

Good or Bad Water

Revelation 3:14-22

I. An unfortunate beginning to a sermon.

A. “*You make Me vomit!*”

1. To “vomit” is a reaction to something unacceptable—physically, it’s a defense against toxins; the cause is a profound discomfort that demands a forceful response from the body.
2. Like the physical, there is a spiritual nausea that can cause spiritual vomiting.
 - a. Insincerity and indifference.

B. The church in Laodicea makes Jesus sick!

1. The most graphic, serious, sickening condemnation of all the seven churches.

II. The seven letters speak to all churches of all time.

- A. Ephesus—Don’t lose your first love!
- B. Smyrna—Trust God in your suffering.
- C. Pergamon—Don’t compromise your doctrine.
- D. Thyatira—Don’t waffle on your morality.
- E. Sardis—Be on guard for spiritual deadness.
- F. Philadelphia—Walk through the doors God opens for you.
- G. Laodicea—Value the eternal riches of Christ.

III. The city and surroundings of Laodicea.

- A. The wealthiest city in all of Phrygia.
- B. Jesus uses the city and surroundings to deliver His drastic message:
 1. The water.
 2. The sheep for wool.
 3. The medical ointment.
 4. Extreme wealth.
 - a. Their self reliance.

IV. The identity of Jesus (V.14).

- A. The Amen—The immutability of Jesus
- B. The beginning of creation.

V. The condemnation (Vs 15-17).

- A. “*You are neither hot or cold*”
- B. “*You are lukewarm*”
- C. Consequence—“*I will spit you out of My mouth!*”
 - 1. They are blind to who they really are.
 - 2. Because of their wealth, they have become self-reliant and indifferent to Christ.
 - 1. They were wretched.
 - 2. They were pitiable.
 - 3. They were poor.
 - 4. They were blind.
 - 5. They were naked.

VI. Was Laodicea a true church?

- A. Ecclesia—*The called-out ones*.

VII. The wealth of Jesus.

- A. Gold refined by fire.
- B. White garments.
- C. Eye salve.

VIII. Solution.

- A. Be zealous and repent!
- B. Let Jesus back in! (V.20).

Good or Bad Water

Revelation 3:14-22

“You make me sick!!”... “You nauseate me!!”... “When I see you I want to vomit!”... What a horrible way to begin a sermon!... It would even be more horrible if Jesus Himself was saying it to you...and to us as a church.

Yet that is what Jesus said via letter dictated to the apostle John to the church in the city of Laodicea...*You make me sick!*... **“I want to spit you out of my mouth!”**...

As far as I’m concerned...Out of all the types of common illnesses/sicknesses... the flu... the common cold... nausea leading to vomiting is the worst!... it is so uncontrollable... so nasty... so disgusting...

To “vomit” is a reaction to something unacceptable—physically, it’s a defense against toxins; the cause is a profound discomfort that demands a forceful response from the body...there is something in your body that shouldn’t be there...it is foreign to the body... and the body doesn’t want it there... so the body gets rid of it by ejection.

Like physical nausea... **there is a spiritual nausea that can cause a spiritual vomiting**... spiritually, it’s a response to insincerity and /or indifference. [lack of interest or concern]

Jesus looks *through* this church...sees who they really are...what they are doing...(15) **I know your deeds**...He sees into its very heart and realizes that here is a church that claims to be a part of My body...but it is making His body sick... so in a very graphic way...Jesus is saying that the church in Laodicea is actually *the* vomit itself!...**I will spit YOU/VOMIT...out of My mouth**... He is going to eject it from His body.

This is the most graphic...serious... sickening... condemnation of all the seven churches that received letters from Jesus in Revelation...Jesus has nothing good to say to this church... He is repulsed by it...

We all should desire to know what it is exactly that repulsed Jesus about this church... yes this letter was written to an actual church two thousand years ago... but it was written to all churches for all time since... including ours... it is a warning to all of us... as individuals and as the corporate body of Christ...

READ REVELATION 3:14-22

All seven of these letters have something to say to all churches of all times... I believe that a church of any size has elements of each one of these churches... Jesus’s messages to these seven churches all combined is the message to every church...

We began with the **church at Ephesus**... a hard working, loyal, discerning church but they lost their “first love”... their passion and love for Jesus Christ Himself.. for us: **Don’t lose your love and passion for Jesus Christ**....

The **church in Smyrna**... **trust God in your suffering**... God knows what you are going through... trust Him!... **be faithful until death and I will give you the crown of life!**... remember the **church at Pergamum**?... faithful...sincere... **“don’t compromise your doctrine”** ...hold fast to the truth of God’s word.

The **church at Thyatira**... **you tolerate the woman Jezebel**... **don’t waffle on your morality**...don’t compromise your values...**the church at Sardis**...**you have a name that you are alive but you are dead!**... **Be on guard against spiritual deadness**... Wake up!

Walk through the doors God is opening for you to share the gospel... the **church at Philadelphia**... But this church at Laodicea... makes Jesus puke!... what are we to learn?

We need the whole picture... perhaps more than any of these churches... the church in Laodicea mirrors the city it is in and geography that surrounds it... Laodicea completes the mail route we been on... the mailman has arrived to his final destination...seven cities lined up forming a “horseshoe”.

One of the pastors in our group who I met when I went to Israel... told me about his amazing trip to Turkey visiting all the historical sites of these seven churches... His favorite was Laodicea... located in the beautiful lush Lycus Valley....surrounded by small mountains.

He told about a place just outside of the city ruins... next to the highway was a cascading waterfall emptying in a creek... all the tour busses would stop and take a sip of the water at the base of the waterfall... he said the water was warm... and disgusting... the mountain was made of sulfur and limestone so the water tasted like warm rotten eggs.... Everyone would take a sip then quickly spit the water out of their mouths!

Laodicea was a very wealthy city... two major trade routes intersected in the city creating a thriving commerce center... It was known for banking... manufacturing of very fine clothes... people from all over the world wanted clothes from Laodicea.

They didn’t have normal sheep... they were known for their very rare “black sheep” that produced a glossy pure black wool which became in high demand... there was a famous medical school there that became world renowned for a healing ointment for the ears and the eyes...[my pastor friend said they still try to sell this ointment...or salve... at all the tourist shops in Laodicea].

Laodicea was so wealthy that after a devastating earthquake... a few years later than the devastating earthquake that destroyed the other cities in 17AD... 60 AD... if you remember... in

the aftermath of the 17AD earthquake, Rome rebuilt the cities... and because of that... the cities became dependent upon Rome... but not Laodicea... the earthquake took down the city... they said “*no thank you*” to Rome... and rebuilt it all themselves... The Roman historian Tacitus wrote something very insightful for us thinking about this church...

Laodicea arose from the ruins by the strength of her own resources and with no help from us... Laodicea city was self-sufficient... so wealthy they needed no outside help... this church and this city Laodicea were alike... they were so self-sufficient they didn't need help from ANYBODY!...including God!.

[off topic...when we move to a different city... do you consider the city?...]

We could go on and list the amazing wealth and prosperity... the resources this amazing city had... but they did have one very big weakness... they didn't have an adequate source for good drinking water.

Just a few miles north of Laodicea was the small city of Hierapolis... known for its hot therapeutic natural hot springs... the water stays at 95 degrees..... Just south about three miles was Colossae... remember Paul wrote a letter to the Colossians... by the way....

Paul also wrote a letter to Laodicea... we just don't have it... Colossians 4:16, Paul instructs the Christians in Colossae, **"After this letter has been read to you, see that it is also read in the church of the Laodiceans and that you in turn read the letter from Laodicea."**

Colossae was known for its delicious cold drinking water...so the wealthy city of Laodicea built aqueducts to bring in the hot water from Hierapolis and the cold water from Colossae... the problem was when the hot water got to Laodicea it was lukewarm... and when the cold water from Colossae got to Laodicea... *it was lukewarm.*

There is a historical record that says *the water was so distasteful that visitors, not prepared for its tepid flavor, would often vomit after drinking it* (Johnson, *Revelation*)....that's the city in a nutshell... as we move through this passage we will see the city and the church are just alike in so many ways.

The church in Laodicea is wealthy... they were the opposite of the church in Smyrna who was surrounded by a wealthy city but Jesus said **I know your poverty (but you are rich)**... meaning they were physically, circumstantially in poverty but spiritually, they were rich....treasures laid up in heaven.

Laodicea church is physically rich...they were without NOTHING.... But spiritually in poverty...**WHAT OFTEN GOES HAND IN HAND IS PHYSICAL PROSPERITY YIELDS SPIRITUAL APATHY**... Physical, material abundance often yields spiritual indifference...

In so many ways... the church in Laodicea is the church in America today...the church in America is a wealthy church everyone in this room is rich in comparison to the world around us...so this letter should make us pause and think... evaluate...

As we've seen in all seven letters... they all follow a pattern... they all begin with a description and characteristic of Jesus Christ...if you remember...from the very beginning we saw that the entire book of Revelation is about the majesty and glory of Jesus Christ... the theme is His not so much "*what happens in the end times*" but rather how Christ is glorified in His ultimate victory.

So each letter began with Jesus... here it begins with **the identity of Jesus** (14) **and to the angel of the church in Laodicea write: This is what the Amen, the faithful and true witness the beginning of the creation of God says:**

The characteristic Jesus is showing us here is that He is completely trustworthy and faithful... there's not a person on earth that can say that they are 100% faithful and trustworthy... don't think there are exceptions... eventually we all let others down.

First He says **This is what the Amen...**says...Amen is a Hebrew word carried over through the New Testament... in its most literal meaning it means that *something is fixed... or unchangeable...what is being said is not flakey...it's solid*

When an eternal truth of God is expressed, the Jews would say "Amen"... which means that eternal truth will never change... we say that God is **immutable**... unchanging... When Jesus says He is the Amen... He is saying "*I am the One who never changes... you can count on Me... you can place your faith in Me...*"

Today Amen has come to mean more of an affirmation that something is true. When we say this at the end of a prayer, we are agreeing with the prayer and asking God to answer....but it really means more than that... it means what has been said is a truth that is fixed...fixed by God's unchangeableness.

Great example... listen to 2 Corinthians 1:18-20

18 But as God is faithful, our word to you is not yes and no.19 For the Son of God, Jesus Christ, who was preached among you by us—by me and Silvanus and Timothy—was not yes and no, but has become yes in Him.20 For as many as are the promises of God, in Him they are yes. Therefore also through Him is our Amen to the glory of God through us.

We can completely 100% depend on the Lord... what happened to Laodicea?...they depended on their material wealth, possessions and abilities.... Jesus also says of Himself that He is **the beginning of the creation of God...**

The Jehovah Witnesses interpret this verse as saying Jesus was created... He was the first thing God created... that's a big problem... but it doesn't say that or mean that... the NIV says translates it **the ruler of God's creation....** The literal Greek translation is **Jesus is the "originator" of creation...**

The ruler and originator... He is Lord over both the spiritual and the physical realm... and He is faithful and trustworthy... we can place our faith 100% in Him...having laid that identity of the who is speaking...Jesus Christ...He delivers the "condemnation"

Read verses 15-16

Have I ever told you there are differing ideas on how to interpret this book of Revelation?... this is one of those verses you will find those differing views... I think when it comes to this verse... the problem is more misinterpretation than good exegesis....

When we hear that someone is really "Hot for the Lord"... we think that person is on fire... passionate... convicted... unstoppable... but if we here someone is cold... we would think the opposite... they've gone cold for the Lord... like ice, or like a corpse...

In other words...Jesus is saying *I would rather you were hot and on fire to me OR... cold and in opposition to me...but don't lukewarm....indifferent....* I CAN'T IMAGINE Jesus telling a church that.

One commentator I respect takes the view that hot means a believer in Christ... cold means the non-believer... he says Jesus would rather you be hot... but if not hot, cold...because if you are cold... someone can lead you to Christ and you'll be hot...but lukewarm?... But Jesus hates indifference.

Here's where we need to make the obvious connection of Jesus's words to the physical, geographical background of Laodicea... Jesus takes what they would have been most familiar with... their water situation in Laodicea... and compares it to their condition...

That hot, 95 degree, therapeutic, comforting water bubbling up at nearby Hierapolis...and that pure, wonderful, delicious water flowing from Colossae... Jesus is saying *You are neither providing comfort and healing for the spiritually sick... hot water...*

OR providing spiritual refreshment for the spiritually thirsty!...I WISH YOU WERE EATHER HOT OR COLD... BUT YOU ARE THIS DISGUSTING WATER THAT IS LUKWARM... I picture that lukewarm sulfur infused rotten egg water they serve the tour busses today. I wish you were good for something...but you are good for nothing!....YUK!

Lukewarm... it is true... nobody wants lukewarm water... notice they don't sell lukewarm coffee?... its hot coffee or iced coffee... we get irritated when they serve lukewarm coffee... you want to spit it out!

And that's what Jesus says to this church...**because you are lukewarm, and neither hot or cold, I will spit you out of my mouth....**harsh words!...strong words... what made them lukewarm?... why does Jesus want to spit them out of His mouth... he tells us in verse 17:

Because you say... I will spit you out of My mouth BECAUSE YOU SAY...I am rich, and have become wealthy, and have need of nothing.... No church was worse off than Laodicea yet no church had a higher opinion of itself than Laodicea...

Jesus tells them He is going to spit them out of His mouth and they say **but we are rich, became wealthy and DON'T NEED ANYTHING... IVE TAKEN CARE OF ALL THAT THANKYOU!**

Sorry you feel like that Jesus... but we've got it all covered... we rebuilt our own city after the earthquake remember?... we don't need anything... we've got all we need....we built a beautiful church... we've put together a great program... WE do it right...

If you were with us last week we looked at the church in Philadelphia...small, insignificant, humble, but Jesus said to them ***I am opening doors for you because you have little power... you can only do a little under your own power... you rely on Me... you have kept My word and have not denied My name...***

The church in Laodicea could not be more opposite!... the church said WE ARE REALLY SOMETHING... AND JESUS SAID... YOU ARE MUCH, MUCH LESS THAN YOU THINK YOU ARE!

Jesus could see what Laodicea could not see... you think you are rich... self sufficient...

BUT...(17) **you are wretched and pitiable and poor and blind and naked...** this points back to the description of Jesus...Jesus is delivering to this church some very tough words... and what He is saying is true!.... it was an AMEN...**what we see about ourselves is not always what is true..** but what Jesus says is something you can rely on... they needed to see this...

They didn't see themselves as they REALLY are!... It is possible...no it is certain... that you...and myself included... do not see who and what we really are... self-deception runs deep in every one of us!...we call those "blind spots"... why are they called blind spots?.... cause you can't see them!

[A couple of weeks ago I was speaking with this sweet older lady... when I say that, now, they're pretty old!...this isn't a great picture for a Sunday but as I was talking with her...as she was beginning to tell me some interesting story... she developed a biological string from her nose to her upper lip... just hanging there...

She was talking...smiling...not noticing... but that was all I could notice!... trying to listen but this thing was such a distraction... all I was thinking was how can I tell her so she could wipe her nose!...I started motioning.. flipping my nose... wiping my face.... She just kept talking!

Finally in order to be able to hear her I had to say *sorry, you got something on your nose... can you wipe it on your sleeve or something?*...SHE WAS THE LAST ONE TO SEE IT BECAUSE IT WAS HER OWN FACE!

There's a somewhat lesser known book by C.S. Lewis called *God in the Dock*...which is a collection of various essays he had written... one of those essays is called *The Problem With X*.

"X" is referring to anyone in your life that you find some flaw with and they annoy you...when you say to someone... *you know what the problem with "X" is....* (fill in the name)... it could be a co-worker... a friend, your best friend, your wife, someone in your family.. someone at church...

You know what the problem with X is?...she can't see it but she just talks way too much!...the problem with X is that she always tries to control the group... the problem with X is that he is so critical but he can't see it himself!

We all do this!... we all see a problem with X... but C.S. Lewis concludes... ***You are the X in someone's life!...*** at some point they've sat down with someone else and said *You know... that Dan... the problem with Dan is...* and everyone chimes in ... *Yes! And he doesn't see it himself!*

The Problem With "X" ultimately challenges us to humility and self-examination. It invites us to recognize that, just as we struggle with the flaws of others, others struggle with ours. True wisdom and progress arise not in the vain hope of changing those around us, but in allowing ourselves to be changed—a process that requires honesty, openness, and, as Lewis implies, a willingness to let God work within us.

We're rich... we don't need anything...we've got it all covered... that's what they saw... they didn't see the string hanging down their nose... but Jesus saw it!... this is why we need the church... a small group of believers that can have loving honest edifying conversation...

Jesus was honest to this church... you are:

1. **Wretched**—Miserable, unfortunate... the word was used to describe land that was leached from all its minerals due to misuse.
2. **Pitiful**... there's not a better word... it means.... Pitiful.
3. **Poor**—Extreme poverty of a beggar... (they thought they were rich!)

4. **Blind**—tell me that wasn't a dig!... The medical school in Laodicea made an eye salve that helped people to see!... some of the members of that church may have helped develop that slave!... BUT THEY ARE BLIND!

5. **Naked**—Laodicea was a city that boasted in the finest of clothing!... the glossy black wool and the finest of garments... **you think your clothes are great but you are naked!**

Jesus brings all this to their faces... He confronts them because He loves this church... another disagreement in translating all this is **whether or not Laodicea is a true church**...are those who make up the church in Laodicea saved or not...

Several great bible commentators think they are not... that the church in Laodicea is a pagan unsaved body of people... I don't think so...Jesus calls them a church.

The church in the New Testament was never referring to a building but rather to the "called out ones"... the Ecclesia... so when Jesus addresses the church... He's addressing the "*called out ones*"

The ecclesia is the assembly of those whom God has called out from darkness into light... from isolation into community... and from self-interest into self-giving love... It is not a building, not an institution, but a living, dynamic body of people, continually being transformed by honesty, humility, and the presence of God....

But the ecclesia is people!... flawed.... Wretched, pitiful, poor, blind and naked people!... not to say in all gatherings of the ecclesia are those who think they are Christians but aren't... Matthew 7:22-24

22 Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? 23 And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity.

So Jesus continues on this path to restoring the body of Christ at Laodicea... a church that has drifted into self-sufficiency yielding an indifference to the truth...

Read verse 18

Jesus takes the role of counselor... advisor... metaphorically a financial consultant... *you have assets that need to be invested wisely... invest in gold*... Boy do we hear that today.... **The economy is going to crash.... BUY GOLD!....** Jesus says "*Calm down*"...*buy gold only purchased through Me... My gold is refined by fire*...

Again... this points back to where we started... Jesus is saying... and when Jesus says anything it is "fixed"... unchangeable.. dependable and true.. AMEN?.... *buy My currency*... Gold here

stands for purity refined by challenges... the spiritual wealth available only through Christ,...and the radiant presence of God. Jesus is inviting us to value what is eternal and incorruptible above the fleeting treasures of this world.

But that's not all... **invest in a white garment**...I might point out... that would be in contrast to the glossy black garments that made Laodicea famous!... *you need a white garment!*... we're going to see all over Revelation that white garments symbolize the imputed righteousness...

The righteousness of Jesus Christ PUT ONTO US...His righteousness clothes us!... to make us acceptable... pure and perfect before the eyes of God...we need white garments of righteousness...

These garments will cover your sins... they will cover your nakedness... then Jesus says...***you need My eye ointment... my eye salve... because you are not seeing clearly***...the eye salve the medical school produced couldn't do what Jesus's eye ointment can do...

The great physician Jesus can make the blind see... He can open your eyes to your spiritual blindness... He can open your eyes to your self-deception... your blind spots!....

Read verse 19

This is good news!... Jesus loves them!... it's a church... the worst of the seven.. but Jesus loves them!...He loves them so much He gives them a remedy.... He says **be zealous and repent!**... if **you don't want to be Jesus's vomit**... be earnest...and change your course!... Repent!

That's hard for people who have everything they need... the tragic human truth is when we have all our needs met... and extras.... That's when it is hardest to be zealous for Christ...

Zealousness = strong... energetic desire...passion for.

It is so hard for us Americans to understand such a prayer as ***give us this day our daily bread***...most of us are getting bread OUT of our diets because we are too fat!... we panicked during Covid... some of the grocery shelves were empty...instead of 159 varieties of frozen pizzas its gone down to 53....

I need Jesus is a foreign concept to us when our stomachs are full and our pocketbooks are stuffed... what do we need Him for?...fire insurance?... We have so much why WOULD we think we need something from Jesus?... it shows in what we prioritize.. where we spend most of our time... how we spend out money... how we plan for the future...

I'm afraid most of us live with a pervasive sense of self-sufficiency...

What do we need him for?... when we are diagnosed with a cancer... when our lives start to fall apart.... What happened to *Jesus I need The every hour!*

Jesus tells us we need to repent!... turn around from where we are going!

What comes next are very familiar words... I can't count how many evangelistic services I attended where the evangelist closed the service with these words...

Read verse 20

These words certainly are appropriate to be used evangelistically... but that is not quite the picture here... these words are written to a church... not an assembly of unbelievers...its not the picture of Jesus standing outside knocking on the door of one's heart to let Him in their lives.... Thought that would be appropriate.

Jesus is saying to these lukewarm believers... *do you want to get back right with Me?... do you want Me back into your life?... do you want to dine with Me again?... to have fellowship with Me again?*

I was reminded this week that there is a relationship between being in *union with Christ and communion with Christ*... when we accept Jesus Christ as our Lord and Savior... we have entered into a union with Him that cannot be broken... if you are in union with Christ.. there is nothing you can do to break that union...

But communion with Christ is another thing...fellowship with Him... intimacy with Him.. closeness to Him.... Communion will ebb and flow in your life... your position in Christ doesn't change... but your fellowship with Him can and does... Laodicea was NOT in communion with Christ.

Where Jesus is, is notable... He's outside the church door!... that's just how out of communion they were!... Jesus is knocking... [nock...nock...nock...nock...]

I find it remarkable that Jesus wants back in this church... I find it remarkable that Jesus still wants to come over to my house and have dinner with me!... He wants to spend time with us... uninterrupted time... He wants us in relationship with Him...

That's the invitation!... *come... let me in!*

Isn't it amazing?... Jesus says *I want to spit you out of My mouth...you make Me want to puke... but I would love to come over to your house for dinner!*

That's Jesus!

Read verses 21-22

