

Revelation: A Message to Laodicea

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[0 : 0 0] How's everybody doing? It's good to be back at Cyberport. So hopefully everybody, no one went to West Island today. Everybody is here. If you're not here, then you wouldn't hear what I'm saying, so it doesn't really matter, does it? Yeah, so we are finishing up this series in the book of Revelations. We've been talking about seven churches. Last week, if this is your first time here, you're going to go, whoa, because last week you wanted to be here for that one. That was the church that everybody wants to be like. That's the church of Philadelphia. That's the church of brotherly love. That's the church that even amidst incredible persecution, they kept God's word, and they kept their testimony. They didn't compromise what it meant to be a Christian.

Everybody wants to be like this church. When you talk to anybody and they do this series, they say, this is like our church, or this is like our denomination. We're just like that, but it's probably not true. And then today we come to this church that no one wants to be like. I mean, it's just hard. And when you read these things, you're going, whoa, this is not good. Because remember, he's talking to Christians. He's talking to the church. He's talking to who we are. Remember, we are the church. We are left behind because we have been lights. We're lights that are put on a lampstand. God doesn't blow us out when we become a Christian and take us home to be with him in heaven, but he places us on his lampstand because he wants us to be light in the middle of the darkness in the world around us. He wants us to be salt. He wants us to be things that actually he wants us to be a mirror. He wants us to be a mirror that reflects God's image and glory to the world around him.

And so that's why he leaves us behind. That's why the church is here. It's not for our glory. It's for God's glory. And we get to this church today, which seems like they've got that kind of confused.

It's most historians would say this church probably best represents what the church is like today in the world. It's the lukewarm church. And remember, we've been talking about as we come to these passages, even though there are thousands of years old, that we're called to look at them, and we're called to ask ourselves some questions. We're called to ask ourselves, like when we look at verse 14, what do we see about Jesus? What do we learn about Christ? What do we learn about God?

What do we learn about what God has done for us? What do we learn about what God is going to do when he comes back? And the second question we're asked whenever we come to passages like this is, well, what does this passage say to me? I mean, how does it relate to me? Is it relevant to Tobin 2,000 years later? What does this passage have to say to me personally? What is this passage telling me I need to do? Is this passage showing me something that I'm blinded to? Is there something that I can't see that's in my heart and in my eyes? And is this passage telling me that I'm walking in darkness or a kind of darkness? Do I need to examine my heart? Do I need to examine my relationship with God? Do I need to repent? We use the word repent a lot here, and sometimes we get confused what that means. And it basically means realizing where we're going, and that's not where God wants us. And we ask for forgiveness, and we turn around and go the way that God wants us.

[3 : 06] And as we look at what the Bible says, it almost says every day we're called to repent. Repent. We're called to look at our lives and examine our lives in light of who God is and what He wants us to do. And if our hearts are sensitive, we realize that we're not like that.

And we make mistakes, and that's okay, because God already knows that. And so He calls us to repent, to ask for forgiveness, and to turn. And so we need to look at these passages, and we need to say, do I need to repent? Do I need to change? And He's really specific here, because He says, I know your deeds. He's not saying, I know what you're thinking. He's not saying, I know what your intentions are. He's not saying, I know your desires. But He says, I know your deeds. I know what you do with your hands. If you want to know what's going on in a person's heart, you always look at what their hands are doing, because the hands don't lie. But sometimes our words lie, and sometimes our emotions lie, but the hands point to the condition of our heart. And we get to this passage today, and this passage is intense. Have you been reading the news lately? There's a lot of talk in the world today about diseases, and viruses, and things going on. And in fact, the Center for Disease Control out of Atlanta said this, and this is a significant time in the history of mankind, that probably no other time would be able to connect, and fly, and do all these things.

Is there a propensity for a virus, or an infection, to hit the human race, and just wipe out all of mankind? There's all these warnings going on that, be careful, because this could happen.

Wash your hands, take your tests, do all these things. And there's a list of questions you're asking. Do I have Ebola? Do I have these viruses? And how can I keep myself safe? But what this passage is talking about is it's talking about a virus that's been in the church for 2,000 years.

That as Christians, we've been struggling with this virus that we're going to talk about today, this sickness. And the problem is that sometimes when we get to this sickness and this virus, that we don't even realize that we have it. That we're walking in darkness, and this thing is infecting us, and it's changing us, and it's changing how we talk and speak and use our hands.

[5 : 20] And so John sends this letter through Jesus, and he talks to the church about this sickness that's in all of us, and he wants us to triage it. He wants us to ask some questions to see, am I dealing with that? And if I am dealing with that, then how do I get rid of it?

So you know me. I study medicine. I worked in a trauma unit. So throughout these last couple weeks, I've been thinking of some triage questions that we could ask ourselves. And so I want to just ask you some questions at the very beginning. I'm going to come back to some of these questions, but I want to ask them to you at the very beginning, because I want you to be thinking about these questions, because these questions determine whether you're infected. These questions determine whether you have the virus, whether you have the sickness that we're going to talk about in this church of Laodicea. First question, is there anything in Hong Kong, is there anything in the culture in Hong Kong that has a chance to control you? Is there anything here that is controlling you? Is there anything in here that is making your hearts lukewarm to God? What is it in this culture?

Because we're going to study about the Laodiceans, and there were several things in their culture that basically made them lukewarm. Number two, what shapes your thinking? What shapes how you think most? The Wall Street Journal? Squawk Box? Buffett? Diamond? Kramer? Or the Bible? What shapes your thinking? What shapes how you are informed? Number three, who do you trust more? Money or Jesus?

I know that's a really weird question, but if you had a choice between a billion dollars in your bank account and you never had to worry about money ever again, or you had a bank account that zeroed out at the end of each month, but you always had just enough to survive and you knew that Jesus was providing everything you needed that month, which choice would you choose?

It's a good indicator if we're sick or not. Number four, do you realize that every moment is a miracle of God's grace? Do you realize that every moment of your life is a miracle of God's grace? Who you are, where you were born, your parents, your birth age, what country, what age, what period, your DNA, your 46 chromosomes, all of these things, all of these things are a miracle of God's grace?

[7 : 46] Every moment we're breathing, we're thinking, we're able to think and cognitively go through things and work, all of these things God has just basically given to you? Do you realize that?

We talk sometimes like God is this venture capitalist, and he is. God's a venture capitalist, and he's given you all of these resources to do what he wants you to do. Do you realize that?

Or do you think to yourself, you know, I'm pretty good. I've actually earned my way. I've got into Harvard. I've got into wherever I went to school, Auburn, which is the Harvard of the South. Don't laugh. Don't laugh. Anyway, but you know, you think I did it pretty well. I got into my own life. What do you realize? Grace or yourself? Number five, when was the last time you told somebody at your work about your Christian faith? When was the last time you told somebody in your family about your Christian faith? This is a good indicator of whether you're infected, whether you have this disease, and he's going to talk about it at the church. When was the last time you prayed?

And the last question is this. If you were to ask a friend, any friend, your wife, your spouse, your best friend, if you were to ask them what you're zealous about, what you're on fire about, what is the thing that makes you on fire? What is the thing that drives you that you just can't get enough of? If you were to ask them what that thing is that you love intensely, how would they answer? What would be the intense thing that you love? I mean, all of these things could be indicators of how we live our life, and if we're suffering with the same disease that the people at Laodicea were suffering with, and I got to be honest with you, because when I read this chapter, it scares the crap out of me. I don't know if I could say crap in church, but I say it sometimes, but it scares the crap out of me, because from what I understand, it's the disease that will infect us all. It's the disease that if we're alive long enough, we're going to be impacted by this disease, and the question is whether we survive it and get rid of it, or do we just stay in it? I mean, the word Laodicea actually means, Laodicea, the name of the city, actually means the people's choice. The people choose. So they were living in a city that was named from the idea of how things were happening. The people choose. The people choose what is right, and when the passage, we look at it, and Jesus says he looks at them, and he has nothing good to say about them.

Nothing. I mean, all the other six churches, he had something good to say about them, but in this church, he has nothing good to say about them. They're sick, and actually, when he looks at them, he wants to throw up. In Greek, it sounds almost just like that. He wants to get sick.

[10 : 43] Are you ready? So let me give you some history. Laodicea was founded in about 335 BC. It was in this area of Greek that we've been talking about, Turkey. In Turkey, we've been talking about it's about 30 miles southeast of Philadelphia. It was in a very fertile valley region. It sat on three trade routes and communication routes that were very important to the Roman Empire. It had two sister cities. One was Heropolis. It was to the north, and then the other one was Colossae. It was to the east.

Now, in the letter to Colossians, they actually say to the readers, send this letter to the church of Laodicea. They need to hear this. And so these were these three sister cities that worked together, and without a doubt, Laodicea was the wealthiest city in the region. I mean, it was so wealthy. It is incredible. Right now, they're still excavating the ruins, and it is amazing. If you go to Nazareth with us when we go back to Israel, the average house was like 10 chairs, two rows deep, or maybe three rows deep, one floor, and then you maybe had a second floor, and you lived in there, but you also kept the animals in the front part. So the houses were really, really small. But when you go to Laodicea, they're excavating them. They're like 2,000, 3,000 square feet. I mean, they're massive houses. I mean, the people were very, very wealthy, and it was very affluent.

Even the churches were very wealthy, and they were very affluent. Laodicea was famous for three things. The first thing is its banking system. Now, don't ask me how they know, but historians tell us that there were more millionaires in this city than any other city in the world. They had their own coins minted. I mean, everybody else in the world used the Roman coins or the Greek coins, but the Laodiceans, they used their own coins. They had Greek coins that had stamps of their cities on it and symbols of prosperity and wealth and things that they felt like they had earned, all these amazing things. They were stamped all over the coins. The city was so wealthy that when an earthquake came in, it wiped out all the other cities around it. All the other cities said, hey, we cannot rebuild. And they sent to Rome, and Rome basically was the bank, and Rome sent them all the money. And Rome, actually, there's documents that Rome didn't even tax them for 10 years because it took so long to rebuild the city. But Laodicea didn't even ask for any help from Rome.

Within one year, they had rebuilt their city all on their own. I mean, they were incredibly self-sufficient. They were incredibly wealthy. We even know some of the names of the wealthy families in the city. I mean, we know some of the wealthiest families in the cities. And then when you walk into their house, there were mottos actually on the floor and on the walls of some of these houses.

And the motto for the Laodicean church was this. And you can go and you can read it. It was, I have my wealth. I need nothing else. Can you imagine that? I mean, you walk into their house, and on the floor was the motto. There is the motto. I have my wealth. I need nothing else.

[13 : 43] Laodicea was also this amazing fashion center. I mean, it's where all the people went. It was kind of like the Paris of the ancient world. There were these sheep there that were black. Don't ask me how they became black sheep. I don't know. But they kept them. They guarded them.

They bred them. And these sheep produced this really fine, black, coarse hair. And they wove it into all these fabrics. And everybody, it was the latest rage. Everybody in Rome wanted a Laodicean coat or pants. And it was amazing. It made the city millions and millions and millions of dollars because they had this monopoly on this black wool. Also, so you had the banking and you had the fashion industry. Also, Laodicea was really important in the ancient world because of medical schools. I mean, it had some of the top medical schools in the world in Laodicea. There's actually some hospitals there. And you can actually go there and see some of the ruins of these things.

And they specialized in fixing people with eye problems. And so they made these, it was one of the first places in the world. They took medicine and they had compounds. And they mixed compounds together and put them together and put them into a packet and you took it. This happened in Laodicea. It was one of the first places in the world. And there's this compound there that was so good that everybody came and you could actually turn it into a salve and you would rub it on your eyes and it actually helped blind people see. I mean, it was amazing.

And so people came from all over the known world because they wanted to see. The Laodiceans were wealthy and they were comfortable and they were intelligent. And we'll also read that they were arrogant. A lot of the historians talk about how arrogant they are and how apathetic they are and how self-centered they are. And the problem is, is by the time the church gets here, the church becomes like it. Have you ever been in an arrogant church? Or an apathetic church?

Or a self-centered church? I mean, this is what the church was like there and it was not good. Laodicea had one bad thing about it. One bad thing. And the thing was its water supply.

[15 : 47] I mean, it had no water supply. Now, for some reason, whenever you do cities, you always look for where there's water, right? Because you want to, everybody, you need water, especially in the desert. And they didn't found the city for that reason. They founded it for other reasons. And so it had no water supply. So the waters to Hierapolis in the north, they were hot. They were calming. They were like a spa. There's actually spas there today. So you could go to the sister city and get in a spa and get comforted with the hot water. And then the wet waters to the east in Colossus, they were some of the coldest, refreshing waters in all of the region. But Laodicea had no water. And so they piped their water in.

And you can go there and there's like these three feet long pipes. They're hewn out of stone. They're massive. And for six miles, they pumped their water through these pipes.

And the problem was that after the period of time that from when it started to when it got there, the temperature changed. I mean, it became no longer hot and it became no longer cold. It just became yuck. And actually a greater problem was that there's a mineral deposit in the water.

And so if you go and you look at the pipes, the pipes are all closed up because the minerals have closed it up because of just the sedimentation and deposit. And so when you got there, you go to the middle of the city and there's this big, a beautiful area where the water came in, the fountains, and you could come and drink and everything looked perfect. But when you got there and you drank the water, the water was terrible. The water made people sick. I mean, they tried different ways to prevent people from getting sick, but they just couldn't do it. They had these filter systems, and all of these things. But the water was so bad there, and the late Oceans were known for just having terrible, terrible water, and it just tasted bad. And another problem was, and you know what's going to come here, is that whenever you don't have a water system in the city, the city is always vulnerable. When you go to Israel, you're going to see that all the pools within Israel, they're inside the city walls so that when you're under a siege, you can just go down and grab water out, and you can survive because it's hot, and they don't have any water. And sometimes the siege people just leave because they don't have any water because it's so hot. But Laodicea didn't have that. They had these exposed pipes. And so when you're invading the city, you knew how to take over the city. All you have to do is take over the pipes. Because if you cut off the water supply, then the city can't survive.

And so because of that, the politicians of Laodicea became experts in negotiation. The politicians of Laodicea became experts in compromise. I mean, if you read the stories throughout history, what you see that they could compromise, they could talk to anybody invaded, they prevented their cities from invading, and they were really good. And actually, one historian said in his writings, he said, Laodicea is a city that stood for nothing.

[18 : 36] It was a city that stood for nothing because it compromised, because new people came in all the time trying to take control. It was the people's choice, and the people did whatever they wanted to. And the problem is that's what happened to the church. The church became the church that stood for nothing. The church allowed the culture to sway it. The church allowed the culture to take it over. When there was a passion and there was a fervor for something that Christ said to do, the church backed off and didn't do anything about it because they didn't want to cause ripples. They didn't want to get in trouble. They didn't want to lose all the great things they had in their city. Sometimes that happens to us, doesn't it? In churches, and as Christians. And so we get to this passage, and Jesus is speaking to this church that's become just like the culture, and he shares some things about them. So I just want to look at three things, and I've already talked about some of these. I want to look at the condition of the Laodiceans, and we've said they're lukewarm. We want to look at their cause. What caused them to become lukewarm? And we want to look at the cure. How can they get not lukewarm? Because you and I, we need to know this. Because if statistics are right, there are many, many of us in here who are lukewarm. And I would say that if you are a Christian, you are struggling with lukewarmness all your life.

And the question is, do you actually see that? Or are you blinded to it? So Jesus speaks in verse 14. He says, I am Jesus. I am the amen. The word there is powerful. It means I'm firm. I'm stable. I'm sure.

I'm trustworthy. Unlike the words of the politicians, unlike the words of the people in the church who compromise, my words are true. My words are final. My words are unchanging. Verse 14, he's faithful.

He's the true witness. He can see through the smoke. He can see through the mirrors. He can see through our clothing. He can see through the things that we try to hide ourselves in. None of those things fake Jesus out. None of the negotiations. None of the pleading. He sees all those things.

[20 : 58] And in verse 14, it says, he's the creator. And what it means there is that he's the giver. He gives everything. There's nothing that you have that he hasn't given. And that's what he's wanting the Laodiceans to see at the very beginning. He's saying, I am the amen. I'm firm. I'm solid.

I'm faithful. I'm true. And I'm the giver of all these things. And then he looks at them. And you read in verses 15 and 16, he looks at them. And he says these words. And they really bother me.

Because sometimes I wonder if I need to hear them also. You're lukewarm. You're indifferent. You're apathetic. You trust yourself. You think that you did it all.

But in reality, you did nothing. You know, the Bible is full of stories like that to God's people. One of my favorite books is the book of Deuteronomy. I hope to teach it next year as we go through it verse by verse. You're going to go crazy. But in it, he says there 25 times, he says, you, God's people, you're going to go into the land. And this land is going to be flowing with milk and honey. And it's going to be amazing. There's going to be food. There's going to be fields. There's going to be grapes that are huge. There's going to be all these wells dug for you. And all this prosperity, all these things, I'm going to give these things to you. And he warns them 25 times, he says, but be careful. Because you're going to get to a point where you're going to think you did it all by yourself.

You're going to get to a place where you're going to say, I did this. And I provided these things. And I made these things happen. And I did all these things. And your heart, your heart is going to become hard to God.

[22 : 46] How's your heart? So John is talking. Jesus is saying to him, and he's saying, be careful, because the city has become just like, the church has just become just like the city. It's learned the art of compromise. It's learned the art of complacency. It's learned the art of apathetic.

In the passage, Jesus says, I wish that you were this hot. I wish that you were cold, refreshing. But because you're nothing, I want to... I want to throw up.

Can you imagine standing before Christ? And he's looking at everything you've done? Because there's going to be a time when we come that we all will do that.

The venture capitalist is going to ask us, right in front of us, what we did with everything that he gave us. Did we use it for his kingdom? Did we promote the gospel?

Did we bring people from darkness to light? Did we live lives that were different? Can you imagine if you were like this church, and you sit there, and you bring it all before him, and he looks at it, and he goes... But that's what the church of Laodicea was struggling with.

[24 : 01] I mean, they had everything, but they had nothing. Verse 17 says, they were lukewarm, and one of the symptoms of being lukewarm is being apathetic.

They were apathetic. They just looked at things and just went with the saddest quote. They didn't want to disturb it. I mean, why would they disturb it? They had everything they needed. They were rich. They were clothed. They were healthy. And Jesus looks at them, and he says, what your actions are, your hands, they're just like your water, and when I taste it, I want to throw up.

Apathy creeps into everything. What's an apathetic person look like? I mean, think about it. You're doing a job evaluation for somebody in your department, and on the job evaluation, the main word that comes up as you've evaluated them is apathetic.

What do you do with an apathetic employee? Do you say, oh, that's so good. I want to put you in charge of the best things. Here's all these resources.

I want to give all these things to you. I want to put a team of 20 people around you so you can just make them apathetic too, and everything's going to be great, and our business is going to become really good. Now, maybe if you're at Samsung, you do that, but at Apple, we don't do that.

[25 : 18] So I just had to say that, okay? Anyway, but they were apathetic. Their heart was cold. Actually, their heart was hot.

It was hot for the things they wanted to do, and they felt like they could do. So what do you do with an apathetic person? Verse 17, it says that another one of their symptoms were they were self-sufficient.

I mean, you go into the houses, and you see there, I have my wealth. What else do I need? They had their wealth. They had their health. They had their family. They didn't need anything. And the scary thing to me about this is that this was the church he's talking to.

Let me ask you a question. I ask a lot of questions. I promise you that I've asked all these questions to myself at least 25 times in the last two weeks. In your quiet, unguarded moments when you're all alone, and you're thinking about your life, and you're thinking about everything that you've accomplished, and you're thinking about what you've done, and maybe even the things you're thinking that you don't want to share to your spouse or your best friend or your community group.

When you think about all these things you've done personally, how do you value yourself? I mean, what do you think about yourself?

[26 : 34] I mean, maybe I should ask this other question. When you think about everything you've done, and you've accomplished up to this point, and what you want to do, and all these things that you've done with your hands, what kind of standard are you using to judge success?

Where does your standard come from? What are you judging, whether you're successful or not?

I mean, when you think about yourself, do you see yourself as in constant need of grace? Do you see yourself in constant need of forgiveness of God? Do you see your brokenness?

Do you see this amazing sense that you're lost unless Jesus comes to you every moment of every time in your life? Or do you think like I think sometimes, wow, that went really well.

I'm doing pretty good. Things are looking really good. And what I realize is that as I do that, as I start to think about my accomplishments, what I start to do is I start to forget about God.

[27 : 42] And I forget about grace, and I forget about mercy. I don't know if you realize it, but this passage is huge in talking to the issues of wealth, in ability, in intellect, in resources.

And it's not saying that these things are bad. But what it is saying is that if you have these things, you better be careful. Because you're going to get this disease.

And it's called lukewarmness. Because after a period of time, you're going to forget that it's all by grace, and it's all by God's hand giving it to you. And it's all by God's giving you, and all these things he's giving you, he's just bestowed these things on you.

They're blessings and blessings and blessings. And after you've been around money and finance and competence and excellence for a while, even in the church, you forget grace.

You forget who gave it to you. You forget whose it is. And you start valuing things by the world's values and by Hong Kong's values and by your family's values and by your office's values.

[28 : 55] And you stop valuing things by Christ's values. And when Christ looks at you, he just goes, blah. Because you forgot him.

I don't know how you feel when you read verse 17, but look at it. He says to them, you say you're self-sufficient. I am rich. But the word is opulent.

And I am wealthy. And the word is I have so much I can't even count it. And I have need of nothing. It was stamped on the floor of their house and on the ceilings of the walls. And Jesus looks at us and he says, you are wretched.

The word is disastrous. You're miserable. The word is pitiful. You're poor. It means you have no value whatsoever. You are nada, zero.

You have no value. You're blind. Not even that you don't see. You don't even understand. You're naked. You're clothed in the best clothes that everybody has to offer.

[29 : 57] And what Jesus says when he looks at us, that all these things we've done by ourselves is self-sufficient. He says, as we would say in Texas, you're butt naked. And you're butt naked.

All these assets that the church is bringing to him. All these assets that you and I are bringing to them. All these things that we've done in our self-sufficiency. All these things that we say, look at what I've done.

I've done these things. Jesus looks at these things and he says, crap. Or he writes deficit. Or he writes loss.

I wonder what there is in Hong Kong. Because all these things he talks about and he talks against are what the city was known for.

The banking. The clothes. The medical care. What is there in Hong Kong right now that you struggle with? What is there in Hong Kong, in the city, in the culture that it's known for, that people treasure, that they want, that it influences us?

[31 : 04] What is that? For each one of us, it might be different. Right? Someone yelled power. It might be power. But for some of us, that power isn't that really important.

We'd rather just have money and have the billion dollars and not worry about it. For some of us, it's prestige. For some of us, we like the crazy lifestyle. We just like the crazy lifestyle. We like being busy. We like being able to tell people, how are you doing?

And you say, I'm busy. We just like that. I talk to people all the time and their marriages are falling apart. And they look at me and say, what should we do? And I say, well, the best thing for your marriage is for you to leave Hong Kong. And they go, I can't do that. I like it.

The benefits outweigh. And I just say, well, you're going to lose your marriage then. What is it that we struggle with? And then Jesus writes these cures.

And these cures are just, he's just speaking to them. But what is he speaks to Tobin? He says different things. He speaks to you. He says different things. And all of these cures, you notice what he says in this thing, verse 18? All of these cures, he advises you.

[32 : 04] He's the consultant. He's the venture capitalist. He says, buy from me. And it's very interesting because we can't buy anything from God, right? We have no money. Our money's not good for him. But he's saying for us to buy from him.

And it's this idea that we come by faith. We buy these things by faith. And all of these things he lists here are their symbols of intimacy with him. Their symbols of dependence with him.

Their symbols of having a relationship with him. And the gold is God's offering to us to meet our needs and to take care of us. And it's our character that's refined by fire. That we go through temptations and trials. And he changes us.

And in Laodicea and in Hong Kong, people are dying because they're going after this gold. And it's filling their life up. But they're losing Christ. But Christ offers to give them something that's in heaven, that's spiritual, and that won't disappear.

They're the white garments as opposed to the black garments. They're the promises of God. They're promises that God will take care of us. That he's going to be there. He's going to make us righteous. He's going to make us holy. He's going to make us pure.

[33 : 01] He's going to take away our sin. He's going to take away our guilt. If you want a great study in the Bible sometime this week, just go in there and do a study on clothes in the Bible. Almost always the idea of clothing has a negative connotation.

It almost always means that you're covering up something. You're covering up your guilt. You're covering up your shame. Because in the garden, we were all just butt naked, right? But when sin came in, the first thing we did was we wanted to put clothes on because we wanted to cover our shame.

We wanted to cover our guilt. And remember, so God comes in here and he kills an animal. And he puts the bloody side against them as a symbol of the blood covering their guilt and their shame. But almost always in Scripture, the idea of clothes is not a good thing.

But here Jesus says, I want to give you these great clothes that are pure and holy. And they're going to make you know that I love you. I care for you. Stop worrying.

Stop being so frustrated. Trust me. And then he says, I want to give you these I, this spiritual salve. This thing that's going to open up your hearts and your eyes. It's going to allow you to see God.

[34 : 02] It's going to allow you to see people. It's going to allow you to see that you're not as self-sufficient as you are. You know, one of the things about being self-sufficient is it makes us nearsighted. It makes us just focus on ourself. And he wants to give the church this salve.

And he says, hey, I want to give these things to you because I love you. Now, I don't know how you feel when you read these words because the words in Greek are very strict. They're very harsh. But at the center of them is this idea that God says them to us because he loves us.

I mean, he didn't even have to write to this church because there was nothing good here. But he still is seeking out them. He still wants to redeem them. Verse 19, he says, he says these things because he loves us.

And if you look at that word zealous there, if you circle that word and go back up in verse 16 and circle lukewarm, those are the two opposite words. And so the people are lukewarm. But what God wants to do is he wants to make us zealous.

He wants to make us jealous for him. And he wants to make us love him because he loves us. And so he says here, I'm saying these things because I love you, church. I want you to be different. I want you to understand grace.

[35 : 03] I want you to understand that I'm in control. I want you to understand that I'm giving you everything that you need. And you're grabbing for all these things for meaning and purpose in life. And you're going to fail. And the question we end up this whole sermon with is the question is this.

Are we open to his love? Do we need it? Do we feel like we need it?

Do we feel like we're doing okay? We don't really need it. Because he has this very strong imagery that the church is apathetic and self-sufficient and lukewarm. And their hearts have this door shut because they don't even want to have fellowship with God.

And God is knocking on the door of our hearts as his children. He's trying to diagnose our condition, which is lukewarmness.

And he's saying, let me in. I love you. Let me in. You were made for me. I was made for you.

[36 : 10] Let me in. I want to take care of you. Let me in. Meals in scripture are always symbols of deep, deep relationships and deep, deep fellowship.

What God is saying here to this church, what God is saying to us, is that he never gives up on us. He's always pursuing.

He's always knocking on the door. He's always wanting to make us better. He's always wanting to give us gold that's lasting forever. He always wants to clothe us with white clothes that take away our shame and our guilt and our hurt and our anger.

He always wants to put salve on our eyes. It helps us see him as he truly is and see the world as he's made it to be and see our position in it and what we're supposed to do. He's always inviting us.

And the question is, will we accept the invitation? Will you accept the invitation? The letter to the church of Laodicea is all about Jesus pursuing us.

[37 : 20] It's always about Jesus caring for us. It's always about God taking these things that are temporal out of our hands or showing us that they're going to fall apart and opening our hands to eternal things.

It's always about Jesus asking us. Do we love him? Or do we love something else?

He's knocking on the door pursuing us as a church. And the question is, will we let him in? Will we accept his grace? Will we accept his love? Will we allow him to clothe us? Or will we clothe ourselves?

Will we clothe ourselves? Will we thank you? Father, we thank you for this day. We thank you for your mercy and your grace. We thank you for this last letter to the church of Laodicea.

[38 : 30] It is a butt kicker. But in it we see that you write it to them and you write it to us because you love us.

You care for us. You don't want us to walk around with this infection and not realizing what the cure is. And the cure is you and your love.

Father, I pray for some of us in here right now who aren't yet in the family of God. I think there are probably quite a few of us here who aren't.

And we're trying to clothe ourselves with other things. We're trying to put different type of gold into our pocket. We see the world in a different way. And what I pray for them right now that you would open their eyes to the reality of your son Jesus.

I pray that they would see that the things that they are grasping for and working themselves to death for and priding themselves in and be able to say, I have this, what else do I need?

[39 : 31] I pray that they would see that you would show them that these things are not eternal. They're not sufficient enough to carry their soul, to heal their brokenness, to make them as they're supposed to be.

Father, I pray for some of us who are in the family. And we're in this church of Laodicea. And we're struggling because we've lost focus in this world that has so much to give us and so much to offer.

And we're grabbing like in the half-off sale. And we just can't grab quick enough all these things. And we're putting them in our bag because we think these things are going to make us happy. And they're going to be great. And they're going to give us meaning. But we forget.

We forget where ultimate meaning is found. And it's found in your son. We forget all the gifts that he's given us already. And all the things that he's given us as the ultimate venture capitalist.

We forget that you love us. I mean, if we really knew that, we wouldn't strive for the other things, would we? So, Lord, I pray for my heart.

[40 : 38] I ask your forgiveness for being so self-centered. Self-sufficient. Self-sufficient. Proudful. Sure.

Arrogant. Loving things that aren't you. Things that once I've grasped them, they fall apart. And we look for something else to grasp.

Father, I pray for our hearts. Heal us. Come into our hearts and change us. Even as your people, we need your grace moment by moment, day by day.

Lord, I pray for our church, your church. You put this church here. You provide everything we need from the finances to the room, the space. We pray, Lord, that we would be different.

Pray that we would see you as you truly are and we would fall in love with you. And that we would be so different in this culture, which is Hong Kong, that people would notice that. And they wouldn't notice us, but they would notice your son, Jesus, in our life.

[41 : 45] Lord, we have a lot of outreaches coming up during Christmas, and we know that this is the time you've called us to be really, really aggressive. And we should always be zealous and aggressive. This is the time.

And I pray for these outreaches in Bel Air and Baguio and Hong Kong U and other places around that you would be there. Pray that you would open people's hearts to your son.

Help them to see the sickness in their life. That the only cure is not another Rolex watch, but the cure is Jesus. Help us to be your people and to be used by you in mighty ways during these holidays.

May Hong Kong be different because you've placed us here. Help us not just to take a space up, but help us to be a church that reaches out to a dead and dying culture.

Lord, we come before you and we just worship you and we thank you. We love you. We need you. We pray these things in your son, Jesus' name.

[42 : 52] Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.