

We bow our hearts in prayer: Lord Jesus Christ, You have said, “Blessed is the one who reads aloud the words of this prophecy, and blessed are those who hear, and who keep what is written in it, for the time is near.” (Rev.1:3) Grant that we, who are conquerors only through You, may be so blessed that our reading and hearing today produce a godly zeal appropriate for those who will reign with You on the throne of Your Father. Amen.

To the Church that is in Parkland:

Grace to you and peace from Him who is and who was and who is to come,

Our text today is a favorite text of those who believe that one must accept Jesus into his heart in order to be truly converted.

That is a sad... and erroneous... understanding of it.

But if you consider the context of these inviting words, as we shall do this morning, then you will find a rather different... and comforting reality.

... We read as follows in Jesus' name:

[Jesus said,] “Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and eat with him, and he with Me. The one who conquers, I will grant him to sit with Me on My throne, as I also conquered and sat down with My Father on His throne. He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.” ^(ESV)

This is Your Word, heavenly Father; sanctify us in the truth, Your Word is Truth. Amen. ^(John 17:17)

St. John opens the book of Revelation informing us that it is

“the revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave Him to show to His servants.”

He then greets the 7 churches that were in Asia: Ephesus, Smyrna, Pergamum, Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia, and Laodicea and delivers to each of them a letter which Jesus dictated to him.

The letters follow a general format.

They are written to the angel, or messenger, of that particular city,

(so it's a letter to the pastor on what God wants him to preach to that particular congregation).

Then Jesus describes a certain divine character of Himself,

Then He speaks of what He sees in these churches, both good things and bad things.

He then calls them to repentance and

lastly leaves them with a promise to the one who conquers.

(And really, there isn't a Christian congregation around that couldn't benefit from studying each of these letters and examining itself in light of them.)

Our text comes from the last of these congregations, from Laodicea, which follows this same pattern.

Now as we consider our text, imagine yourself as a member of the Laodicean church,

which may be quite comparable in its availability of temporal welfare.

Your city is a wealthy city. An imperial mint is there to make coins. So money flows easily enough.

You even have a renown medical school that produces a famous salve for eyes.

It has a great wool industry for making clothing.

So what sin would you expect to hear about that He would see in you that was so bad?

In the previous churches, we read of such things as idolatry, sexual immorality, hypocrisy, and toleration of heresies, among other things. What could be so bad?

Now think about what you might have been thinking as you first heard Revelation read to you. You hear about Ephesus, the difficulties they were having, then Smyrna, then Pergamum, & so on... Is there a hint of smugness at first... "Well, we don't have that problem... Or that one..." "Wow, Thyatira, how can you call yourself a Christian church anymore?"

But then it comes to you... What could Jesus possibly reprimand you for? Jesus sees... a lack of zeal – this is the infamous "**lukewarm**" congregation.

Neither hot nor cold, so He would **spit them out of His mouth**.

And while usually there is something good that Jesus also sees, there isn't one for Laodicea. Their letter is one of sharp rebuke.

Now to us, initially, a lack of zeal may not sound all that bad.

"Hey, they're still Christians," we might say, "just lacking a little enthusiasm."

But do you know how Jesus goes on to describe them? **Wretched, pitiable, poor, blind, and naked**.

Do you imagine that this might have come to quite a shock to them? Does it too you?

What did Jesus see that we don't see?

It was their hearts He saw. And He tells them what attitude He saw in them:

"You say, 'I am rich, I have prospered, and I need nothing,' not realizing that you are wretched, pitiable, poor, blind, and naked."

They had no zeal for the joy of their salvation because they felt no need for it.

They were satiated, satisfied well enough, by their temporal material wealth that they became distracted from the more vital eternal and spiritual matters of their conscience. But as was already suggested, perhaps their conscience wasn't very active, but allowed them to believe that all must be right with them and God since they prospered here.

But can we boast of being any better?

Who of us realizes exactly how wretched our own sinful condition is?

David is right: **Who can discern his errors?**^{Psalms 19:12} ...especially here in reference to zeal?

We cannot quantify or gauge our zeal... or lack of it.

No doubt the Laodiceans believed themselves to be Christians, "good" ones, I would imagine, maybe even zealous ones, as I would guess we do of ourselves often enough.

Can you not be like them? What idolatry do you confess, since we know we are not free of idolatry?

With what heresies, what false comforts from this world's cultural teachers,

do you allow to take root in your hearts unchecked by Scripture, because you do not read it?

What immorality lurks in your hearts, crosses your lips, visits your screen, or is even gratified illicitly?

With what hypocritical pretenses do you deceive your neighbor and try to lie to your Savior?

With what amount of apathy or indifference do you seize upon the opportunity to be in God's gracious presence every week: to examine yourself before Him and find His nail-pierced hands outstretched to enfold you?

Have you been living in such self-security, blind to the depth of your wretchedness?

Unmindful of the nakedness in which you appear before the all-seeing eyes of God?

Rich in self-delusions of spirituality, but poor in the Spirit?

Zealous, but not for the things of God? On that account... lukewarm and tepid.

These are harsh accusations. In our day, the messenger could easily be taken for a hater,
and the One who gave the message judgmental, too demanding, and _____.

You could close your ears and shut out the accusations...

But then you wouldn't hear the knock at the door of your heart...

A heart which is already bleeding from guilt and aching from remorse.

But Jesus does not knock to see if you will open to Him.

It is not a test of obedience to determine if you are worthy of His presence and forgiveness.

He knocks because, as He says, "**Those I love, I reprove and discipline,
and so be zealous and repent.**"

This is the voice of your dear Savior, who comes to you. He is not far off, aloof to your real needs.

He has and gives the very things you need to be zealous.

It is not the motivation of law and guilt that builds zeal.

These actually kill godly zeal, just as they stand in judgment over you.

Instead, your zeal is inspired by the story of Jesus riding into Jerusalem.

There the triumphant king humbly gives Himself over as the appointed Passover Lamb,
to take your place on the excruciating throne of disgrace in the cross.

There He hung as the **wretched, pitiable, poor, blind, and naked,**
apathetic, immoral, hypocritical, heretical **sinner;**

so that He could **declare** you **innocent from hidden**, as well as public, **faults;** ^{Psalms 19:12}

so that He could come in to you and dine with you, having communion with you;

so that He could share with you His throne of glory, not only to sit with Him,

but also to reign with Him and your heavenly Father.

He who has an ear, let him hear... and rejoice!

Open the door of your mouth and heart crying out again the words of our collect:

*Stir up, we beseech You, Your power O Lord, and come, that by Your protection we may be rescued
from the threatening perils of our sins and be saved by Your mighty deliverance;*

*Through Jesus Christ, Your Son... **The Lord our Righteousness.** Our zeal. Our morality. Our Truth.*

Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord!

And open the door of your mouth again, and sing out a cry out for deliverance.

Sing with the pilgrims on Palm Sunday, "**Hosanna**," that is "save now."

Indeed! "Save now" O Lord, from our lukewarmness; from our spiritual apathy and indifference.

Make us zealous and frequent recipients of your gracious forgiveness,

communing with You, and You in us, by Your body given and Your blood shed for us.

Hosanna, Hosanna in the highest.

Glory be to God in the highest, and on earth peace, goodwill toward men. Amen

Soli Deo Gloria