

OUTLINE FOR NOVEMBER 13, 2022

TEXT: REVELATION 3: 14-22

THEME: ARE YOU A LUKEWARM CHRISTIAN?

**14** “And to the angel of the church in Laodicea write: ‘The words of the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the beginning of God's creation. **15** “‘I know your works: you are neither cold nor hot. Would that you were either cold or hot! **16** So, because you are lukewarm, and neither hot nor cold, I will spit you out of my mouth. **17** For you say, I am rich, I have prospered, and I need nothing, not realizing that you are wretched, pitiable, poor, blind, and naked. **18** I counsel you to buy from me gold refined by fire, so that you may be rich, and white garments so that you may clothe yourself and the shame of your nakedness may not be seen, and salve to anoint your eyes, so that you may see. **19** Those whom I love, I reprove and discipline, so be zealous and repent. **20** 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. **21** 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. **22** He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.”

In the name of Jesus:

The setting is The Olympic Games, Mexico, 1968. The marathon is the final event on the program. The Olympic stadium is packed and there is excitement as the first athlete, an Ethiopian runner, enters the stadium. The crowd erupts as he crosses the finish line.

Way back in the field is another runner, John Stephen Akwhari of Tanzania. He has been eclipsed by the other runners. After 30 kilometers his head is throbbing, his muscles are aching and he falls to the ground. He has serious leg injuries and officials want him to retire, but he refuses. With his knee bandaged Akwhari picks himself up and hobbles the remaining 12

kilometers to the finish line. An hour after the winner has finished Akwhari enters the stadium. All but a few thousand of the crowd have gone home. Akwhari moves around the track at a painstakingly slow pace, until finally he collapses over the finish line.

It is one of the most heroic efforts of Olympic history. Afterward, asked by a reporter why he had not dropped out, Akwhari says, "My country did not send me to start the race. They sent me to finish."

Dear friend in Christ, the Holy Spirit has given to you a saving faith in Jesus Christ, our gracious God and Father has given to you a life to live to His glory, and He expects you to not only run the race for Christ that He has laid out before you, but He also encourages you to finish that race. Jesus says: "Be faithful unto death and I will give you the crown of everlasting life." Sadly, many today, even in our congregation, are tempted by Satan to lose their faith. Their love for the Lord Jesus has grown cold, their faith has waned. How do I know that? Just look at what we are seeing today. Jesus says that you will be able to know those who follow Him by their fruits. And yet, there are some whose commitment to God and His Church is, to be frank, lacking in zeal. Today in our society and in our congregation people will come to worship when it pleases them, give offerings to the Lord when it suits them, and give of their time to work for the Lord if they can find the time. The greatest

commandment is this: Love the Lord your God with all of your heart, soul, mind and strength. How does your love for the Lord match up and jibe with what God expects in this greatest commandment?

In our text for today, Jesus is speaking to the church in Laodicea. The city of Ladocea was one of the wealthiest cities in the area at that time. It was known for its flocks of sheep, with their fine black wool, which produced wonderful woolen garments. The city was known also for its medical school and medical advances. The people who belonged to the church in Laodicea were chosen by God to love God first above all things and serve Him showing their love for others.

But note what Jesus knows and says about the people in the church at Laodicea. Jesus doesn't congratulate them, He doesn't commend them for what they have done, no, rather His Words are a harsh judgment upon the sins of the people. Make no mistake, Jesus finds that the people in the church were neither hot nor cold for the Lord. Their sin was apathy. They lived as if they didn't believe in Jesus, loved Jesus, and acted as if they could care less if they followed Jesus in their life. The church at Laodicea existed primarily for their own selfish desires and earthly wealth. It was more important for these people to live for themselves, to get out of life what they could for their own sake. Their lives, their hopes, their dreams were all centered on themselves.

They paid lip service to God, going through the motions in living their life for Christ.

What about your life? Are you a lukewarm Christian? Yes, we believe in a merciful and loving God, but God will not be mocked and God is not fooled. God will not play the part of a fool. He will not tolerate a life that pays lip service to Him. He will not allow your sin to go unpunished if you go on with your life living as if God did not matter and as if you mattered the most.

If you are more concerned about money and your bank account, if you are more concerned about what you have instead of what God needs, God calls you to repent! If you are half-heartedly living for Jesus, then you aren't living for Him, you are living for yourself. If you are a lukewarm Christian, it is as if you are a spiritually dead and lifeless Christian in God's sight. God wants you to wake up! If you don't and if you continue in your lukewarm attitude and lifestyle Jesus says He will spit you out of His mouth! Rather than living your life for treasures and gold here on here, Jesus calls on you to change, to repent. To confess your sin to God and ask Him for forgiveness. And Jesus does forgive. That is why God sent His Son into this world, to save you from your wretched sin of apathy and lukewarm living. Jesus lived His life for you enthusiastically, for His will was to do the will of His Heavenly Father. Jesus embraced earning your salvation, for it was with joy that He set His face to go to Jerusalem and it

was with a determined love for His Father and for you that He offered Himself up on the cross to pay the penalty and suffer the punishment for your sins of lukewarm faith, of apathy, and selfishness.

Jesus calls you to repentance on this day because He loves you. Like a loving parent who will discipline children that are loved, so God loves you so much that He is willing to correct you when you are wrong, forgive you your sins, and to refine your life as gold is refined by fire so that you may live your life to the glory of God.

These are serious words today from our serious Lord. The Lord is serious when He calls you to repentance, that is why He stands at the door and knocks. Jesus will go out of His way to seek the lost and He comes to the door of your heart today seeking entry. Do you hear Him knocking? Jesus wants to live in you so that you will live with Him? How will you answer? Will you answer?

There are plenty of opportunities for you to answer? So how will you answer? You know, it would be great to have a Sunday School with more children attending, , but the problem we have is that parents won't bring their children to Sunday school! But what will God say about these things? Do the reasons for not bringing children to Sunday school show a living faith or a lukewarm faith?

It would be wonderful to have more people in church and worship each and every Sunday. Your friends and neighbors need to hear about Jesus. Does your life reflect a living invitation to others to come and follow Jesus?

There is much work to be done in this congregation. Jesus says that the harvest is plentiful but the laborers are few. Fewer and fewer people are working for Jesus today, volunteering their time and talent and giving back to Jesus what He has given to you. Jesus stands at the door and knocks, who will answer?

The mission needs of this congregation and the church at large continue to be great. Our congregation and the Church could do more work with more dollars. But more and more people are holding their offerings from the Lord, giving less frequently, sparingly or not at all. And so what does the church do? We cut back and try to do the same or more with less, while members continue to make certain they have what they need because they really don't trust God to provide with what they need. Rather than giving first to God, and sacrificially to God, giving a first fruit gift of 10%, members will spend money on themselves, and on what they need, and give God what they have left. Is this really God pleasing? Is this showing a love for God above all things?

As we grow closer to the end of another year, it only serves as a reminder that there will come a day when the Lord comes back to judge

the living and the dead. That day is coming soon! So repent! Trust in Christ. And in grateful response to what God has done for you, live for Jesus! He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit is saying today. In the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

Amen