking it could not be conquered. Along with its strategic military position, it was a city known for its fine clothing and dyeing processes.

1. What two descriptions does Jesus use for Himself in the intro to this letter to Sardis (vs 1)? [Return to verse 4 and verse 20 of chapter one for meaning of this]
2. At the end of verse 1, what does Jesus say is true about the church in Sardis?
3. What might that look like for a church to have had "a reputation for being alive" but actually be dead? (Hint: Who would be the audience that believes it is alive and what might they use to evaluate life?)
4. What is Jesus' exhortation to this church as well as the reason He gave it? (vs 2)
5. How does this reason strike you?
6. What does Jesus further exhort them to do in vs 3?
7. What had the church in Sardis "received" and "heard"? (Read 1 Corinthians 15:1-4 for insight on what is meant by what was received and heard)
8. What is Jesus' warning to this church at the end of verse 3?

When Jesus speaks of "coming like a thief" it can refer to "the day of the Lord" which can bring both judgment and salvation. The day of the Lord is not one singular event. It refers to times when God manifests His presence uniquely, often bring judgment or deliverance. When we focus our lives on worldly, earthly pursuits, we stand to lose all we've acquired (i.e. become stripped) in "times of judgment".

9. What does Jesus say about those in Sardis who "have not defiled their clothes"?
10. Compare this to what Jesus says in Rev 16:15
11. What promises does Jesus make to the one who conquers (i.e. remembers, repents and keeps)?
12. How does this promise strengthen and encourage you to overcome by confidently putting on and pursuing Jesus' righteousness and not that of the world?

SEEING JESUS CHRIST

Jesus, who was the perfect, spirit-filled human ("has the seven spirits of God") lived the perfect life. He was clothed in perfect white clothing. When He was judged for our sins on the Cross, He was stripped of all He possessed on earth (His garments), yet He lost nothing of eternal value. He was "fully clothed". If He had compromised and "defiled His clothes" He could have acquired so much on earth, but lost infinitely more for eternity. He did not. Jesus' life may have appeared "dead" to many on the outside, since He had so little. Yet it was the epitome of fully alive on the inside!

- How does Jesus' life move you to evaluate the state of your spiritual life from a perspective of what you are "clothing" yourself with?

MAKING IT MATTER

1. What might Jesus say specifically to our church in terms of our works "not being complete" before God? Why?
2. Do we/you emphasize the gospel "we have received and heard" or has something else become your priority?
3. How have you struggled with keeping your past reputation of being alive more than truly being alive according to Jesus?
4. What should we use to evaluate the true, spiritual life of our church?
5. Do you evaluate your spiritual life this way? Why/why not?

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 it glorifies God.

1. Ask people to share one key, specific application from today's lesson that they want God to bring about in their life. Then take time to pray for each other in these areas.