

## Sunday 29<sup>th</sup> December 2019 Rev 3.14-22 Laodicea

Laodicea was a church with a reputation

- It had all the right credentials
- It had been planted by one of Paul's protégés around AD 50-60
- It had clearly grown to a good size
- Paul had even written a letter to the church there

### Colossians 4:12-16

<sup>12</sup> Epaphras, who is one of you and a servant of Christ Jesus, sends greetings. He is always wrestling in prayer for you, that you may stand firm in all the will of God, mature and fully assured. <sup>13</sup> I vouch for him that he is working hard for you and for those at Laodicea and Hierapolis. <sup>14</sup> Our dear friend Luke, the doctor, and Demas send greetings. <sup>15</sup> Give my greetings to the brothers and sisters at Laodicea, and to Nympha and the church in her house.

<sup>16</sup> 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.

Laodicea in context

- Was affluent and respectable
- It was well thought of in Christian circles

If the church of Laodicea was around today

- It would probably export its church programmes around the globe
- And be about to launch its own TV channel

- And we'd all be really impressed with it!

But what is Jesus verdict on the church?

- Some pretty strong words to say

Jesus says that they are neither hot nor cold

- That they're lukewarm
- And that he's about to spit them out of his mouth
- Greek is stronger, bible translators are very polite
- I'm going to vomit you out of my mouth

Vomit isn't nice

Some of us have experienced it over Christmas in our families!

Jesus says

- You make me sick!

That is some statement for a church

- Which is so successful

Why does he use this metaphor?

- Neither hot nor cold
- Lukewarm believers

Laodicea had two city neighbours

- Hierapolis which was famous for its hot springs
- Colosse which was the source of water for Laodicea
- Laodicea only had a small stream as its water source
- In the summer months the stream would dry up

- So the citizens relied upon a aqueduct from nearby Colosse
- To provide them with water

The problem was

- That by the time the cold, refreshing water from Colosse got to Laodicea
- It had been warmed by the sun
- And had become lukewarm

Just like us

- Nice cold water from the tap
- Hot water for tea
- Either is great
- But lukewarm water is not nice

Jesus draws on an everyday part of their lives

- To describe how he feels about the church

What's the reason?

- Their love of money and possessions
- V17 – rich & have everything that I need

Jesus says

- You don't realise your true spiritual state
- V17b – wretched, pitiful, poor, blind and naked

The issue seems to be this

- That the Laodicean's gathered together at church
- Sung songs

- Were probably passionate believers
- They listened to talks
- They responded to talks
- They said yes to God on a Sunday
- And then lived as if he didn't exist for the rest of the week

So Jesus says

- I'd rather you were one or the other
- Either red hot for me – passionate disciple
- (Gospel read by Jill from Luke with the 2 disciples on the Emmaus Road: "were not our hearts burning within us...")
- Or not bother at all
- In other words – don't go through the pretence of being a true follower in Church
- If the rest of the time you're going to pursue money and things
- Materialism

What a challenge

Don't know what you were thinking when I described the church in Laodicea earlier

- I was thinking
- That could be us, we have a reputation for "batting above our weight", affluent, and respectable

See such wealth around us

- So many with so much money
- And so many things

- So easy to fall into the trap of wanting more especially at Christmas

### **Challenges for us today**

1. Are we hot or cold? Or a bit lukewarm?
2. Story of the frog. There are severe consequences of being lukewarm! We can become anesthetised to the world around us and just become like everyone else – and we slowly die and lose that passion for Jesus
3. What are we really pursuing – more of God or more money and things? Is materialism really our God?

### **A final thought**

Jesus says

- Despite everything
- The Laodiceans are still his friends
- And that his rebuke is because he loves them
- And that there is still time to listen to his knock at the door
- And respond

The question is will we as we enter a new year and a new decade

- Will we hear his rebuke of us today?
- Will we hear his knock today and let him in?
- Will we hear and respond?