THE CHURCH AT LAODICEA

THE DANGER OF APATHY

**DATE: 7/15/2018, 7/22/2018 pm**

**TEXT: Revelation 3:14-22 (Stand and Read)**

**INTRODUCTION**

We now come to the last of the 7 Letters Dictated by Jesus to the Apostle John in (chapters 2 & 3) the Book of Revelation

We have been studying the Dangers that were Facing these churches

Dangers that Our church Faces as well

Last time we look at the Church in Philadelphia and its Danger of not taking Advantage of a Great Opportunity

Tonight, we're going to look at the Danger the Church in Laodicea Faced

That Danger was …

**Apathy –** means *a lack of interest, enthusiasm, or concern about something important*

A couple of these churches had good reports - but at a glance most of these churches reveals some serious problems

The downward slide that began with a loss of its first love in Ephesus, culminates with total apostasy in Laodicea

This church had gotten so far away from God that it literally made Him sick

Keep in mind the 3 Perspectives of these Letters …

-- **Practically** – These are real letters to real churches with real problems in real time

-- **Prophetically** - These letters portray the church at various stages of church history

The Laodicean church pictures the state of the church from about 1900 AD to the Rapture

It's largely the church we see in the world today

It's an apostate (false) church

-- **Personally** - These letters should speak to every Christian and to every church that reads them

The History of this Church

This city was founded by Antiochus II sometime before 253 BC

It was named after his wife

The city was located on a high plateau and secure from enemy attack

The one defensive problem in Laodicea was the fact that there was no internal source of water

Water had to be piped in through aqueducts

One source was from the hot springs in Hierapolis six miles to the north

Another source was from Colossae (10 mi. east)

(This fact will be important as we get into the message)

Laodicea was destroyed by an earthquake in 61 AD

The city was so wealthy and so self-sufficient that they rebuilt their city with their own resources

(refusing an offer of aid from Rome)

The city was famous for 3 primary characteristics

-- Finances - It was a center of banking and commerce,

Known throughout the Roman Empire for its wealth and financial power

-- Fashion - It was renowned for a soft, black wool

 produced there

 This wool was considered a luxury and was sought after for clothing and rugs

Laodicea was the center of fashion in its day

-- Pharmaceuticals - There was a famous medical school in Laodicea which produced a pill that was sold all over the Roman Empire

This pill was crushed, mixed with water to form a paste

This paste was rubbed into the eyes and was supposed to cure a variety of eye problems

Jesus uses all of these in His Message to this church

With this background in mind …

Let’s look into these verses and consider our Lord’s words of Disapproval and Warning

I think these words are particularly relevant today …

Because churches like Laodicea - and people in them

… Have a Laodicean mentality that needs to change

Let's Pray and look at **The Danger of Apathy**

**~~~Prayer~~~**

**I. THE "PROBLEMS" – vs. 14-17 …**

We find No praise, compliments, applauds or congratulations in this letter

Jesus has nothing Good to say (to them) at all!

He simply comes to them and lays out the Problems as He sees them

What were the Problems Facing this Church? (3)

**A. They had a 'Possession' Problem – v. 14 a**

***"And unto the angel of the church of the Laodiceans"***

We'd miss this if we didn't pay close attention

This same introduction is found in every Letter written to the other churches

In each case, Jesus uses ***"of"*** or ***"in"*** to describe the church

**Revelation 2:1 –*"Unto the angel of the church of Ephesus"***

In **Revelation 2:8,12,18; 3:1,7 – *"And unto the angel of the church in … "***

But in **Revelation 3:14** He writes – ***"And unto the angel*** of the ***church of the Laodiceans write"***

He adds one little word **– *"the"***

It may seem like a small thing, but it's not

In each of the first 6 churches, Jesus is saying that those churches belong to Him

Even though some had problems, He was still in change

These churches were letting the Holy Spirit lead them

But when He comes to this church, it's a different story

For, in this phrase we see that this church was leading itself

This was the church of **the** Laodiceans, Not **the** church of Jesus Christ

They had a problem with who was the real boss

That little word ***"the"*** is a *definite article*

Showing that the Laodiceans *thought* this church belonged to them

**I Corinthians 6:20 – *"For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body,***

***… and in your spirit, which are God's"***

**They had a 'Possession' Problem**

**B. They had a 'Passion' Problem – v. 15 a**

Jesus tells them that, like the water in their city,

They have become Lukewarm

Remember the water problem I spoke of earlier?

Water from the hot springs in Hierapolis six miles away was brought into the city by aqueducts

By the time it reached Laodicea

The water was no longer hot, it was Lukewarm

Cold water from Colossae was also piped in

But by the time it reached Laodicea

This water was Lukewarm as well

This Tepid, Lukewarm water made getting refreshment in Laodicea difficult

The church had also become Lukewarm

This means that they had lost their Passion for the things of the Lord

 They had become Indifferent and Apathetic

They had reached a place where they were just going through the motions

They were unmoved by the things of the Lord

Apparently - they were indifferent toward the cross of Christ - the Word of God - and the condition of the Lost

These folks were not burning with Passion for Jesus

Neither were they totally dead and cold

They were somewhere in between

And their condition made Jesus sick! – **v. 16**

We know people are lost and we know that lost people are going to Hell

But do we really care?

We say, “*That’s terrible, I wish they would get saved*”

 But - we don’t show up at prayer or go out to witness

We really don’t care!

The average church member today is a study in Apathy!

They are not exactly Dead because they do some praying – hear some preaching – sing a little

But, they are not exactly on Fire either

There is no Excitement and no Passion about …

… Who they serve - what they hear - and what they are doing

They are somewhere in the middle of the road

That is exactly where most church members are today!

People enter a church - take their seat - fold their arms and say, “*Bless me if you can!*”

-- They never feel the need to go to an altar to pray

-- They never feel a need to testify

-- They never feel a need to do anything (but come and go)

How can we hear about Jesus - His love for our soul …

His death on the cross - all that He has done for us

And still remain unmoved?

How can we know Him and never be moved by that relationship?

I certainly don’t expect everyone to respond like I would

But I think there ought to be some signs of life

 Some emotion - some hint that our soul is moved by the Word of God, the Spirit of God and the work of God

Where is our Passion for the things of the Lord?

There are major problems with a church member who reaches this point

**They had 'Possession' Problem**

**They had a 'Passion' Problem**

**C. They had a 'Perception' Problem – v. 17 …**

When the people in Laodicea looked at themselves

They saw the Perfect church, nothing wrong

They looked at their Position, their Possessions and their Power and they said - “*We've arrived*!”

There they sat, indifferent, apathetic, unmoved and they think they are alright

The problem with this attitude is that it is based in flawed self-awareness (blind)

Jesus tells them that they are totally wrong about what they have and where they are

(Look at the verse again)

*How do we see ourselves? How does Jesus see us?*

I'll tell you what we need more than money - more than crowds - more than buildings - more than recognition in the community - more than many of the things people place such great value in

*We need Jesus and we need what He can do for us!*

 I would rather have Him - His presence and His power

Than anything material you can name!

We need Him! We must seek Him!

We must welcome Him! We must worship Him!

**THOSE ARE THE "PROBLEMS" (end)**

**II. THE "PRESCRIPTION" – vs. 14-19**

Jesus gives them a Prescription for their Problems

A Prescription is a Remedy, to make right an undesirable situation

This church was in trouble - but not all hope was lost

There was still hope! Jesus comes to give them His cure for their ailment

But, before He Prescribes His Cure, He has to set some things straight

**A. His 'Appearance' – v. 14** (in the examining Room)

First, we see the fact that He even comes to them to warn them (He could have not bothered)

Let's Notice why He Appears to them

He comes as …

**1.** The Confirmer

He Confirms Who He is by declaring He is the …

***"Amen"***

So, what does He mean by that?

This is a Hebrew word that means *So be it; let it be so; or it is so*

It was used to express the ideas of Faithfulness and Truth

**Deuteronomy 7:9 – *"Know therefore that the LORD thy God, He is God, the faithful God, which keepeth covenant and mercy with them that love Him and keep His commandments to a thousand generations;"***

When we use it to end our prayers we are saying –

“*Let it be so!*”

When we use it to respond to a message we are saying - “*It's so,* or *that's true!*”

It's a word of Confirmation and Finality

When Jesus comes to this church

He comes as the One with the Final Word

**Hebrews 1:2** tells us that God - ***“Hath in these last days spoken unto us by His Son, whom He hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also He made the worlds;”***

Jesus comes as the Confirmer of all God’s Promises

**II Corinthians 1:20 – *“For all the promises of God in Him are yea, and in Him Amen, unto the glory of God by us”***

Regardless of how this church saw itself

Jesus comes to tell them the Truth

He comes to have the final say in Laodicea

He's the Confirmer

Next, He comes as …

**2.** The Confronter (And No one likes to be confronted)

He says He is “***the faithful and true witness***”

This church's view about itself was flawed

Jesus wants them to know that He knows them as they really are

And He's coming to reveal their true state

What they thought about themselves was Not right

And He's come to set that record straight

A lot of the time we are not what we think we are

We like to believe we are, but when the truth is told

He's the Confirmer, The Confronter and …

**3.** The Creator

He calls Himself “***the beginning of the creation of God***”

Therefore, He is in Control of Everything

Not a speck of dust can move in the universe without His permission! / He's in Control

He comes to this church, that thought it was running its own show

But in spite of what they might have thought

He reminds them that He is still in Control

**Ephesians 5:23 – *"… Christ is the head of the church: and He is the Saviour of the body"***

That means He is controlling your life as well

You best find out what He wants done

And don't make decisions on your own

He's the One Who knows us better than we know ourselves

He's the One in control - in spite of what some people may think!

 **His 'Appearance'**

**B. His 'Announcement' – v. 15 b, - 17** (This is the Diagnosis)

First, let's look at …

**1.** The Desire **– v. 15 b** (In His Announcement)

In **v. 15 b** He says – ***"I would thou wert cold or hot"***

He now uses the illustration of the water situation that these folks would have been well aware of

This church knew exactly what the Lord was talking about

First, He tells them that they are neither Cold or Hot

Then He expresses the Desire that they would be one or the other

You can't deal with people when they are Luke warm

You see, when someone is Cold spiritually they know it and can be corrected easily

And when someone is Hot spiritually they don't need to be corrected

People who are Luke Warn just Don't care

If they were one or the other He could do something with them

But because they are Luke Warm - He can't!

**2.** The Disgust **– v. 16** (in His Announcement)

He says because they are Luke Warm …

***"I will spue thee out of My mouth"***

That word ***"spue"*** means *to vomit*

Jesus tells this church that - like a drink of lukewarm water - they make Him want to vomit them out of His mouth

What He means is this: He cannot and will not tolerate their Indifference and Apathy!

Pretty strong language coming from the Lord!

**3.** The Description – **v. 17** (in His Announcement)

According to the first part of **v. 17** they thought they had it all

***"Because thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing;"***

He looks at them and tells them they have nothing!

-- They were Proud of their Achievements

But Jesus calls them …

“***wretched***” which means *troubled* (and)

“***miserable***” which means *pitiful*

-- They were Proud of their Wealth

Jesus tells them …

They are actually “***poor***” which means *destitute and reduced to begging*

-- They were Proud of the way they saw Themselves

Jesus tells them that they are “***blind***”

They couldn't see themselves as they really were

Someone said …

“*There is no one so blind as he who will not see*”

-- They were Proud of their Fashion

Yet, Jesus tells them that they are “***naked***”

 They are totally exposed and revealed for what they really are

To be naked in that society was the ultimate humiliation (Today, it's a badge of honor!)

**His 'Announcement'**

**C. His 'Advice' – v. 18** (Here's the Prescription)

Jesus tells this church exactly where they can find all the Help they need

Let's look at the Lord's Advise

**1.** Buy True Riches

If they will come to Him - put Him first, and live out the Word of God - they will know true riches

***"I counsel thee to buy of Me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich"***

**Psalm 12:6 –*"The Words of the LORD are pure Words: as silver tried in a furnace of earth, purified seven times"***

**2.** Put on Fine Clothing

***"and white raiment, that thou mayest be clothed, and that the shame of thy nakedness do(es) not appear;"***

He Advises them to adorn themselves in spiritual garments

This is an invitation to come to Him for salvation

Many were still lost in their sins

 If they will come to Him - He will cloth them in robes of righteousness and they will be no longer naked and exposed

**Isaiah 61:10 –** ***“I will greatly rejoice in the LORD, my soul shall be joyful in my God; for He hath clothed me with the garments of salvation, He hath covered me with the robe of righteousness, as a bridegroom decketh himself with ornaments, and as a bride adorneth herself with her jewels”***

**Revelation 19:8 –** ***“And to her was granted that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white: for the fine linen is the righteousness of saints”***

**3.** Anoint your Eyes

***"and anoint thine eyes with eyesalve, that thou mayest see"***

He advises them to come to Him so that He can restore their spiritual vision

When their spiritual vision is restored

They will be able to see themselves as they are and they will be able to see Him as He is

This will lead to repentance, obedience and humble service

We need our spiritual vision restored!

Why are people dead, dry, and indifferent?

Because we don't see ourselves as the Lord sees us!

**D. His 'Invitation' – v. 19**

***"As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten: be zealous therefore, and repent"***

Jesus gives them some much needed Advice, then He Invites them to come to Him

Let's look at His Invitation

**1.** His Compassion

***"As many as I love,"***

In spite of their indifference toward Him

He still loves them!

What a blessing!

Jesus doesn’t write people off when they don’t do as He pleases

But He calls them and continue to love them even what then reject Him and His love

**2.** His Caution

***"As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten"***

Jesus tells them (and us) that just because He loves us like we are

He loves us too much to leave us as we are

In an effort to get our attention

He will use 2 methods to turn us back to Him

-- He will “***rebuke***”

This word means *to convict, or to correct*

He will speak to us in our condition

He will send His Word and He will convict us in our hearts through the ministry of the Holy Spirit

**John 16:8 – *"And when He is come, He will reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment:"***

If we will respond to Him, He will receive us

**I John 1:9 – *"If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness"***

If we fail to heed His rebukes

He will use more direct methods

-- He will ***"chasten"***

The word “***chasten***” means *to correct with blows*

He may touch any area of our life to get our attention

He could even use death

**I Corinthians 11:30** – ***“For this cause many are weak and sickly among you, and many sleep”***

Those who refuse to walk in God’s path will encounter trouble in their lives

 **Proverbs 13:15 – *“Good understanding giveth favour: but the way of transgressors is hard”***

**Jeremiah 2:19 – *“Thine own wickedness shall correct thee, and thy backslidings shall reprove thee: know therefore and see that it is an evil thing and bitter, that thou hast forsaken the LORD thy God, and that My fear is not in thee, saith the Lord GOD of hosts”***

**Proverbs 15:10** – ***“Correction is grievous unto him that forsaketh the way: and he that hateth reproof shall die”***

**3.** His Counsel

“***be zealous…and repent***”

The word “***zealous***” means *to come to a boil*

It's talking about getting on Fire again for the Lord

When they see their need and turn to Him - it will manifest itself in genuine repentance

Remember - repentance can be defined as *a change of mind that results in a change of direction*

If Laodicea were to repent, they would again respond to the Lord and His presence in their church

They once again would be moved by the cross and by the plight of the lost sinner

We need to hear and heed the voice of the Lord here

In this church, we need to repent

We need to ask the Lord to let us see ourselves as we really are!

We need to be able to see Him as He really is

We need to come to a boil and to get on fire for Him and repent of our indifference, our apathy our lack of conviction and concern

God help us to get to Him before His judgment falls on us

**I Peter 4:17** – ***“For the time is come that judgment must begin at the house of God: and if it first begin at us, what shall the end be of them that obey not the gospel of God?”***

**THE "PROBLEMS"**

**THE "PRESCRIPTION"**

**III. THE "PROMISES" – vs. 20-22 …**

The Lord closes this letter with some truly blessed Promises

The sad truth is that Laodicea had evicted Jesus Christ from their church

He is on the outside trying to get in

If they would just follow the Prescription …

Jesus had some Precious Promises for them

He says “***I stand at the door and knock***”

In His effort to get back into this church - Jesus stands there and waits

These verbs are in the Present Tense

It could be stated this way - “***Behold, I am continually standing at the door, knocking and speaking"***

He never gives up in His efforts to enter the lives of those He loves

I am glad that He never gave up on me!

Let's look at these 3 Promises

**A. A 'Personal' Promise – v. 20 b**

**“*if any man hear My voice, and open the door, I will come in to him …*”**

I don't know if anyone is listening

I think of poor Rhoda in **Acts 12** when Peter came knocking

They thought she was crazy as well

Jesus does not need for the whole church to get on fire so that He can come in

He merely needs just one person to hear Him and open

Jesus is a gentleman! He will knock and He will call

But He will not break down the door

It must be opened by an act of the will

He Personally Promised to enter if we'd open

**B. A 'Precious' Promise – v. 20 c**

***"… and will sup with him, and He with me"***

What greater Promise could someone have than to have Jesus come to Supper

The ancient Greeks enjoyed three meals a day

They usually ate a large breakfast - a much smaller lunch - and then a leisurely evening meal

Which they called “***supper***”

At this evening meal, the family would take their time, talk and fellowship

It was a time of intimacy for the family

(We don't see that today)

**C. A 'Powerful' Promise – v. 21**

***"To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with Me in My throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with My Father in His throne"***

This verse is a promise that all the benefits of salvation

will be given to the person who overcomes

The converted person will become identified with Jesus, With His heavenly Father and His heavenly Home

Those who come to Jesus are promised that they will reign with Him and rejoice with Him in heaven one day

That's a powerful promise!

**CONCLUSION**

Where does this message find us this evening?

Are we saved by His grace?

Are we zealous and committed to the Lord and His work?

Or, are we indifferent and apathetic toward the things of the Lord?

Can you hear His voice and His Knocking?

Is the door open?

Does it need to be?

He wants our fellowship with Him; does He have it?

**THE "PROBLEMS"**

**THE "PRESCRIPTION"**

**THE "PROMISES"**