

**Sermon Notes: "Opening the Door to Jesus' Presence"** (*Spirit and Truth Weekend – Guest Speaker: Matt Reynolds*)

## **Introduction & Personal Background**

- Matt Reynolds from Ohio, leads Spirit and Truth (equipping & renewal ministry).
- Former pastor for 21 years; came to faith young, passionate in youth/college, but fire dimmed in ministry.
- Realized church ministry can look spiritual outwardly while heart grows cold (e.g., preaching to hundreds but not sharing Jesus personally; endless meetings but little prayer).
- 2016 conference encounter: Wrecked by fresh presence of God; stirred by persecuted church testimonies (Egyptian trauma counselor working with ISIS victims; challenge: "Will you live like you believe what you say?").
- Made a vow: No more "polite church game" — full surrender to Jesus, whatever it costs.
- Led to transformation in his church, then stepping into missionary/full-time renewal work; surrender is ongoing, not one-time.

## **Core Message: More Than Polite Church – Encountering God's Presence**

- North American church often reduced to "polite exchange of religious goods & services": nice programs, feel-good experiences, community help — but little true life change or devotion.
- God offers far more: Real encounter with His living presence, where Jesus becomes a real Person partnering in daily life, not just a concept or moral guide.
- Current season of "shaking" (COVID, scandals, cultural/political division, leader failures): Not punishment, but loving exposure of lukewarmness so we stop self-delusion and return to true devotion.
- Lukewarm Christianity looks spiritual but is inwardly dead — more dangerous than outright cold because it deceives ("I'm okay").

## **Key Scripture: Revelation 3:14-22 – Letter to Laodicea**

- **Context:** Wealthy merchant city; self-sufficient (rejected aid after earthquake), famous for textiles ("rich" clothes), eye salve ("see"), banking/wealth.
- Jesus' diagnosis: "You are neither cold nor hot... lukewarm... I am about to spit you out."
  - Root sin: **Pride & self-sufficiency** ("I am rich; I need nothing") — blind to true spiritual poverty ("wretched, pitiful, poor, blind, naked").
- Rebuke is loving discipline: "Those whom I love I rebuke and discipline."
  - Being "spit out" = grace (like Jonah) to wake up and return to life.
- Invitation of grace: "Here I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in and eat with that person, and they with me."
  - Famous image (Jesus knocking, no outside knob): He won't force entry — love requires choice.
  - **Not primarily evangelistic** — this is to the church! Jesus can be **outside** a church that bears His name.

- A church without Christ's presence at the center is no true church — just a nice organization.
- Promise to the victorious: Share His throne (intimacy & authority).

## **Application & Invitation**

- Humility required: Acknowledge desperate need; stop pretending self-sufficiency.
- Open the door = surrender control, make space for Jesus' presence (personal & corporate).
- No fancy programs needed — just lift up Jesus, give Him full attention, let Him lead.
- When Jesus is central: Life flows, transformation happens, gospel spills over naturally (alive people share life).
- Weekend example: Simple — Scripture, prayer, worship, silence, prayer walk, community outreach — God met powerfully because space was made for Him.
- Prayer: Repent of lukewarmness, open door to Jesus, invite His presence to fill hearts/church.

## **Closing Call & Response**

- Respond now: Kneel at altar (surrender), pray for church/presence, seek prayer.
- Don't leave without responding to God's stirring.

**Amen.**

## **Provoking Questions for Further Thought**

1. In what ways have you (or your church experience) slipped into a "polite church game" — looking spiritual outwardly but feeling inwardly distant or self-reliant?
2. How has recent "shaking" in your life, culture, or the broader church exposed areas of lukewarmness or pride — and how might you see it as God's loving invitation rather than condemnation?
3. Reflect on Revelation 3: Jesus knocking at the door of the church (not just unbelievers). Where in your personal life or church routines might Jesus currently be "on the outside looking in"?
4. What would practically opening the door to Jesus' presence look like for you this week — in daily habits, decisions, or church involvement?
5. If Jesus truly took center stage in your life/church (no pretending, full surrender), what changes — scary or exciting — do you anticipate, and are you willing to trust His presence for that?