



Sermon 8 – To the church in Laodicea - Revelation 3:14-22

1. Has anything stood out for from this series on the 7 letters? Something new to you perhaps – or any are you have been helped or challenged to consider?

Authority

2. Read Revelation 1:5. Jesus said to be the faithful and true witness. What does this mean? What does ‘firstborn from the dead’ mean? See also Colossians 1:18 and surrounding verses.

What’s good

Sadly nothing!

What’s not

3. What don’t we like about things that are lukewarm – both literally and metaphorically?
4. What does Jesus mean by *you are neither hot nor cold... you are lukewarm*? What does a lukewarm church or a lukewarm Christian look like?
5. Why is Jesus so offended by this that he’d rather someone be cold. What do you think he means by *I am about to spit you out of my mouth*?
6. How do you think someone ends up ‘lukewarm’ in their relationship with Jesus?
7. How can we guard against ever becoming ‘lukewarm’?

Action

8. Three action points related to the geography and commerce of Laodicea – gold refined in fire, white clothes and salve to put on eyes. What was Jesus asking these Christians to do?
9. What might these exhortations means for us – how do we apply them?

Encouragement

Revelation 3:20 has often been preached as if it were about non-Christians being encouraged to let Jesus in. However, from the context, Jesus is clearly addressing lukewarm believers. He is knocking on their door and seeking to renew fellowship with them. What an amazing picture of grace and invitation!

10. A Christian friend of yours appears to have become very lukewarm in their relationship with Jesus. They can take or leave church and seem to have no passion for God nor for serving him anymore. How would you try and encourage or exhort them on the basis of this letter?
11. What Jesus mean by his promise that they who overcome will have the right to sit with him on his throne?

Pray for one another that the lessons in these letters will stay with us – the encouragements, the admonishments and the promises!

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...by the power of the Holy Spirit
...and the authority of the Word of God**

Date: 25th March 2018
Services: 730, 930 Peregian
Series: 7 searching letters
Passage: Revelation 3:14-22
Title: To the church in Laodicea
Outline: Authority
What's good
What's not
Action
Encouragement

Well this morning we've arrived at the 7th of the 7 letters to the 7 churches of Revelation 2-3 and I hope you've found plenty to encourage you - for the Lord has had loads to commend in the life of the church in the 1st century, and in the life OUR church along the way...

- **Ephesus** - he commends their hard work and perseverance, their intolerance of wickedness, and the way they've endured hardship
- **Smyrna** - he commends the fact that they are rich in Christ, despite their afflictions and poverty
- **Pergamum** - he commends their staying true to Jesus' name and that they haven't renounced their trust in Jesus even when one of their number was martyred
- **Thyatira** - he commends them for their deeds, their love and faith, their service and perseverance... and they are doing more than even they did at first...
- **Philadelphia** - last week we saw that he commends them because they kept Jesus' word, they had not denied Jesus' name and because they had endured patiently....

So many encouragements from these letters - encouragements I see as applicable right here... and I hope you've been encouraged along the way. //

But perhaps also, you've been **spoken** to...

Whether that be because you had indeed **forsaken** your first love, or you realised there are some **idols** or **sexual immorality** to deal with, or you realised you have a reputation for being **alive** but are **dead**...

...and perhaps these letters have caused you to take **stock** a little... and that's a **good** thing because we read that the Lord **disciplines** those whom he **loves**... and if he's **working** on you... like he's working on me - then, praise God... it's because he loves us! - and because he is **transforming** us by his **Holy Spirit**...!

Well - today's final letter - to **Laodicea** and we're going to follow our normal pattern:

...we begin by seeing why Jesus has

1. **authority** to speak

Then we'll see

2. what's **good?** ... in the church at Laodicea
3. What's **not** -

We'll see what the call to

4. **action** is

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And finally, we'll explore the word of

5. **encouragement...**

so first - why does Jesus claim authority to speak?

1. Authority

Have a look with me - v14 - *These are the words of the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the ruler of God's creation.*

You'll recall that in each letter, Jesus claims authority by way of recapping some aspect of his nature which was presented back in ch 1....

So **there** we read *Grace and peace to you from him who is, and who was, and who is to come, and from the seven spirits before his throne, and from Jesus Christ, who is the faithful witness, the firstborn from the dead, and the ruler of the kings of the earth.*

Who is, was and is to come = the Amen - the one who **truly is**

Faithfulness witness - witness to God **himself** - for he has come from God - John's Gospel - Jesus - the way, the **truth** and the life

And the ruler of the Kings of the earth - because he is the ruler of God's **creation...**

So yes - he has **authority** to speak... and again - we do well to **listen...**

2. What's good?

Well as for the Christians in Sardis we looked at two weeks ago - there's sadly **nothing** good here... at least nothing he mentions in this letter - so - again - it's opposite to last week's letter where he found **nothing** to condemn...

So we move straightaway then - sadly - to....

3. What's not (so good)

Have a look with me at v15 *I know your deeds, that you are neither hot nor cold. I wish you were either one of the other! So, because you are lukewarm - neither hot nor cold - I am about to spit you out of my mouth.*

18 months ago, Susan and I moved into our own home - a new home which we had built... every day we thank the Lord for the blessing of that home and the joy it brings.

But Susan has **one complaint.** /

The **hot** water. /

It's not very hot. //

Because of work place health and safety laws, the temperature of the hot water system is limited to just under 50c.

Now you wouldn't call that lukewarm, but for Susan - it isn't hot enough when you really want to have a go at a greasy frying pan or the like, and so she ends up boiling the jug. //

Once we moved to Noosa just over 8 years ago, we had to find a new holiday destination because for years we came here, renting an apartment at Sunrise Beach.

So where do we go for holidays? Often, Cairns - or specifically - **Bramston Beach** about an hour and a quarter south of Cairns...

It's a lovely tiny village and we love the house we rent there... it backs right on to the Coral Sea... which is **pretty** to **look** at but you'd never want to **swim** in especially at the time of

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year we're there which is the last week in Nov and the first week in Dec.

Why? Not only because of the **stingers**... but because of the **temperature** of the **water** – totally **lukewarm**... must be **32-34c**... and it just feels - **yuk!**

There's lots of things we don't like if they're **lukewarm**... lukewarm **tea**... not great... lukewarm **chips**... yuk... if you're dinner's gone cold because you were on the phone – a lukewarm **roast** or **pasta** is not all that nice...

Nor do we like lukewarm **metaphorically** do we? – so if you come up with what you think is a **brilliant** idea for a holiday but your spouse is only **lukewarm** about it – well – it's not that great... You'd prefer if they there dead **keen** or dead **against** – at least you'd know where you **stand!**

If you want to move to the **Sunshine Coast**, but your spouse could **take it** or **leave it** – well – there's a few more conversations you have to have.... You'd prefer if they there dead **keen** or dead **against** – at least you'd know where they **stand!** But to be **lukewarm** about the **idea** – well – it's **awkward**... it's messy...

if you're lukewarm about your **job**, your **marriage**, your **children**... it's **messy**... //

and if you're lukewarm about **Jesus**??

Well Jesus says to the Christians at Laodicea – *you are neither hot nor cold* – you are lukewarm – *I wish you were one or the other* –

and we know exactly what he means.... And we can imagine how he must surely feel about that!! //

Here is a church that is so **bland**, so **wishy-washy**, so **apathetic** about its faith that Jesus warns it he will have **nothing** more to **do** with it!

They have no **vision**, no **plan**, no **direction** – neither do they *care* that they have no **vision**, no **plan**, no **direction**...

They are not **fired up** for evangelism, but they are not **against** it!

They're not **clear** on the gospel – but they don't **mind** it

They're not trying to **grapple** with the Scriptures – but they are not **against** them.

They are not looking to **grow** in their relationship with God and grow in the **likeness** of the Lord Jesus – but they are not **against** that sort of thing...

Can you see how **frustrating** that would have been?

And the sad thing friends; is that the church around the **country** I reckon has **many congregations** like this....

Harmless gatherings **Sunday by Sunday**.... Where clergy don't want to **say** anything or do anything too **bold** or take a **stand** on anything in case they **offend** some one...

And people in church can just **take it** or **leave it**... turn **up** or **not** turn up... **volunteer** or not **volunteer**... doesn't **matter** – “**whatever**...”!

...and Jesus says it makes him **sick!** – he's going to **spit them out of his mouth!** //

Now – what was the problem here? – how did they get like this?

I think it was because they were **self-sufficient!** – have a look with me at v17: *you say 'I am rich; I have acquired wealth and do not need a thing'. But you do not realise that you are wretched, pitiful, poor, blind and naked.'*

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so Laodicea was characterised by people who think they have everything they **need** or **want**, when all the time, *spiritually* speaking they are **bankrupt!** They have *nothing!*

One of my minister colleagues used to speak about people who were **big** in the **world**, but **small** in the **church**...

That is, people who at **work**, had significant roles, did well in their career, made a name for themselves... earned significant money... wielded influence – hired and fired people – etc... etc... dealt with millions of dollars...

But at **church** – they offered very **little**... they just fitted church in where there was nothing else pressing...

Big in the **world**... **sharp** – on the ball – everything at their **fingertips**...

At **church** – **lukewarm**... **insipid**... on the one level – **rich**... didn't need a thing – but **spiritually** – *wretched, pitiful, poor, blind and naked.* //

Now brothers and sisters, I don't think as a church **we're lukewarm**... **most** of us here are on-**fire** for the Lord... **keen, clear**... **ready to serve**... ready to **speak up** for Jesus... **fantastic!!**

But here are two things we do need to take note of:

(1) we must ensure that it is **never** our **problem**. // That we are **always** fired up and so, keen to **serve** the Lord, bring **glory** to him, promote the **gospel** and live **distinctive, God-pleasing lives**...

We must humbly always admit our **need** before God and come to him for the spiritual **riches** we **need**...

we must determine more now than ever, never to become **complacent**... **never** to **give up**, never to **lose** our **passion**... and never think we have **arrived** and we can put our **feet up**.

And (2)... I have to **ask** – although I don't think it's applicable as a whole **church** – it is possible you **personally** have grown **lukewarm** as a **Christian**?... your love's grown **cold**, but you don't really **care** anymore. You're **middle of the road** and **soft at the edges**. You're certainly not **against** the gospel, but you are not actually **fired up** about it **either**?

My prayer is that the gospel **itself** will fire you again.. and your **mediocrity** and **half-heartedness** will **die** a natural **death**... that **together** here, we can grow **hot** and **keen** and **clear** and **purposeful**... ///. May it never be said of us as a church – *you are lukewarm, neither hot nor cold... I am about to spit you out my mouth...* ///

4. Action

What's the action that to which Jesus calls a lukewarm church... or if *you're* lukewarm here this morning – what action is he calling **you** to make?

You'll see it in v18 – *I counsel you to buy from me gold refined in the fire, so you can become rich; and white clothes to wear, so you can cover your shameful nakedness; and salve to put on your eyes, so you can see.*

Now as for each of the churches, Jesus is picking up aspects of this city's life and using them as metaphors of spiritual life...

Buy **gold** from me says Jesus – well the city was a significant banking centre for the region

Wear **white clothes**? – well the city was known for its woollen cloth

Buy **salve** for your eyes says Jesus? – well the city was known for its remedial ointment for eye ailments!

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He's connecting with them and their day to day experience...

...but how is he using the metaphors?

Gold – the Apostle Peter speaks of faith which is of greater value than gold which is refined by fire... Jesus is saying the lukewarm Christian / – seek to be refined by Jesus... that your faith may be fanned into flame... and become hot instead of lukewarm!

White clothes? Elsewhere the New Testament speaks of putting on Christ... and the robe of his righteousness... he is telling the lukewarm Christian to put off their apathy and half-heartedness... and to put on Christ in all his glory.... To draw close to him once more... to be transformed into his likeness....

When we put our kids to bed... part of our bed time prayer – we always finished with 'and please make us more like the Lord Jesus every day'... that's what Jesus has in mind here...

And the **salve** for your eyes? – remember blind Bartimaeus? Who though he was blind could see exactly who Jesus is? – Jesus asks the lukewarm Christian to ask for spiritual wisdom and insight – that they might know the love of God in all its breadth, depth, height and length... to see with crystal clear clarity the reality of who Jesus is...

...for you can be sure that when your eyes are open to see **Jesus** in all his **power** and **glory** – you won't be **lukewarm** for very **long!!** //

Faith that is refined like **gold** –

The very **character** of **Christ**

And **eyes** to see the **ways** and **glory** of **Jesus**...

That is what a lukewarm **church** **needs** – or a lukewarm **individual**... //

One final action point – there tucked away in v19 – *be earnest and repent*... no more lukewarmness... and a definite decision to put away half-heartedness...!

Finally – what encouragement does he leave the church of Laodicea – what encouragement for us??

5. Encouragement

v20 *Here I am! I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in and eat with him and he with me.*

When you're lukewarm about Jesus... you feel it's a while since you have had any intimate fellowship with him.

He feels distant.

Here's a clue... maybe it's because lukewarm Christians have actually shut him out... and that's *why* they end up lukewarm

But see the grace and love of this invitation?

He's not **forcing** his way back in... he's graciously waiting for an invitation... and the very moment you respond to his **knocking** and **open** the **door** and **invite** him in – he's there... the **eating** – a **metaphor** for **sharing intimacy** – for **reconnecting**... for **relationship**...

What a **beautiful promise**... maybe for **you** today

... **open** the door to him... **invite** him **back in** to your life... and **he'll be there**... /

...draw **near** to him says Jesus' brother in the letter of James, and **he will draw near to you**...! //

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But there's one other encouragement...

Look with me at v21 *To him who overcomes (to the one who is victorious), I will give the right to sit with me on my throne, just as I overcame and sat down with my Father on his throne...*

Not only will the lukewarm Christian who repents find themselves **dining** with Jesus... they'll find themselves **reigning** with Jesus... !

...sharing his rule as we were designed to do from creation... *rule the earth and multiply* - do you **recall??** - // here's a promise of complete restoration... that in the new kingdom - the new heavens and the new earth - all will be as it was **meant to be!!** //

You **lukewarm today?** Don't leave here **lukewarm..!**

leave **hot** and **keen** and **clear thinking**... and these **promises** will be **yours**...

Whoever has ears, let them hear what the Spirit says to the churches. Amen.