



# Potomac Hills

## Presbyterian Church, PCA



By Grace Alone ~ Through Faith Alone ~ In Christ Alone

The Reverend Dr. David V. Silvernail, Jr.  
Revelation 3:14-22

January 3, 2010  
English Standard Version

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### ***“The Church of Peril and Promise”***

This is the 12<sup>th</sup> sermon in the series on The Book of Revelation entitled,  
***“The King’s Triumphant Return.”***

#### **Revelation 3:14-22**

*“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. <sup>15</sup> ‘I know your works: you are neither cold nor hot. Would that you were either cold or hot!’ <sup>16</sup> So, because you are lukewarm, and neither hot nor cold, I will spit you out of My mouth. <sup>17</sup> For you say, I am rich, I have prospered, and I need nothing, not realizing that you are wretched, pitiable, poor, blind, and naked. <sup>18</sup> 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. <sup>19</sup> Those whom I love, I reprove and discipline, so be zealous and repent. <sup>20</sup> 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. <sup>21</sup> 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. <sup>22</sup> He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.’ ”*

*Heavenly Father, thank You for giving us Your Word and making us Your people. As we look at the church in Laodicea, will You please help us? We know we’re **too** much like this church. We **don’t** trust Your Word as we should. We struggle with the same sins, the same idols, the same issues, the same problems. We **lack** faith. We’re sinful and self-centered. And all the while, we think we’re doing fine when we’re not. God, we know that soft words produce hard people and hard words produce soft people. And we find these words **hard**. We want to be people who are soft and kind and loving with each other ... so bring the hard words. So Lord, help us to meet*

*Jesus in His glory as we see Him in these words. Do this for each of us, this morning, in Jesus' good name, Amen.*

**INTRODUCTION: *The New Shape of Christianity.*** <sup>1</sup>

This Sunday it's possible that more Christian believers attended church in China than in all of so-called "Christian Europe." Yet in 1970 there were no legally functioning churches in all of China; only in 1971 did the communist regime allow for one Protestant and one Roman Catholic Church to hold public worship services, and this was mostly a concession to visiting Europeans and African students from Tanzania and Zambia.

This Sunday more Anglicans attended church in each of Kenya, South Africa, Tanzania and Uganda than did Anglicans in Britain and Canada and Episcopalians in the United States combined — and the number of Anglicans in church in Nigeria was several times the number in those other African countries.

This Sunday more Presbyterians were at church in Ghana than in Scotland, and more Presbyterians were in congregations of the Uniting Presbyterian Church of Southern Africa than in the United States.

This Sunday the churches with the largest attendance in England and France had mostly black congregations. About half of the churchgoers in London were African or African-Caribbean. Today, the largest Christian congregation in Europe is in Kiev, and it is pastored by a Nigerian of Pentecostal background.

This week in Great Britain, at least fifteen thousand Christian foreign missionaries were hard at work evangelizing the locals. Most of these missionaries are from Africa and Asia.

It is as if the globe had been turned upside down and sideways. A few short decades ago, Christian believers were concentrated in the global north and west, but now a rapidly swelling majority lives in the global south and east.

Dr. Mark Noll of Notre Dame, and the author of the insightful book, *The New Shape of World Christianity: How American Experience Reflects Global Faith*, observes that "the Christian church has experienced a larger geographical redistribution in the last fifty years than in any comparable period in its history, with the exception of the very earliest years of church history. ... More than half of all Christian adherents in the whole history of the church have been alive in the last one hundred years. Close to half of Christian believers who have ever lived are alive right now."

It's as if [a Christian] Rip Van Winkle fell asleep under a tree in 1960 and woke up this week to the sound of church bells. After wiping a half-century of sleep from his eyes, if he tried to locate his fellow Christian believers, he would find them in surprising places, expressing their faith in surprising ways, under surprising conditions, with surprising relationships to culture and politics, and raising surprising theological questions that would not have seemed possible when he fell asleep.

There are two generally acknowledged causes for this gigantic shift. One is the remarkable growth rates of evangelism, missions, and Bible translations in Asia, Africa, Latin America and the islands of the South Pacific. The second cause is the equally remarkable decline of Christian adherence in Europe and America. Adherence means "faithful attachment." Christian adherence means faithful attachment to the Christian faith. That is, we not only profess

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<sup>1</sup> The Introduction is adapted from *The New Shape of World Christianity* by Dr. Mark Noll, pages 19-21

our faith, but we also **live** in accordance with our faith.

The raw numbers of Americans and Europeans who profess faith in Christ hasn't dropped significantly. The number of people whose lives actually reflect that faith has dropped **dramatically**. Why? Well, many people think it's because we live in Laodicea ... or at least a modern version of it. There's an old song called "**Living in Laodicea**" by the Christian artist Steve Camp. He wrote it about the church in America. The chorus of that song goes like this:

*For I've been living in Laodicea  
And the fire that once burned bright, I've let it grow dim  
And the very Word I swore that I would die for all has been forgotten  
As the world's become my friend*

And so that brings us to our text this morning, which was written to the church living in Laodicea. But it was written by the only One able to understand their situation, the only One able to address their situation. And that, of course, is the Lord Jesus. So let's start by looking at the ...

#### v. 14: **WORDS OF CHRIST** <sup>2</sup>

How is Jesus revealed? "*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.'*"

No matter what the congregation thinks of themselves, it was Jesus' evaluation of a congregation that truly matters. Jesus is "**the Amen, the faithful and true witness.**" Jesus will tell the truth, the hard truth, and nothing but the truth! In this letter Jesus is going to bear witness against the Laodiceans. He's going to deliver an awful threat and an amazing promise. It's fitting that He identifies Himself as the One who has the credibility and power to say such things. When he says that He's "**the Amen,**" he means that He's reliable; He's God's confirmation, God's "yes" to all divine promises. **2 Corinthians 1:20** says, "*For all the promises of God find their Yes in Him. That is why it is through Him that we utter our Amen to God for His glory.*"

"Amen" is simply a transliteration of a Hebrew word that means firm or true or faithful. So the next phrase defines it: "**the faithful and true witness.**" So this letter is not to be taken

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#### **2 The Exposition of the text is adapted from the books:**

*Triumph of the Lamb* by Dr. Dennis Johnson, pages 89-94;  
*Discipleship on the Edge* by Dr. Darrell Johnson, pages 114-126  
*What Christ Thinks of the Church* by Dr. John R. W. Stott, pages 111-124  
*Seven Deadly Spirits: Revelation's Letters for Today's Church* by Dr. T. Scott Daniel, pages 116-125  
*The New International Greek Testament Commentary: Revelation* by Dr. Gregory Beale, pages 296ff  
*The Letters to the Seven Churches of Asia Minor in their Local Settings* by Dr. Colin Hemer, p. 178-209  
The article "*The Letter to the Church in Laodicea,*" by Rev. Mark Bates, Village Seven Presbyterian Church, Colorado Springs, CO, *Tabletalk* (Ligonier Ministries), May 2009, pages 64-65

#### **And the sermons:**

"*The Revelation of Jesus Christ (Part 3)*" by Mark Driscoll, Mars Hill Church, Seattle, WA, 9/7/08  
"*To The Church in Laodicea*" by Dr. Kim Riddlebarger, Christ Reformed Church, Anaheim, CA, 2002, [www.christreformed.org](http://www.christreformed.org)  
"*Opening the Door to Jesus Christ*" by Dr. Robert Rayburn, Faith Presbyterian Church, Tacoma, WA, 10/26/08  
"*Dear Laodicea*" by Rev. Charles Biggs, Ketocin Covenant Presbyterian Church, Purcellville, VA, 11/15/09  
"*Fool's Gold*" by Rev. Charlie Baile, Shady Grove Presbyterian Church, Derwood, MD, 10/16/08  
"*How To Buy Gold When You're Broke*" by Dr. John Piper, Bethlehem Baptist Church, Minneapolis, MN, 1/2/83, [www.desiringGod.org](http://www.desiringGod.org)  
"*Letter to the Church in Laodicea*" 8/17/08 by Dr. Tim Keller, Redeemer Presbyterian Church, NY

lightly. It's the Word of God, with all His firmness and truth and reliability behind it.

The elders may think well of the congregation; the people of the congregation may feel good about the congregation; the world can think a congregation is rich and successful. However, it doesn't matter what our evaluation is if Jesus thinks differently. Apparently this church thought one way of itself and Jesus, "*the faithful and true witness*" thought another way. And it's not pretty. Jesus confronts them with ...

**v. 15-17: WORDS OF REBUKE**<sup>3</sup>

*"I know your works: you are neither cold nor hot. Would that you were either cold or hot!"<sup>16</sup> So, because you are lukewarm, and neither hot nor cold, I will spit you out of My mouth.<sup>17</sup> For you say, I am rich, I have prospered, and I need nothing, not realizing that you are wretched, pitiable, poor, blind, and naked."*

In His letter to the church of Laodicea, Jesus warns us about the danger of self-sufficiency. Laodicea was an unusually wealthy city. It was a banking center and proud of her rich resources. Its financial independence was a matter of local pride so much so that Laodicea, in an act we can hardly conceive of in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, actually refused the imperial financial aid that was offered to repair the damage caused by an earthquake in AD 60. Rather than accepting aid from the Roman Empire, the people of Laodicea refused help and rebuilt the city themselves with their own resources. They didn't need anyone's charity.

Yet, while Laodicea appeared to have everything, it actually lacked the most basic resource — **water**. Laodicea sat between two nearby towns in the same valley both easily visible in either direction. Colosse was famous for the cool refreshing water that tumbled off the snow-capped mountains. And Hierapolis was famous for its hot springs. And so both the hot water of Hierapolis and the cold water of Colosse were both so refreshing, both of those waters **were useful**. They **DO** what water's supposed to do.

But Laodicea had no water supply of its own. Water had to be piped in through aqueducts because there was no natural supply at the town site, located as it was at the junction of several roads, not by a river or spring. Some of the pipes through which the water was brought to the city are still in existence today and the high mineral content of the water is indicated by the thick deposits on the interior of the pipes. By the time it arrived, the water was lukewarm and full of sediment. Laodicea was well known for its lukewarm, bad-tasting water.

Cold water is good for drinking, hot springs were reputed to have healing qualities, but lukewarm, sediment-filled water neither refreshes nor heals. It's just disgusting. Jesus tells the Laodicean church that they're just like their water. "*I know your works: you are neither cold nor hot. Would that you were either cold or hot!*<sup>16</sup> *So, because you are lukewarm, and neither hot nor cold, I will spit you out of My mouth.*"

Now, it's been pretty cold outside this week. And I don't like the cold. And when you've been outside in the cold, whether shoveling the sidewalk or playing in the snow, what do you want when you finally get inside? **Heat!** You want to be warm. And in that kind of situation we like **hot** ... **Hot** chocolate, **Hot** tea, **Hot** apple cider, **Hot** soup. And then we want to take a **hot** shower ... with our hot wife. We like **hot!** [Did he really just say that? Yes, he really did!]

But six months from now, you'll be complaining about the heat. I won't ... remember, **I like hot**. But most of you will. And when shoveling the sidewalk turns into mowing the grass,

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<sup>3</sup> The definition of "Affluenza" comes from *Word Watch: The Stories Behind the Words of Our Lives* by Anne Soukhanov, lexicographer and executive editor of *The American Heritage Dictionary*.

and when playing in the snow becomes playing in the yard, what do you want when you come inside? **Cold!** You want something cool. And in that situation we like cold ... an ice **cold** coke, **ice** tea, **cold** lemonade, **cold** beer, a **cool** swim in a pool. We like cold.

Lukewarm ... .. not much to say about lukewarm. No one's ever asked me for lukewarm beer. No one wants lukewarm chocolate because then the mini-marshmallows won't melt. Lukewarm doesn't warm us up when we're cold. And it doesn't refresh us when we're hot. It's not good for very much.

Toilet water is lukewarm.

You see, Jesus is **not** saying that He wishes these people were either spiritually hot or spiritually cold rather than being spiritually lukewarm. Nowhere does God desire for His people to have cold hearts. Rather, Jesus explains what He means by being lukewarm in the next verse, verse 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.***" The lukewarm person is one who's lost his dependence on God. In his arrogance, he believes **he has no need of Christ's righteousness because he has enough of his own**. Whenever we take pride in our own moral goodness, we have fallen into the perilous sin of the Laodiceans. We are like lukewarm water.

Now I think that some of you here are hot. You love Jesus and orient your life around serving Him. You pray, you give, you teach. Now some of you are cold. You're refreshing. People love to be around you. You love, you serve, you share. And ... some of you are lukewarm. When it comes to loving Jesus and loving His people, you're indifferent, you're ambivalent, and you give people the impression that you don't really care. And when it comes to the ministry of the church, you're dead weight that we're dragging uphill.

You might find that offensive. So be it.

You see, loving Jesus and loving His people, His church **is something that's seen**. If you can't see love in action, then perhaps there's not that much love there to begin with. Because, bottom line, you and I do those things that we care about.

And you can say, "But you can't see my heart." You're right. I can't see your heart. But you're not supposed to be doing these things for me. You're supposed to be doing these things for Jesus, out of your love for Him, in response to the grace He's given you ... **and He can** see your heart. And He's letting these people in Laodicea know ... **that He knows** ... exactly what they're thinking, exactly what they're saying, and exactly what they're doing.

These people said "***I'm rich, I have prospered, and I need nothing.***" I have a good job, a nice car, a big house, lots of money, great resume, I have more degrees than Fahrenheit, I'm very important. You see, these people suffered from the disease of "**Affluenza**." Affluenza is defined as an array of psychological maladies such as isolation, boredom, passivity and lack of motivation engendered in adults, teenagers and children by the possession of great wealth. It is "an unhappy condition of overload, debt, anxiety, and waste resulting from the dogged pursuit for more." And while I'm using this word to describe the church in Laodicea, the word "**affluenza**" was coined to describe our lives today. The church in Laodicea is alive and well in Loudoun County, Virginia. I think it was St. Augustine who said, "Saying 'I have everything' is terrible when 'everything' doesn't include the living God."

The church then, and now, has apparently imbibed a full measure of this self-sufficient spirit. It's possible that the Christians' prosperity resulted from the compromises they had made with the idolatry of the local trade guilds. In other words they hadn't let their Christian faith interfere with making money! The Smyrna church, as we read in chapter 2, was financially poor

but spiritually rich. The Laodicean church was the exact opposite: financially rich but spiritually poor.

And Jesus finds this sort of spiritual pride so offensive that it makes Him sick. He will spit out of His mouth all those who think that they are rich in their own righteous works. These Christians weren't denying the faith but they weren't **doing** anything on its behalf either. They were useless to the cause.

So is that it? Is it over for these people? No, not at all. Because the church is all about grace. Jesus is all about grace. And so He comes to them with ...

**v. 18-19: WORDS OF COUNSEL**<sup>4</sup>

Outwardly speaking, things couldn't have looked better for the Laodiceans. They were a wealthy and influential city located right at the intersection of three major crossroads — what we'd call highways. They had a booming banking business with lots of gold. They had a famous medical school with a famous professor who invented an eye salve with a Phrygian powder. And they had a well-known **black wool** industry as the fertile ground of the nearby valley provided great grazing for sheep. They were rich, helped people with their eyes, and had clothing from the sheep and they were famous for these things. And yet Jesus says, "*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.*"<sup>19</sup> *Those whom I love, I reprove and discipline, so be zealous and repent.*"

Walter Marshall said, "**Your heart is addicted to salvation by works.**" As a result, we often wear our good deeds like spiritual merit badges, thinking we can impress God with our righteous acts. Like the Pharisee in Luke 18, we pride ourselves that we're not like other men. After all, we're not engaging in the perversity of our culture. Instead, we pray (sometimes), tithe (3%), read our Bibles (occasionally), and serve in the church (when guilted into it). Yet, we must realize that arrogant self-sufficiency results in disgusting works, no matter what these works may be. And some of you are pathetic. You're not lovely, loveable, or loving. **So where's your hope?** Right here in verse 19. Here we read "*Those whom I love...*" And that's your hope. You are loved. And here in this verse Jesus ties together love and repentance.

You see, unless we see that we're poor and needy, Jesus will have no part of us. We don't begin the Christian life poor and then grow into the riches of our own righteousness. Rather, we begin the Christian life **spiritually bankrupt**. As we grow, we come to understand the depth of our sin and our great need for a savior. It's only when we see our poverty that we can truly become rich.

So Laodicea and its ineffective Christianity — it's useless, self-satisfied going through the motions form of Christianity — is a message of immediate relevance to every part and every age of Christianity. The summons of this letter is to be heard and answered by every Christian over and over again and by every Christian church. If you remember, the very first of Luther's *95 Theses*, which was the opening salvo of the Protestant Reformation, reads, "***When our Lord and Master Jesus Christ said, 'Repent' he willed the entire life of believers to be one of repentance.***"

Repentance, like the faith from which it springs, is not something done once and for all at the beginning of one's Christian life. That's apparently what the Laodicean Christians were

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<sup>4</sup> Walter Marshall quote is taken from his book *The Gospel Mystery of Sanctification: Growing in Holiness by Living in Union with Christ*.

thinking. They had believed and repented and had become Christians. Their relationship with God had been taken care of and, whether they ever would have put it this way to themselves, they seemed to think that now that faith and repentance were behind them they could live the same as any other inhabitant of Laodicea. But repentance, as the Bible teaches us everywhere and as we are reminded here, is supposed to be the habit and the daily characteristic of a Christian's life, not something done once and never again. There will be the need for repentance over and over again ... every day.

The will of Christ for the church is that our poverty be replaced by spiritual wealth; that our nakedness and shame be covered with the robes of righteousness and good deeds; that our blindness be healed so we can see things as they really are and escape from the dream world of self-satisfaction.

And there is only one place we can get these things—from Jesus Himself. So he says, "Buy from **ME** gold!" But how do you buy gold when you're broke? Jesus knows we're broke. He just said so in verse 17. And not just broke, but blind — we can't work. And not just blind, but shamefully naked — we can't even leave the closet. So how do you buy gold and garments and salve for your eyes when you're poor, blind, and naked? How do you get the wealth of Christ, the power to be clothed with obedience, and the wisdom to see things like God does, when your house is empty, and you're too frightened and ashamed to venture out?

Well, the answer is ... **You don't go out; you invite Jesus in.** And that's the first thing we see when He gives this church His ...

#### v. 20-22: **WORDS OF PROMISES**

In the ancient world sharing a meal had greater significance than it does today. It was a symbol of affection and acceptance. Remember in Luke 15 that Jesus was criticized by the Pharisees for not only associating with tax collectors and sinners but eating with them. Later, we read in Acts 11 that Peter was criticized by the Jerusalem Christians not for preaching the gospel to the Gentiles — they were okay with that — the problem was that he also **ate** with them. Eating with Gentiles or tax collectors was getting **too** close, going **too** far!

But Jesus hasn't changed. He still wants that kind of intimate fellowship with us. He says, "*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.*"<sup>21</sup> *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.*"<sup>22</sup> *He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.'*"

The picture here of Jesus standing at the door and knocking may seem kind of pathetic to you. Like some homeless guy looking for a meal. In reality, Jesus is **the master of the house** whose servants are expected to be ready to open the door for Him at His return. The house is His own in which He graciously and remarkably condescends to dine with His servants.

This is what Jesus says in **Luke 12:35-38**, "*Stay dressed for action and keep your lamps burning,*"<sup>36</sup> *and be like men who are waiting for their master to come home from the wedding feast, so that they may open the door to him at once when he comes and knocks.*"<sup>37</sup> *Blessed are those servants whom the master finds awake when he comes. Truly, I say to you, he will dress himself for service and have them recline at table, and he will come and serve them.*"<sup>38</sup> *If he comes in the second watch, or in the third, and finds them awake, blessed are those servants!"*

Jesus says I love the church, I want to be with the church, I died for the church ... the church is my bride ... my wife's in there and I want to see her.

The statement seems to refer to a promise of communion **right now** with believers who

will repent of their sins and turn to the Lord in new faith, new obedience, and new service. The summons here is for people who are already Christians to be **renewed** in their fellowship with the Lord.

And if we open the door, He promises more than relationship. He promises that we'll reign with Him. This comes directly from **Daniel 7:27**, "*And the kingdom and the dominion and the greatness of the kingdoms under the whole heaven shall be given to the people of the saints of the Most High; their kingdom shall be an everlasting kingdom, and all dominions shall serve and obey them.*"

Stop pretending to be what you're not, get serious about your relationship with Jesus, remember He loves you and He wants you to repent and to open yourself to Him being active in your life once again. He is the master of the house and those servants who stand ready in His service He gives amazing promises.

### **CONCLUSION: Swollen Bellies, Starving Souls** <sup>5</sup>

Betsy Childs is an associate writer at Ravi Zacharias International Ministries in Atlanta, Georgia. In a recent article, she addresses the similarities between the church in America and the church in Laodicea. She writes ...

I remember feeling great distress as a child over the images of starving children that were regularly shown on television. At that time, most of the children I was seeing were victims of famine in Ethiopia. Their swollen bellies confused me; if they were starving (as the woman on TV said), why did they look so fat? My mother explained to me that the abdomens of these children were swollen because they weren't receiving any protein. Their distended bellies were a sign that they were severely malnourished.

Just as I misinterpreted the swollen stomachs of the Ethiopian children, it is possible to misjudge the health of our culture and society. In the same way that the distended stomach of a starving child looks deceptively similar to one who has been overfed, the abundant evidence of material prosperity in our country belies the spiritual poverty endemic in the West.

In his book *The Progress Paradox: How Life Gets Better While People Feel Worse*, Gregg Easterbrook documents the sharp rise in prosperity in America. Not only have the rich gotten richer, those in middle and even lower income brackets now enjoy many comforts that a few decades ago were the prerogative of the very wealthy. He writes:

If you sat down with a pencil and graph paper to chart the trends of American and European life since the end of World War II, you'd do a lot of drawing that was pointed up. Per-capita income, "real" income, longevity, home size, cars per driver, phone calls made annually, trips taken annually, highest degree earned, IQ scores, just about every objective indicator of social welfare has trended upward on a pretty much uninterrupted basis for two generations. Many subjective graphs would also show steady upward trends: personal freedom, women's freedom, reduction of bias against minority groups.

But your graphs would lose their skyward direction when the topics turned to the inner self. The trend line for happiness has been flat for fifty years. The trend line is negative for the number of people who consider themselves "very happy," that percentage

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**5 The conclusion is adapted from** the email newsletter, *A Slice of Infinity* by Betsy Childs, associate writer at Ravi Zacharias International Ministries, 5/22/07. Gregg Easterbrook quote comes from his book *The Progress Paradox: How Life Gets Better While People Feel Worse*, page 163.

gradually declining since the 1940s. And the trend line would cascade downward like water over a falls on the topic of avoiding depression.

In spite of the material prosperity of the West, spiritual poverty shows through like gaunt limbs that cannot be hidden by designer clothes. Ours is not the first society to mask spiritual starvation with material excess. In verse 17 of our text, Jesus warned the church in Laodicea about this very thing, *“For you say, I am rich, I have prospered, and I need nothing, not realizing that you are wretched, pitiable, poor, blind, and naked.”*

Prosperity isn't wrong, but it's incredibly dangerous. When the man we've come to call the "rich young ruler" approached Jesus, Jesus told him to sell all of his possessions. Was this because the poor could not be fed any other way? Was this because wealth is intrinsically sinful? No. It was because Jesus knew that this man's wealth possessed his heart and would not admit any rival master.

These Christians in Laodicea don't take it seriously when the New Testament speaks of followers of Christ seeking first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, of laying their treasures up in heaven, of keeping themselves unstained by the world, of counting everything loss compared to the surpassing greatness of knowing Christ Jesus as Lord. They seem to be just as eager to get rich and just as worried about accumulating things as anyone else in town. They seem to take as much satisfaction and find as much pride in the things for which Laodicea is famous as any other inhabitant of the town. The Christian faith doesn't seem to make all that much difference to them; so then why should anyone else embrace it? And, in particular, the Christians talk on and on about knowing Jesus Christ, about his being present by the Holy Spirit, about walking with the Lord and so on. They seem to say that they have knowledge of God and communion with God that practitioners of other faiths have never experienced. Well, if that's true, why doesn't it more of a difference? Why don't they live their lives in an obviously different way? Does knowing God mean so little?

Real Christians turn pale when we hear unbelievers ask such questions **precisely** because we all know all too well how much we've contributed to the impression they have about us. We can laugh about someone who's confidently predicting the end of the world but carefully keeps his life insurance current and follows the performance of the portfolio that makes up his 401K. But it's demoralizing for us to think that we're like that in even more serious ways.

We sing *Amazing Grace* but don't seem to be all that amazed.

We talk about heaven but don't seem to want to go there.

We confidently assert that this world is not our home but seem to be putting down roots like everyone else.

We talk about our dependence upon the Lord but seem to be counting on the same things our unbelieving friends count on for **their** happiness and prosperity.

Dr. John R.W. Stott writes, “Perhaps none of the seven letters is more appropriate to the [21<sup>st</sup>] century church than this. It describes vividly the respectable, sentimental, nominal, skin-deep religiosity which is so widespread today. Our Christianity is flabby and anemic. We appear to have taken a lukewarm bath of religion. Zeal, heat, fire, passion — these are the qualities we lack today and desperately need.”

May we not be a McChurch — where we come and go in fast food style and move quickly, but no longer savor the Gospel. Don't be misled by the signs of prosperity around you. Swollen stomachs don't indicate nourishment, and success doesn't insure health. Unlike those who are physically starving because of famine, we have a choice: **spiritual food is close at**

**hand.** Ask God to evict the love of the world from your heart, and prepare yourself to taste and see that the Lord is good. Because only those **who can't pay** get to buy what Jesus offers.

Think about that. You need to pray.

Take a moment to do that, and then I'll close.

*Heavenly Father, thank You for revealing Jesus to us. Lord, help us to take seriously what is written here. For those of us who need to realize our true spiritual condition, make it clear to us. For those of us who need to stop trusting in our own works, trusting our own goodness, trusting our own resources, open our eyes to both our sin and our Savior. For all of us who need to repent, lead us to repentance, and then clothe us with the garments only You can provide ... in the Name of Your Son, Jesus, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, One God, now and forever. Amen.*

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**Isaiah 55:1**

*“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.”*

**Revelation 22:16-17**

*“I, Jesus, have sent My angel to testify to you about these things for the churches. I am the root and the descendant of David, the bright morning star.”<sup>17</sup> The Spirit and the Bride say, “Come.” And let the one who hears say, “Come.” And let the one who is thirsty come; let the one who desires take the water of life without price.”*