

My father-in-law likes to drink coffee in the morning. But he nurses it. His coffee stands a lot between drinks. Because he likes it hot he spends a lot of time at the microwave warming it up. He won't drink even slightly lukewarm coffee. Maybe you agree with him. It's the same way many people don't like lukewarm soda, lukewarm supper, or lukewarm bath water. If something's hot and it's supposed to be that's good. Cold and it's supposed to be good. But lukewarm in most cases is just terrible.

Jesus would agree. He doesn't like a lukewarm church. We can easily identify churches that appear hot. They're the ones with a million programs, active buildings all week long, and parking lots filled with cars. We could probably just as easily identify cold churches by the opposite. It's the lukewarm churches that are harder to spot.

The book of Revelation includes in the first couple of chapters seven letters to actual churches. In each Jesus identifies through the Apostle John the reason for writing to that particular church. Each is worthy of our study as lessons for our congregation today. Our focus is on the seventh and final church, the church of Laodicea. To them and to us the second lesson encourages us to...

**Overcome your lukewarm feelings toward God
You're not spit out yet
The Savior still knocks at your door**

It was February of 1997 when my family visited Germany. One memory I have is of a big church right off the market square that we were able to tour. We walked down the aisle of pews, around the center stone altar, and looked down into the crypt. As big and as beautiful as the church was one thing was obvious. What should have been bustling with activity and people was empty. We and a few other tourists were all that was inside. Many of the gorgeous cathedrals of Europe stand empty, going unused. Why, because the people are cold, having lost all appreciation and love for the gospel. Contrast that with the work being done in Africa. Being one of the hottest places on the planet people are suffering. But the gospel has made them hot with passion. Thousands of people come to faith in Christ each year. The gospel is red hot and thriving.

Laodicea isn't mentioned a lot in the Scriptures. From history books we know it was a wealthy Roman city. Banking establishments, a medical school, and a booming textile industry all produced enough for Laodicea to feel comfortable. Still Jesus said, **"I know your deeds, that you are neither cold nor hot. I wish you were either one or the other!"** Wealth had made the people of the city comfortable. So did their home produced medicines and their own ability to make cloth. As the city was comfortable so were the people of the church. They looked at their mountains of cash, their plush clothes, and their medicinal salves and felt secure.

So America is Laodicea right? Not yet completely cold, but not hot either. You know the Lord doesn't just want us applying this to America. We have no debt. Many of you know that. We sold the parsonage and have 100,000 sitting in the bank. We've got the opportunity to sit tight, collect interest, and be safe. Our budget problems would be a thing of the past. That's not completely cold but it isn't exactly hot. Is it partially a hint of lukewarm feelings towards God and his work?

But lukewarm feelings also come in the form of lukewarm members. We can see the activity and the people that flock to other churches. Maybe we've even attended one or two of them. But here it seems lukewarm, unchanging. Is that leadership's fault? Is that my fault? Not coming, not participating, and not caring isn't leadership's fault or mine. It's yours. Spiritual apathy is just as dangerous. Not quite cold, but not hot either you are lukewarm to Jesus.

"So, because you are lukewarm—neither hot nor cold—I am about to spit you out of my mouth." You can drink cold water, in fact it's refreshing. You can drink hot water; in fact it warms you on a cold day. But lukewarm water is no good except for spitting out. Jesus can stand cold because at least there's openness to hearing the gospel. Jesus loves hot because it means spiritually strong. But lukewarm, like we are sometimes, gets spit out.

But we're not spit out yet. Why else would Jesus want this letter written? Laodicea was getting a wakeup call and so are we. We're not spit out yet. There's still time to turn this thing around. There's still time to go from lukewarm to hot. The time of grace isn't over yet. Jesus, **"the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the ruler of God's creation"** wishes for us to hear the condemnation of our sinfulness. He wants us to know how serious it is. Threatening spitting us out means we're receptive to the promises he makes which will turn us around.

School counselors are there to help you. They speak calmly when you're frantic. They assure you of success when you doubt. The counselor has gentle words, encouragement, and a caring heart. When Jesus counsels it's the same thing. **"I counsel you to buy from me..."** Get from Jesus what you can't get from yourself. This buying is done without money. Sinners can only do it by listening to the Word and receiving in faith what God offers by grace. What sinners buy is completely priceless. The blood of a hundred sinners would not buy God's grace. But the blood of one Christ did. Through him God pours out good gifts, countless blessings, and free forgiveness. From him comes forgiveness for lukewarm feelings of spiritual apathy and lukewarm use of resources. It's all been forgiven in Christ.

Perhaps you've seen the painting that captures this verse. Jesus standing in flowing white robes outside a brown wooden door attached to a stone house with only a dim light. His hand is up and he's knocking on the door. **"Here I am! I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in and eat with him, and he with me."** How many of you hear that verse melt because of the beauty of the image presented? Me too! It's a wonderful picture of a divine Savior coming to miserable sinners, a Savior so close he knocks.

All we have to do is open the door to him, right. It seems right, but it isn't. Saving faith is never a decision the person makes. You and I can no easier open our heart to Jesus than we can fly using our arms. It's impossible for sinners. **"You did not choose me, but I chose you,"** Jesus said to his disciples and us. The Laodiceans fell away from faith; they closed the door to Jesus. The Savior took the initiative to bring them back. If we're lukewarm as individuals or a congregation we did it to ourselves. The Savior takes us back with this sweet gospel picture. Jesus isn't asking us to come to the gospel; he brings it to us week after week. The King of the universe comes to your door, stands, calls, and knocks. The very power that created the universe and the power that rose from the dead knocks on your door. His power comes by the very Word that we hear and it moves us to open it for him. His grace urges us to run to the door and see who it is.

What a difference this grace makes. We thought we were rich, but God's grace showed us true wealth coming from gold refined by fire, pure and lasting. We thought we were clothed, but God's love showed us white clothes of righteousness he gives us free of charge. We thought we could see, but God's mercy brought a salve to truly open our eyes to reality. His grace, his love, his mercy they're reality. Our reality is in Christ. He's knocking on our door and his Word reaches our heart to compel us to open it to him.

It was said that we have to overcome our lukewarm feelings towards God. First we have to recognize we're lukewarm. Naturally this isn't something we can do, but by listening to God's Word we can. We're not spit out of Christ's mouth yet. But we aren't going to overcome anything on our own. So Christ comes knocking at our door. He hasn't left us alone but instead has come for us. We open to him by a gift of his grace alone. **"To him who overcomes, I will give the right to sit with me on my throne..."** that's how we'll overcome being lukewarm, promises of Christ. In Christ we will overcome our lukewarm feelings towards God.