

"HOT LOVE" / SPEAKING OF JESUS 4

Every year, our church as a whole and in parts walks through a self-evaluation time as a part of our praying and planning process for the next year. That is we evaluate the church as a whole and then its parts or ministries. Close to 100 people are used in this process and in this past year = one theme echoed through all our evaluations:

We (The Summit) had become a church that saw very few people coming to faith in Jesus Christ.

*We started this church 17 years ago so many who were far from God would be brought to Him through the love of Jesus. And for a lot of years we saw many people come to faith in Jesus as their only way to be right before God. In the last few years, "many" had turned to "several" and "several" had eventually turned to - very few. The few matter – but we live in a county of almost 400,000 people where the latest surveys show that almost 250,000 openly declare that they don't go to any kind of Christian church. There are hundreds of thousands of neighbors, co-workers, students, and children far from God - near us. What am I saying? I am saying - we cannot be a faithful and healthy body of Christ and only impact a few in our county. We as the elders have been moved to repent. Of what? **As a church, our love and desire to engage those far from God – has waned.** And from this, **we unknowingly have created a culture where we were ok with this.** This is not ok - and I again will be first to lead out and ask for your forgiveness. I want to be a part of the body of Christ that really believes Jesus was raised from the dead – and he can raise those far from Christ back to life. I want us to be that body again – where the Spirit of God is working in power in our lives and the lives of those far from God.*

This series "Speaking of Jesus" is not a one time shot for us to talk about this. Rather, this is the beginning of a reshaping of our culture so we become a people where everyone – no matter one's race, creed, or sin feels welcomed in this place - as well as our homes and our lives. We want this body of Christ to become a place where many people meet Jesus and are changed. The last two weeks we have begun this series with this premise – what stuns us, what captures our affections – we will talk about. (repeat) Flowing from those two united thoughts, we are going to talk today about one of the great barriers to speaking of Jesus and his love to others. The elders are leading out in this repentance, turning from our sin in this area and we long for you to join us. Here is truth we will talk through today that will begin to guide our repentance:

Lukewarm love for God – gives us a cold love for those far from God.

Hot love for God – gives us a zealous love for those far from God.

There is a **Strong Warning** and **Incomparable Promise** in this passage for us today. But before we hear these, God is stating – these are the words of Jesus Himself – so pay close attention – this is vitally important.

REVELATION 3:14 (ESV) "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.' He says, "I am the last word "Amen". This ending on sermons and prayers in the bible – means what is declared is true. And, I am the first word - because I created all things."

01. A Strong Warning – "I will spit you out"

REVELATION 3:14 (ESV) " '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.' "

1- Who is God speaking to?

Is God speaking to non-believers in the church – those who have never trusted their souls to the work of Christ to be right before God and know into relationship with God? Notice what He says, ...

REVELATION 3:19 (ESV) Those whom I love, I reprove and discipline. God says this in the book of Hebrews to His own.

HEB 12:6, 8 (ESV) 6 For the Lord disciplines the one he loves, and chastises every son whom he receives." ...

8 If you are left without discipline, in which all have participated, then you are illegitimate children and not sons.

God is speaking to believers.

2- What does "spit you out of my mouth" mean if God is speaking to believers?

Does "spit you out" mean God is disgusted with you and will end His relationship with you if you stay lukewarm? Listen to Jesus ...

JOHN 10:27-29 (ESV) 27 "My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me. 28 I give them eternal life, and they will never perish, and no one will snatch them out of my hand. 29 My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all, and no one is able to snatch them out of the Father's hand."

II TIMOTHY 2:13 (ESV) if we are faithless, he remains faithful - for he cannot deny himself.

No – God will not end our relationship because of our sin. God rescued us because of His goodness and love – at the great cost of His Son – with a view to your full and ultimate restoration. The evidence of scripture does not say – God has a limit to your sin as His son/daughter. Rather – God knows your sin as His son /

daughter, and **because of his love for you – He is working to restore you through “reproof and discipline.”**
Lemons, Matt and Bruce - Are you going to take me back? – Why? Because I’m bad. I would need to go back as well. No - You are ours, and we are yours forever – but together we are going to learn to live like Jesus desires for us.

So what does “spit out” mean. Two things:

1) This was specific warning to the Laodicean church – repent or I will end this body.

The history of God’s work in his local church through the scripture was that He had to end some churches that did not respond to His reproof and discipline.

2) For today: As the body of Christ - He is speaking to our church – repent.

To believers, He is declaring His love by saying I will not stop pursuing repentance in your life.

This lukewarm love and life is so abhorrent to God – that He uses this powerful vomit metaphor to say: I cannot and will not tolerate this life in you because you are mine.

BUT ... because you are mine and I am Yours - I will not stop pursuing you!

*** What does His non-stop pursuit of our repentance look like?** His conviction in us is so painful that there is no joy in the believer’s soul until there is repentance. *This doesn’t always mean God disciplines by taking away a job, a dream, your house – look at Laodicea. He let them swim in their idol of material success. God can use anything – but the one constant is constant conviction to repent.*

3- So what does lukewarm love look like – and why is it so abhorrent to God?

Most of my life, I have heard pastors teach this passage in this way: “Lukewarm believers say they believe, but they’re not that committed. They show up in church to warm the pews, but they still do worldly things. They dress the wrong way, watch the wrong movies, listen to the wrong music, wrong radio stations, and their family – well just look at it! If only they knew all the right things to do so they could be on fire like us.” The 1st problem with this teaching – it makes those on fire better than others by their actions and it makes specific actions we have decided as good the test for who is on fire and who is lukewarm. The 2nd problem – is it makes the fire in the believer totally dependent on the believer. The 3rd problem – that is not what this passage is teaching – it is really saying the opposite. Beginning in verse 17 – Jesus tells us exactly what it means to be lukewarm.

REVELATION 3:19 (ESV) For you say, I am rich, I have prospered, and I need nothing, not realizing that you are wretched, pitiable, poor, blind, and naked.

The “lukewarm” people Jesus is “reproving” think they have it all together, but they don’t.

Jesus is not rebuking the uncommitted or those who don’t do the right things. He is not coming down on the marginal believers or even drug addict. He is calling out those in the body that think they are rich with God when they are actually poor; that they think they can see all God is about when they are really blind to their own great and abhorrent sin toward holy God. **Lukewarm believers – stir God’s heart and fire. Why?**

“Lukewarm” then is a perverted mixture of hot and cold. What does “hot” mean in this passage?

“Hot” = One who lives trusting that their righteousness (right standing and complete acceptance) before God is in the work of Christ alone.

Hot = I believe I am right and acceptable before God **ONLY** because of Jesus’ work – and everything I get from being right before Him love, favor, blessing, care, peace, hope, and more –**ONLY** comes because of Jesus work as well.

“Cold” = One who trusts self for their right standing and happiness in this life. (No concern for or belief in God or Jesus)

If you’re “cold,” you are separated from God by your sin and often you don’t care - but often you feel it. Sometimes we have to hit the bottom before we learn to look up. As Martin Luther said, “if you’re going to sin, you may as well sin boldly.” Try it all, if that’s what it will take for you to see it doesn’t satisfy. The sooner you get to the end of your rope, the sooner you’ll see your need to be rescued.

God wants everyone to be “hot” living desperately in the need of Jesus righteousness. However, Jesus is saying, being “cold” can be as moving in us as being “hot,” in one sense. Why? In both cases you’re seeing your need, insufficiency, and helplessness, and coming to see your desperate need for Jesus’ work alone to make us right.

The one fatal condition is to be needy while depending on your own work to fix or solve the need

“Lukewarm” = One who trusts that their righteousness (right standing and complete acceptance) before God is in their own or self work.

The result is horrible: people in spiritual need who can't recognize it because they think they're doing great.
Hot= Christ's righteous / Cold = All about Self / Lukewarm" = self-righteous

- "Lukewarm self-righteous Christian" is not somebody who claims to follow Jesus but only shows up on Sundays.
A LW Christian is somebody who says, "God must be pleased with how often I'm here!"
- "Lukewarm self-righteous Christian" is not somebody who openly struggles with sin and loving others.
A LW Christian is somebody who says, "I have a right to hate this person – they don't treat my God, my country, or me right."
- "Lukewarm self-righteous Christians" **believe that they are living the right way, with all the right values, and all the right methods, and all the right works – and they believe, trust – that God is pleased with them and favors them because of how they live.**

IS THIS YOU? To some degree it is all of us. But does this define you?

Why is our lukewarm love so abhorrent to God?

- A lukewarm love – defames God's name and character. *I make others think that His love is like my arrogant, conditional, and ultimately selfish love – because I walk around with His name on me.*
- A lukewarm love – produces a cold love for those far from God.

My self-righteousness produces FEAR in me toward others who are not like me. *You may ruin my way of life, or contaminate my family, my kids.*

My self-righteousness produces a HATE for others and DESIRE to stay away from those whose lives gross me out. *If you view sexuality different, politics different, the country different – I can't stand you bc my views are a part of my right standing before God. Your views are gross but even more – I think you are gross.*

I hated prejudice people – how self-righteous. *Rebel flags, Muslim haters, using the word gay to slander people. If it moves me to lovingly confront you – that is good. If it moves me to hate you – that is self-righteousness. Yuck*

02. An incomparable promise – **"I love you and I will never stop pursuing you so you can know the fullness of my life."**

REVELATION 3:19-20 (ESV) 19 Those whom I love, I reprove and discipline, so be zealous and repent. 20 Behold, I stand at the door and knock. **God's stunning and scandalous love – is not just a feeling. It is God acting toward us in a way that shows his great love. He reproves – calls out our sin and warns us and – He disciplines – calls us to repentance to train us to live by faith in Christ's righteousness not ours.**

This picture of lukewarm meant something to Laodicean church because of their water supply. The towns nearest them had hot springs to the south and cool springs to the north. Their water was yuck because of temperature and minerals. They didn't hate water – any more than Jesus hates you His son/daughter. They hated the taste of their water and it had to be changed to be useable. They had to boil it – to remove the bad – vomit worthy taste. God is changing us –

We discipline to punish because of fear and anger. We are mad and embarrassed – so we bring straight pain to produce fear in the one we are punishing. Obey or else! OR we discipline to train new behavior. In the Disney store – crazy kid. Will what do you think of that? That's nuts. Why? Embarrassing or this response to not getting ones' way hurts the child and the family now and in the long run. But how will you discipline. In this case, God disciplines to train us so we can bring fame to His name rightly showing His as the Greatest and so we and our body of Christ can know life.

1- What does repentance from self-righteousness look like?

- **Repentance is ongoing – This will be an ongoing life of repentance (zealous – be committed to).**
God says you are going to see removal of fear and hate as you are committed to a life of repentance – often!!!
- REVELATION 3:19-20 (ESV)** 19 ... 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.

• **Repentance requires an all access relationship with Jesus and other followers**

- **Fear** – causes us to bar the door to our heart to Jesus when we live in lukewarm love because we ultimately know if God or others peer in real deep they will see that our righteousness is only surface deep.

I had a friend that I knew for 10 + years that rarely if ever confessed sin, revealed brokenness in his life, or let me peer in much less speak in – unless he got caught in a mess. He always was helping others, but if you got

close to his stuff – it was almost like the scene in the Wizard of Oz – smoke and lights and great noise happens with a loud voice saying - “pay no attention to the man behind the curtain.” If this is your life – you will have to unbar the door to your heart and give Christ all-access to your sin and brokenness. He knows ... and loves still

- We need to allow other followers of Christ all access into our hearts.

*I hear your objection. That is scary. No one does that – do they? 1) Yes people do try and live this way. No one perfectly lets others complete access. But there are many of us trying because we believe God has something great and beautiful – healing and restoring – life giving and powerful for us as we open the door to Jesus and others. **CG’s and DNAs** 2) Yes it is scary – especially for a lukewarm lover because you believe if you are found out – God will stop loving you and so will others. **LIE, LIE** – listen to God tell us how he destroys fear and hate.*

2- How do we repent today and tomorrow from self-righteousness?

Trust that right standing and acceptance before God is – an unending treasure that is - in Christ ALONE.

REV 3:18 (ESV) I counsel you to buy from me gold refined by fire, so you may be rich... *God said this in Is.*

ISAIAH 55:1,3 (ESV) 1 Come, everyone who thirsts, come to the waters; and he who has no money, come, buy and eat! Come, buy wine and milk without money and without price. 3 *Incline your ear, and come to me; hear, that your soul may live;* and I will make with you an everlasting covenant, my steadfast, sure love Come buy or obtain that which you cannot afford – that which someone else (God) has paid for. **Jesus is the gold which makes us rich and he was purified so we can be right and acceptable before God.**

Son/daughter whom I love – when you taste fear or hate in your soul toward others – or just no love. You are believing lies that say: others can somehow affect what you have in Me. They can ruin it or help get it. **OR, you are feeling superior because you have worked hard for your blessing.**

*** Jesus’ work has earned for you everything you will ever have or need in God.**

Turn to Jesus’ righteousness and remember, He was “sacrificed - refined” for you and now- right now you all you will ever have or need in Me. All Jesus’ work – you cannot feel superior and it is nothing others can affect.

REVELATION 3:18 (ESV) ... and white garments so that you may clothe yourself and the shame of your nakedness may not be seen,

Son/daughter whom I love - when you find yourself walking in shame because you don’t want your fear or hatred to be discovered remember Christ’s work covers your shame.

*** Jesus’ work fully covers the shame of your fear and hatred.**

Turn to Jesus’ work and believe His perfect life covers your old life now. When he sees you He sees blameless and acceptable. This only starts to believed the more you repent before God and brothers and sisters.

REVELATION 3:18 (ESV) ... and salve to anoint your eyes, so that you may see.

Son/daughter whom I love - when a believer is gently or sternly warning you of your self-righteousness – ask God to open your eyes to your sin & the beauty of God’s love & acceptance in Christ.

*** Jesus’ work opens our eyes to the depth of our sin and the greatness of God acceptance.**

Repent to God and your brother or sister and ask God to open the eyes of your heart so you can see clearly the self-righteous leanings of your heart.

Ultimately - God wants to change how we relate to Him and that will change how we relate to other. **REVELATION 3:20 (ESV)** 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.

*Self-righteousness says – My life determines my favor before God. That means **others help me gain or keep favor.** Christ-righteousness says – Christ’s life determines my favor before God. That means **others are not to be used or shunned – but served and loved** so they can see their need for Christ’s righteousness.*

Turning again and again to Christ’s righteousness – will stir a hot love for God.

Hot love for God – gives us a zealous love for those far from God.

If we are going to reshape our culture – something dramatic in our hearts is going to have to happen. Are you willing to go there with our elders. with us? It means – daily repenting of that. which makes us not desperately need Jesus. It means

being moved by His complete acceptance of us in Christ that we stop criticizing the one's God is trying to rescue.

I long to see our homes, and our meals, and our nights out, and our gatherings here in this place filled with people who do not yet believe – but they are joining us because they are captured by the love we have for each other and them. I long to see children, students, adults who are far from Christ be rescued and brought to life in Jesus.

Blessing – from a promise spoken almost 2900 years ago – may we receive this blessing that has now been fulfilled for us in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus – our King. Hear this blessing over you today:

5 “For the time is coming,” says the LORD, “when I will raise up a righteous descendant from King David’s line. He will be a King who rules with wisdom. He will do what is just and right throughout the land.

6 And this will be his name: ‘The LORD Is Our Righteousness.’

Jeremiah 23:5-6 (NLT)