



ST NINIAN'S UNITING CHURCH

WEDNESDAY WORDS

NOVEMBER 13TH, 2024

BASED ON REVELATION 3:14-22

THE MESSAGE TO LAODICEA

PRAYER: Lord, my prayer for today concerns my willingness to be really committed to doing what you have called me to do. You have asked each of your followers to be firm in our foundation of faith and to follow your examples and teachings of love, hope, faith, joy and grace and above all else the first commandment. Risen Christ, as hard as I try, at times I find it difficult to be who you know I can be. Sometimes for peace and relationship with others, I falter and the lukewarm faith overtakes me. However, when I see the beauty in the world which surrounds me and take a moment to look at the colours of the stars in the universe, I know you have been with me from the beginning. The warmth of your love empties out the lukewarm faith and renews it with the strength of faith that is carried high on the wings of eagles and to the great depth of the oceans to the level plains and the mountains. I know then the wealth I carry inside of me far outweighs even the wealthiest of this world. In the name of the Spirit of Christ I pray amen.



PRAYER POINTS OF PRAISE

- The angels which surround me, carrying me when I'm weak, and encouraging me when encouragement is needed
- Friends near and far; family to spoil and be spoiled by
- Minds which are open to hear new things and hearts which are willing to love
- Faithful People through history who have remained faithful despite the many challenges they faced.

PRAYER POINTS OF THANKS

- For the Word which continues to be the centre of spiritual growth and life
- For the ability to get around to different parts of the world
- For missional activities
- For the work of the wider church community

PRAYER POINTS OF CONFESSION

- For the moments I'm tone deaf to the needs of others
- For the moments when I'm being selfish, dishonest with Jesus, myself, family and friends
- When forgiveness for others isn't on my radar.
- When I'm not listening to your voice steering me in the right direction.

WORDS OF GRACE: Our Lord knows what's in our hearts and minds. God's presence is with us and enabling us in our ministries of teaching, prayers, pastoral caring, and hospitality. God's grace is love and eternal, Jesus says: 'Your sins are forgiven' our response is thanks be to God amen.

REVELATION 3:14-22

I thought we might step into the final Book of the Bible. Revelation is a book which isn't spoken about very often, probably because it's perceived to be full of doom and gloom, evil and dark images and full of mystery which is difficult to explain. So, I thought I would give it a go!

I have heard people in the past say they think when John wrote it he must have been eating magic mushrooms or something. I've also heard knowledgeable people say that when he was on the island of Patmos, he was almost starving and was experiencing hallucinations. What is clearer is that it was most likely written during the reign of the warped personality Domitian and fits in better with the complacency and defection of the churches in the 2nd and 3rd chapters. One thing to remember when reading Revelation is the use of the words 'like' and 'something like' we are hearing a comparison is occurring rather than an actual event or an identification of something or someone. I'm confident that John's writing of this final Book is that he was in a full and loving relationship with the Holy Spirit, devoted to faithfully serving the Creator God.

The message to Laodicea.

14. 'To the angel of the church in Laodicea write: These are the words of the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the ruler of God's creation.
15. I know your deeds, that you are neither cold nor hot. I wish you were either one or the other!
16. So, because you are lukewarm – neither hot nor cold- I am about to spit you out of my mouth.
17. You say, 'I am rich; I have acquired wealth and do not need a thing.' But you do not realise that you are wretched, pitiful, poor, blind and naked.
18. I counsel you to buy from me gold refined in the fire, so you can become rich; and white clothes to wear, so you can cover your shameful nakedness; and salve to put on your eyes, so you can see.
19. Those whom I love I rebuke and discipline. So be earnest, and repent.
20. Here I am! I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and open the door, I will come in and eat with him, and he with me.
21. To him who overcomes, I will give the right to sit with me on my throne, just as I overcame and sat down with my Father on his throne.
22. He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.'

REFLECTION

Our reading today is written for the church in Laodicea and is rich in both warnings and promises steeped in Christ's abiding love. It isn't often we hear Jesus identifying himself as 'the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the beginning of the creation of God.' His introduction assures us of His sovereignty, authority, and reliability all of which are essential for

understanding His intentions toward His people. Jesus was there when the Spirit breathed life into the earth at the very beginning. The Son of God's first appearance in the scriptures wasn't at the time of Jesus' birth in Bethlehem. Jesus describing himself as the amen, shares with us that He will be there at the end. We say 'Amen' at the conclusion of prayers, when all has been said, all petitions have been said, we acknowledge Jesus, the Holy Spirit and then amen -the end.

The Laodicean church had become very complacent, Jesus calls it lukewarm, self-sufficient, proclaiming wealth but spiritually poor. Their condition reveals a critical truth about the nature of spiritual vitality. They believed they were rich, and their needs were nothing, and yet, they were wretched, pitiable, poor, blind, and spiritually naked. This church was so wrapped up in itself with material things, it didn't recognise its true condition. This stark contrast between how they perceived themselves to be was so different to any actuality and their true spiritual state reflects the dangers of complacency in faith even in today's church community. Perhaps the Australian attitude of 'she'll be right mate' won't help us here.

What stands out in Jesus' address to the Laodicean church isn't just the condemnation of their lukewarmness but the loving invitation that follows. Jesus, in His limitless love, calls them to change their direction and allow themselves to hear the voice of reason and repentance. Jesus' desire is that His people would recognise what was happening to them, that the decisions they were making needed to change and take on the path leading them back to Christ – a reflection of the grace that was so much a part of Christ's nature. The hope Christ offers is beautifully restorative; He stands at the door and knocks, waiting for permission to enter and grow a personal relationship with each person. This act of knocking symbolises Jesus' persistent pursuit of our hearts despite our failures and brokenness.

On top of the above comments, the promise of being in fellowship with Christ holds an incredible significance for each of us. He makes the statement that if *anyone* hears His voice and opens the door, He will come in and dine with them. This imagery of dining together offers a picture of intimacy, mutual communion, and shared life, emphasising that Jesus longs for a relationship with each of His followers highlighting the goodness of Christ's love – a love that wants to interact in our lives, desiring partnership and presence rather than just a lukewarm now and then acknowledgement.

Verse 19 is a timely reminder: 'Those who I love, I rebuke and discipline.' Like a parent who loves their children does the same thing. This discipline isn't punitive but corrective. It's borne from love, seeking to guide us back into a flourishing relationship with Him. This kind of relationship reassures us that even in our failures, Jesus is actively engaged, working toward our sanctification and a restored relationship with Him.

He also ends his message with a promise to overcome our brokenness, stating that's who will sit with Him on His throne, sharing in His victory. This glorious prospect is a declaration to us of Christ's ultimate goodness – the assurance that our struggles don't go unnoticed, and we're invited into a place of honour, glory, and authority with Christ when we retreat from being merely lukewarm or cold, to being fully in an alignment with the risen Christ Jesus.

When we read from Revelation, we can allow ourselves to be captivated by the goodness of Christ's love we can see in multiple dimensions: His sovereignty as the true witness, His relentless pursuit of each one of us, His corrective discipline rooted in parental love, and His promise of intimate fellowship and ultimate victory. It calls us to leave our complacent lukewarm spirituality behind us and follow the pathway that will take us directly to God's hope, grace, love, joy and mercy all of which ensure us that the intimacy of this relationship is cherished and nurtured. When we hear the knock on the door to our heart we are accepting this loving invitation, which will open our lives to the transformative power of His grace, living in the richness of His love.

Amen

FROM THE WORDS OF THOMAS À KEMPIS

Grant me, O Lord, to know what I ought to know, to love what I ought to love,
To praise what delights you the most. To value what is precious in your sight,
To hate what is offensive to you.

Do not suffer me to judge according to the sight of my eyes,
Nor to pass sentence according to the hearing of the ears of ignorant men (people);
But to discern with a true judgement between things visible and spiritual,
And above all, always to inquire what is the good pleasure of your will.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rn9-UNer6MQ>

