**Pastor Tim’s Message Notes from 2-14-2021
To the Church in Laodicea…**

Today, on this Valentine’s Day, we often think a lot about love. We know from Scripture and from our experience that God is a God of love.

Everything God does is an expression of His love. Even in God’s anger and His judgments, it flows from His burning heart of love and passion for the best for people. He only wants what’s best for us. And what’s best for us is to be in a beautiful growing relationship with Him.

We have been journeying through Jesus’ messages to seven churches, found in the book of Revelation chapters 2-3. Every one of Jesus’ words to these seven churches was given in love and was what they needed to hear. And this was definitely the case in this 7th and final church, the church in Laodicea.

But before we look at Jesus’ words to that particular church, let us hear a little bit about this city.

The city of Laodicea was considered an important city for many reasons. First, it was important for trade and communication. This was because it was located right along a major trade route.

Second, it was also a city that was politically important. And this was probably because it was located at the crossroads of three other important areas in the region. And because it was politically important, it became the administrative and judicial and banking center of the region.

And third and finally, there was a school of medicine in Laodicea, that brought more fame to the city.

As a result, Laodicea became a city of wealth and comfort and power and influence. And it was a city where many people were affluent and prideful.

But like every city, the gospel of Jesus Christ arrives and transforms hearts and minds. And people become followers of the Savior. It was likely Paul’s co-worker, Epaphras, that had a role in bringing the gospel of Jesus to this city decades earlier.

But by the time of the book of Revelation, in the mid-90’s AD, unfortunately it appears that the culture of Laodicea was converting the church much more so than the church bringing the light of Jesus further into the city.

And Jesus, while still speaking in love, has very strong words of correction for them.

Let us hear Jesus’ message to this church now. It is found in Revelation 3:14-22

**14“To the angel of the church in Laodicea write:**

**These are the words of the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the ruler of God’s creation. 15I know your deeds, that you are neither cold nor hot. I wish you were either one or the other! 16So, because you are lukewarm—neither hot nor cold—I am about to spit you out of my mouth. 17You say, ‘I am rich; I have acquired wealth and do not need a thing.’ But you do not realize that you are wretched, pitiful, poor, blind and naked. 18I 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.**

**19Those whom I love I rebuke and discipline. So be earnest and repent. 20Here 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 that person, and they with me.**

**21To the one who is victorious, I will give the right to sit with me on my throne, just as I was victorious and sat down with my Father on his throne. 22Whoever has ears, let them hear what the Spirit says to the churches.”**

After Jesus’ informing them that He has an angel on assignment for this church, as He does for all His churches, Jesus greets them in a unique way.

Jesus identifies Himself as **the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the ruler of God’s creation.**

The word “Amen” means, so be it. It is not a masculine name. We are not to pray Amen and Awomen, as some ministers may recommend. It means so be it.

And Jesus is saying that He is the so be it of God. Jesus spoke the word and so be it, heaven and earth were made. Jesus said “Let there be light” and so be it, there was light.

Jesus is reminding them that His words have the authority of God in them.

In fact, in the gospels, there are a numerous of times where Jesus says “Amen, Amen” I say unto you or verily, verily, I say to you” ---- and what Jesus would say after that was always something extremely important.

So in referring to Himself as **the Amen**, it was as if Jesus was telling them to ready themselves for what Jesus would say next.

And not only does Jesus call Himself “**The Amen**,” He also declares Himself to be “**the faithful and true witness and the ruler over God’s creation**.”

These words remind them that Jesus has been faithful to them and Jesus rules over them.

Jesus is always faithful and Jesus rules over all, even when others choose to be unfaithful and choose to reject Jesus’ rule over them, as the Laodicean Christians seemed to have been doing.

Following this introduction, Jesus tells them that He knows their deeds and that they are neither cold or hot.

He tells them that they should be cold or hot, but instead are lukewarm and He is about to vomit them out.

Again, Jesus is still speaking in love here. This is what they needed to hear. They needed to be woken up to their apathy and lukewarmness in their faith.

One interesting thing about this city of Laodicea was that while it was such an influential town and while it had a gymnasium and a stadium and many elegant buildings, Laodicea actually did not have their own water supply. They had to pipe in their water.

They received some of their water from Hierapolis, which was 6 miles to their north. Hierapolis was known for its hot springs.

And 10 miles to their east was Colossae, which was known for their pure, cold drinking water.

By the time the water got to Laodicea, it wasn’t as hot or as cold. And lukewarm water just isn’t as drinkable as hot or cold. It would be better to be one or the other.

And Jesus is informing these Christians that they had lost their spiritual fervor and had become lukewarm, like their water.

And Jesus explains what led to His diagnosis of their state.

Jesus says **“You say, ‘I am rich; I have acquired wealth and do not need a thing.’”**

It appears that the Christians in Laodicea had fallen into one of Satan’s most common traps. “The trap of trusting in their wealth, rather than in the Lord.”

They had become rich in spirit. Jesus wants people who are poor in spirit. People who recognize their complete need and dependance on God for all things.

Jesus’ treatment for them was for them to “purchase from Him gold refined by fire so they can truly be wealthy, and white garments so you can be clothed and eye salve to anoint your eyes so you can see.”

Jesus also says “all those whom I love I correct and discipline. Be zealous and repent. Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If any hear my voice and opens the door, I will enter in and dine with them and they with me.”

Wow! These words of Christ are so profound.

**First, their cure was to invite Jesus back into His church**. Jesus was knocking at the door and waiting to be let in.

These backslidden Christians needed to first invite Jesus back into their church. Jesus is meant to be the head of the church, not knocking at the door waiting to be let in.

**And second, after letting Jesus in, they needed to receive His discipline. His correction**. Jesus was correcting them in love. They needed to repent or turn away from their self-reliant life and recognize their need for Christ once again.

**And third, Jesus wanted to eat with them**. What this means is Jesus wanted to these Christians to have fellowship with them, to share their lives with Him. To invite Him to be a part of and Lord over everything in their lives. Sharing a meal spoke of intimacy, unity and friendship. Like the first of the 7 churches, the church in Ephesus, these Christians needed to fall in love with Jesus again. Everything begins there.

Before we close, I would like to share 3 quick applications for our lives today.

**The first one is to live dependent on Jesus**. Remember that we are called to be poor in spirit, recognizing our complete need and dependence on Him every day. Do not let wealth or anything else lead you away from this. It is so important.

**Second, receive the Lord’s discipline and correction**. He always does this in His agape love. So if the Holy Spirit is leading you to do something or to stop doing something, know that God is guiding and disciplining and correcting you for your own good.

A good parent lovingly disciplines their children and God is our perfect Father.

**And third and finally, remember that Jesus desires fellowship with you**. While we will not physically dine with Him until we see Him face-to-face in glory, He desires that we are intentional in inviting His presence to be with us and to be in communication with us at all times.

I would like to conclude with a poem, written by a man named Doug Warburton. And the poem is entitled Shoes in Church:

Shoes In Church by Doug Warburton

Shoes in Church

I showered and shaved................ I adjusted my tie.

I got there and sat................ In a pew just in time.

Bowing my head in prayer............ As I closed my eyes.

I saw the shoe of the man next to me....... Touching my own. I sighed.

With plenty of room on either side......... I thought, 'Why must our soles touch?'

It bothered me, his shoe touching mine…. But it didn't bother him much.

A prayer began: 'Our Father'............. I thought,

'This man with the shoes, has no pride. They’re dusty, worn, and scratched.

Even worse, there are holes on the side!'

'Thank You for blessings,' the prayer went on.

The shoe man said................. A quiet 'Amen.'

I tried to focus on the prayer....... But my thoughts were on his shoes again.

Aren't we supposed to look our best…. When walking through that door?

'Well, this certainly isn't it,' I thought, glancing toward the floor.

Then the prayer was ended............ And the songs of praise began.

The shoe man was certainly loud..... Sounding proud as he sang.

His voice lifted the rafters........ His hands were raised high.

The Lord could surely hear.... The shoe man's voice from the sky.

It was time for the offering........ And what I threw in was steep.

I watched as the shoe man reached.... Into his pockets so deep.

I saw what was pulled out.......... What the shoe man put in.

Then I heard a soft 'clink' as when silver hits tin.

The sermon really bored me.......... To tears, and that's no lie.

It was the same for the shoe man... For tears fell from his eyes.

At the end of the service........ As is the custom here.

We must greet new visitors, And show them all good cheer.

But I felt moved somehow........... And wanted to meet the shoe man.

So after the closing prayer........ I reached over and shook his hand.

He was old and his skin was dark..... And his hair was truly a mess.....

But I thanked him for coming.......... For being our guest...

He said, 'My name’s Charlie............ I'm glad to meet you, my friend.'

There were tears in his eyes......... But he had a large, wide grin.

'Let me explain,' he said............. Wiping tears from his eyes.

'I've been coming here for months...... And you're the first to say 'Hi.''

'I know that my appearance...........Is not like all the rest.

'But I really do try....................To always look my best.'

'I always clean and polish my shoes...Before my very long walk.'

'But by the time I get here........They're dirty and dusty, like chalk.'

My heart filled with pain............ And I swallowed to hide my tears.

As he continued to apologize.......... For daring to sit so near

He said, 'When I get here............ I know I must look a sight.'

'But I thought if I could touch you....Then maybe our souls might unite.'

I was silent for a moment............. Knowing whatever was said

Would pale in comparison.... I spoke from my heart, not my head.

'Oh, you've touched me,' I said.......'And taught me, in part'

'That the best of any man..............Is what is found in his heart.'

The rest, I thought............... This shoe man will never know.

Like just how thankful I really am.... That his dirty old shoe touched my soul.

Live each day as your last, for we never know our time here on earth. Love and Peace My Friends and remember that it is not how we look on the outside but how we look within.

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