

The Needy Church

Revelation 3:14-22

INTRODUCTION

- A. We live in a society where people need everything they see — they need a new house, they need a new car, they need new clothes, they need a new this, they need a new that.
- B. Churches can get caught up in this attitude as well- they need a new preacher, or new elders, or new Bible class teachers, or a new building, or a new this, or a new that.
- C. But, sometimes churches really do need something.
 - 1. Jesus looked at the church in Laodicea, and he found a church which needed much; they were quite needy.
 - 2. Let's examine this text to see what the church in Laodicea needed.

THEY NEEDED ZEAL, vv. 15-16

- A. Jesus knew their works.
 - 1. This is the last letter to one of the churches of Asia Minor.
 - 2. And notice that to each congregation, Jesus said, "I know your works."
 - a. There is no hiding our works from Jesus, for he knows what we do.
 - b. He knows what you do individually, and he knows what this church does collectively.
- B. Jesus knew that this church was neither hot nor cold.
 - 1. This metaphor comes from the context of Laodicea.
 - a. Colossae was close to Laodicea, and in Colossae were cold springs that provided the weary much needed refreshment.
 - b. Also, six miles from Laodicea was Hierapolis.
 - 1) In Hierapolis were boiling hot springs, and people used this hot water for medicinal purposes.
 - 2) The water flowed from Hierapolis to Laodicea, but by the time the water reached Laodicea it was only a tepid mineral water.
 - 3) This water made those who stopped for a drink deathly sick at their stomachs, and they would spit out this water.
 - 2. In a spiritual sense, the church at Laodicea had become like that water.
 - a. They were neither cold nor hot.
 - 1) They weren't on fire for Jesus nor were they against him.
 - 2) What they were doing, they were doing halfheartedly.
 - b. We can become lukewarm ourselves and act halfheartedly.
 - 1) We don't care if we study Scripture or not.
 - 2) We don't care if we worship or not.
 - 3) We don't care if we strive to keep ourselves pure from sin or not.
 - c. Scripture addresses those who just serve God halfheartedly.
 - 1) Amaziah "did what was right in the sight of the LORD, but not with a loyal heart" (2 Chr. 25:2).
 - 2) "'And yet for all this her treacherous sister Judah has not turned to Me with her whole heart, but in pretense,' says the LORD" (Jer. 3:10).
 - 3) Jesus said, "No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will be loyal to the one and despise the other" (Mt. 6:24). Jesus said that because

some people attempt to serve God with divided loyalties.

- d. We are to serve God with our entire being — “You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind” (Mt. 22:37).
3. Because this church had become lukewarm Jesus was going to spew them out of his mouth.
 - a. Spew literally means to vomit — the idea is that this church was so repulsive that Jesus had to get rid of them.
 - b. If we are lukewarm — neither on fire for Jesus or opposed to him — we make him sick at his stomach and he will vomit us out of his mouth.
 - c. Are you lukewarm? Will Jesus vomit you out of his mouth?

THEY NEEDED JESUS’ ADVICE, vv. 17-18

- A. They said that they were rich, had become wealthy, and had need of nothing, v. 17.
 1. Laodicea was a very affluent city.
 - a. Less than ten years before John wrote Revelation, Laodicea was destroyed by a devastating earthquake, and the city rebuilt itself without any assistance from the Empire.
 - b. Laodicea was the banking center of the region.
 - c. Laodicea was also known for black wool which was made into garments in demand throughout the Empire — this brought much wealth to the city.
 - d. The city was also well-known for an eye salve produced in a ophthalmology school there.
 2. The church had been influenced by the city, and they thought that they needed nothing spiritually.
 - a. They thought they had everything together and that they were the perfect congregation.
 - b. But, they were indeed wretched, miserable, poor, blind, and naked.
 - 1) They were destitute; they had nothing.
 - 2) Instead of having everything together as they thought they had many, many needs.
 3. Like those in Laodicea, we can deceive ourselves.
 - a. We can think we have everything together spiritually, that we have arrived, when in fact we are spiritually weak.
 - b. Illustration about Queen Elizabeth I’s refusal to look at mirrors, Encyclopedia of 15,000 Illustrations, #1 1314.
- B. Jesus counseled them to buy from him what they needed, v. 17.
 1. What they needed to buy would correct what they were — the gold would correct their poverty, the garments would correct their nakedness, and the eye salve would correct their blindness.
 2. Just as this congregation needed to go to Jesus for what they needed spiritually, we need to go to him for what we need spiritually.
 - a. What we need spiritually cannot be found anywhere but in Christ.
 - b. All spiritual blessings are found in Christ (Eph. 1:3)- if we want blessed spiritually, we must go to Christ.
 - c. Are you going to Christ for what you need spiritually?

THEY NEEDED REPENTANCE, vv. 19-20

- A. Those whom Jesus loves he rebukes and chastens, v. 19.
 1. Although Jesus was disappointed in this congregation, he still loved them — Even though he becomes disappointed with us, he still loves us.
 - a. Jesus was showing his love through this rebuke.
 - b. Just as parents rebuke their children out of love, God disciplines his children out of love (Heb. 12:5-6).
 2. Jesus shows his love for us by rebuking and chastening us.

- a. There are going to be times that we need to be rebuked and chastened.
- b. He does this, I believe, in several ways:
 - 1) Jesus does this through Scripture (Heb. 4: 12-13).
 - 2) Jesus also does this through providence.
 - a) Something may occur that causes me to realize that my way of living isn't correct; alcoholics refer to this as hitting bottom.
 - b) For example, if I am a Christian struggling with alcohol, and I'm driving drunk, pulled over, arrested, forced into rehab, I just might decide to correct my actions.
 - 3) Jesus also does this through his people.
 - a) If I am not living right, my brethren have a responsibility to correct me (Gal. 6: 1-2).
 - b) If I am not living right, my brethren have a responsibility to withdraw fellowship (1 Cor. 5).
- B. Jesus rebukes this congregation in order that they might repent.
 - 1. His rebuking them is not to be cruel, but he's trying to help them; he wants them to make things right.
 - 2. If there are things in our lives that are not right, Jesus wants us to repent; he wants us to turn back to him.
- C. Jesus stands at the door and knocks, v. 20.
 - 1. Although this letter to Laodicea is rather discouraging, it ends on a high note.
 - 2. If anyone hears Jesus voice, he will come in to him and dine with him.
 - a. In biblical times, eating together was a sign of close fellowship.
 - b. Jesus is saying that he wants a close relationship with this congregation.
- D. Jesus wants to have a close relationship with you, but you have to open the door. Would you open that door this night?