



Message **Transcript**

The Apathetic

Jeff Schwarzentraub

- Lord, we give you all the praise, all the glory, and all the honor for who you are. Lord, we love celebrating you and Lord making you central in our worship. Even the privilege of taking communion with you today, Lord, knowing that we are forgiven completely because of your shed blood and your resurrection from the dead. Lord, we give you praise, glory, and honor. Lord, our prayer today is that you would speak directly to us, Lord, that you would use me as your servant, speak through me, Lord, and Lord use the foolish things of preach to change us. Lord, we wanna hear you're living an active word. We believe that every time your word is faithfully proclaimed that you have a word for us, so Lord be helpful to us. And now that all of God's people who are gathered who desire to hear His word and believe what He says and will by faith put into practice what the Lord shows you, would you agree with me this morning by very loudly saying the word--

- [Congregation] Amen.

- Amen. Yesterday morning, I received a text that our heat in the church was out. So we had people here yesterday from 11:00 in the morning till 6:00 o'clock last night and the heat still didn't work. And when we got here this morning that he still didn't work. We had propane heaters in here, those would look like the sideline of a football game and it was 53 degrees, and I thought, what a better day to preach on being hot and cold in the book of Revelation than this day? And praise God, He's warmed it up, but for you guys to come out, I mean, our name brave really means brave. So it's good that you brave the elements, glad that you're here.

But the reason that we're talking about that today is many times when you get diagnosed with something, when you go to the doctor, one of the first things they may do is take your temperature to see if you're normal or healthy. In our season that we're living in right now, sometimes when you go to a restaurant or a movie theater or somewhere like that, they'll take your temperature to make sure that you're not sick, or if you're gonna fly on a plane, they'll take your temperature. What God wants us to do and what He wants to do for us is to take our spiritual temperature so that we're aware of what He considers normal, what He considers healthy, so we can continue to journey with Him.

And as we've been taking a look in the book of Revelation chapter two and three, have both been about the church and the type of church that God blesses as He's given a resource to give commendation or condemnation to churches. It's been His grading sheet for the churches, these seven specific churches that we've been studying, and not only are these seven specific churches in history, but they're representative of the church in general and what God has to say to us.

Out of all the churches we're going to study, the church today, may be just maybe most like the church that we have in America. So I encourage you to listen up as we take a look at the apathetic or the complacent church and what Jesus Christ may have to say to us.

So I'll invite you today, open your Bibles up to the book of Revelation. We're gonna begin in verse 14 and go through verse 22. I'd to read it aloud to you and then

we're gonna talk about four specific ways that you should honor Jesus Christ in His church, four specific ways that God wants to be honored in His church.

Hear the word of the Lord this morning, "To the angel of the church in Laodicea write; The amen, the faithful and true witness, the beginning of the creation of God says this; I know your deeds, that you are neither cold nor hot. I wish that you were cold or hot. So because you are lukewarm and neither hot nor cold, I will spit you out of my mouth because you say I am rich and have become wealthy and have need of nothing and you do not know that you are wretched and miserable and poor and blind and naked. I advise you to buy from me gold refined by fire so that you may become rich and white garments so that you may clothe yourself and that the shame of your nakedness will not be revealed and eye salve to anoint your eyes so that you may see. Those whom I love I reprove and discipline, therefore, zealous and repent. Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come into him and we'll dine with him and he with me. He who overcomes I will grant to him to sit down with me on my throne as I also overcame and sat down with my Father on His throne. He who has an ear, let him hear what the spirit says to the churches."

Now, the seventh church that we will study. It's the final church in this section of the book of Revelation. And we've taken a look at the first six. And just by way of review, we took a look at Ephesus, which was the performance-driven church. It was a faithful church that had forgotten their first love. And we talked about making Jesus Christ central and primary in our pursuit and who we should be. Then we took a look at Smyrna, which was the persecuted church. It was a poor suffering church who

continued to endure, and Jesus said, "Don't be fearful of tribulation, don't be fearful even to the point of death." Then we looked at Pergamum, which was the compromised church. It was a church that was compromised by false teaching. And we took a look at how important it was for us to have faithful teaching from the word of God and how false teaching leads us away. And we took a look at Thyatira, which was the immoral church and it was a church that gave way to being compromised by the appetites of the flesh. They were tolerant of sin. And look at the church in Sardis, the dead church, that had a reputation for being alive, but they were actually dead. Now the good news in that church was that God still had a remnant that was alive and that needed to wake up and be for Him. Then we took a look at the church in Philadelphia, which was the powerful church. It was a church perceived as weak, but it was powerful in faith because of its dependence upon the Lord, Jesus Christ.

Today we take a look at the church in Laodicea, which is the epithetic church, or you could say the complacent church, or you could say the indifferent church. It was a lukewarm church who continued in its complacency despite God's promptings. And here's what He writes to the church. He says, "To the angel of the church in Laodicea write." So to the pastor, to the preacher, to the one who's leading the church in Laodicea, write this.

Now what we know about the church in Laodicea, it was about 40 miles Southeast of Philadelphia. The church we just studied. So now, as we started an Ephesus, we're going all the way around Asia Minor, we're coming back down to the base as if we're going clockwise through. Laodicea was a church that was known for

its wealth. It was as a wealthy city. As a matter of fact, when there was an earthquake in 60 AD and the Roman government said, "We'll give you money to rebuild your city," here's what they told the Roman government, "Well, we don't need your money. We have plenty of money, we'll rebuild it ourselves." And that's exactly what they did. So out of all the cities that we've studied, this is perhaps the wealthiest city of all.

So can you picture a church located in a wealthy area? Can you picture a church located in a place that has so much wealth, it doesn't know what to do with itself. Can you picture a place like, I don't know, like maybe like Cherry Hills village in Colorado. I mean, this is a wealthy city. This place has no needs. It can take care of itself.

It's very close to Colossae. It was 11 miles West of the City of Colossae, where Paul wrote the book of Colossians Two. It's six miles south of Hierapolis, and you'll need to know that as we continue to talk, and its main industry was it created black wool cloth. It was known for its black wool cloth and there was a medical school there, which created an eye salve, which helped people that had problems with sight to be able to see. That's what they were known for in their city. So to this church, here's what Jesus Christ says to write, "Write this, the amen, the faithful and true witness, the beginning of the creation of God says this."

Now here's where we get the first reason that we should worship Jesus Christ in His church. And it's very, very simple, but it's very, very clear, it's because Jesus Christ is worthy. We're called to worship Jesus Christ in His church and honor Him because He is worthy. He describes Himself as the amen, the faithful, and true witness, the

beginning of the creation of God. He's the amen.

Now, what does amen mean? Any of us, we think amen is what you add on the end of the prayer to say, "I'm done. It's over. It's your turn now." Amen means yes, amen means it shall be, amen means I believe this is going to happen, it means that the promises of God and I'm praying according to His word that God will see it come to pass. Amen. Sometimes in church, we'll say, amen. I say those who agree with me, who want to hear His word this morning, believe what He says, and by faith put into practice agree with me by saying, amen. You're saying, yeah, I believe that, it's true, it's going to come to pass, it's certain.

The Bible that says all the promises of God in Jesus Christ are yes and amen. I mean, it's a promise and He's not just an amen, He's the amen. It means all of the promises of God are yes and amen in the Lord, Jesus Christ. He's defining Himself as the one who can bring about change, the one who will bring things to pass, He is the amen, He's the, yes, He's the, it will be so.

And what else is He? He's the faithful and true witness. That means this, He's not a faithful and true witness, He's not just a reliable witness, He is the faithful and true witness. It means this when Jesus Christ says something, it's true. When the word of God says something, it's true. He is faithful, He's reliable, you can bank on it. Not one word of God's word will change in any age, billions and billions of years from now, His word will not pass away.

Everything that he's written is faithful, everything that he's written is true.

Everything Jesus Christ says is faithful and true. He is true, thy word is truth. He wants us to understand that in Him, He is the amen, He is the trustworthy one, He is the faithful witness. What does that mean? That means there are no others that compare to Him. If Jesus says, "I am the way, the truth, and the life and no one comes to the father, except through me," do you know what that means? It means that he is the V way, the truth, and the life and no one comes to the father except through Him. That's what it means.

You say, "Well, Jeff, what about all the other religions out there?" It means that if you don't come through Jesus, you don't have a relationship with God, period, end of story. Why? Because he is the amen, He is the faithful and true witness. And then how does he identify Himself? He identifies Himself as the beginning of the creation of God. Now, when we began the Alpha and Omega Series, we began in the book of Genesis and I began there on purpose because I wanted us to see that we can trust God's word from the very beginning and we can trust God's word all the way at the end. That every single part of his book from Genesis 1:1 through Revelation 22:21 it's true, it's God's word. He's the beginning of the creation of God.

That does not mean that Jesus became at the time creation that he started 6000 years ago. It means before creation ever was, I am. He's the one who began creation, He's the one who started creation. You may wonder, I see trees, where did they come from? Jesus. I see stars, Where did they come from? Jesus. I see our universe and all the galaxies out there that we don't understand, who's the one that created all of that? Jesus. Who's the one that nourishes us? Jesus. Who's the one that gave us water?

Jesus. Who's the one that gave us air on our planet? Jesus. How did he create all the planets in our solar system the way? It's Jesus. He's the beginning of the creation of God.

So here's His testimony to a church that says that they're indifferent, that they really don't care, that they really don't mind, He's good, He's one of the gods out there, great. Here's what he says, "I am the amen, I am the faithful and true witness, I'm the beginning of the creation of God."

He means there is no other besides me and you need to know that in your church. He's telling them that he's the one that's worthy of being glorified, honored, and praised that He wants to take central position in the church. He's saying I am the truth who guides the world under all of my leadership. I am completely trustworthy. I am the only eyewitness of creation. I am the eternal God. That's who I am.

Friends, we are called to honor Jesus Christ in the local church because He's the only one who's worthy, which means in church, Jesus Christ should have central place in every single activity that's going on. In all activity, Jesus Christ should be preeminent, Jesus Christ should be given praise, Jesus Christ should be given priority, Jesus Christ should be elevated. There should be no doubt at all when you come to church who the church is about. The church is about Jesus, the amen, the faithful and true witness, the beginning of the creation of God. He and he alone are worthy.

Secondly, he says this that we're to honor Jesus Christ in His church because of this, He's sick of your lethargy. He's sick of your lethargy. Notice what he says, "I know

your deeds, I know your deeds." Now, He said this to other churches as well. We've talked about this. He knows everything about you. Not only does he know your deeds he knows why you did what you did. He knows everything about you. He sees you when you're sleeping, He knows when you're awake, right? I mean, this is Jesus. He knows everything about everything. He watches it all. Nothing is hidden from God's sight. He knows your deeds, He's acquainted with them. You can't hide them from God. He knows everything about you.

And what does he say about this specific church in Laodicea? "I know your deeds that you are neither cold nor hot. I wish that you were cold or hot. So because you are lukewarm and neither hot or cold, I will spit you out of my mouth."

Now, how many have heard that before, right? I mean, many times I've heard this preaching. I'm not saying this is the wrong way to preach this, many times what we say is, God doesn't want you cold, God wants you hot, God wants you to be on fire for Jesus, God wants you to have passion for Him. I believe that God wants you to have passion for him. I believe that God wants you to be on fire. But it's interesting for me because when I read through the scripture here, He's like, "You're neither hot nor cold, I wish you were cold or hot." In other words, God's saying, "I wish you were cold or I wish you were hot, but you're neither. You're not hot nor cold. So because you are lukewarm and neither cold nor hot, I will spit you out of my mouth."

It seems like God is saying, "You can be hot or you can be cold, I just don't like lukewarm." Anything about the city of Laodicea, they got their water from two different sources. One was from Hierapolis to the North about six miles. Hierapolis was known

for its hot springs. Hot Springs were known for its medicinal purposes. Lots of minerals in the hot springs, great place to get in and soak and feel better. Lots of minerals in that water. That water would get pumped, that hot water with minerals would get pumped through an aqueduct to Laodicea. Guess what happens when hot water with minerals gets to Laodicea, guess what it is? Think it's still hot, when it travels six miles to an aqueduct? No, it's warm and it's got minerals in it and it's not pleasant to the taste. So while it was drinkable water, it wasn't pleasurable water.

Their other water source came from the Colossians, Colossae, which was 10 miles away to the other side. And when that water would come through there, they were known for their freshwater springs, they were known for their cold water. But what happened when it traveled the 11 miles to Laodicea, guess how it arrived. It arrived lukewarm. So while Laodicea was known as a city for great industry and great trade and its wealth, it was not known for its great drinking water. Nobody liked drinking it. Although it was drinkable, it was like, it's just not that pleasurable to drink. And we understand this, like there's places that you might drive through and ask for a drink, perhaps you or drive through and order a coffee. What do people ask, hot or cold? You want an ice coffee, do you want a hot coffee? I mean, I've never driven through a drive-thru at a Starbucks or anywhere else where like, how would you like it? I want room temperature please, nice, and just average. That's what I like, no ice, no heat, just lukewarm, please. Nobody likes that. There's something about drinks that are hot when it's cold outside on a day like today, it was negative six when I left my house this morning, something about grabbing a cup of coffee or a hot drink, when you can

put your hands on, it warms your hands, as you drink it, it warms your inside. There's something pleasurable about hot. There's also something pleasurable about something to drink that's cold.

Remember back in the day when you could go see a movie at a movie theater and after the previews, they would run a little 30 second clip about the snack bar and what was offered with popcorn. And I'll never forget, I think it was AMC, they would always show that Coca-Cola and they would show with all this ice and it was like shimmering cold. And you would hear the sound refreshing drink. If I didn't have a Coke, I'm like, "I need a Coke, I need one right now." 'Cause there's something about a cold drink that's refreshing, something about a hot drink that's soothing. There's nothing great about a lukewarm drink with minerals In it.

Jesus was saying in the same way that that makes you sick. When I look down at your church, you make me sick. It's not just that you sadden me, it's not just that you anger me, you make me nauseous. I'm about to spit you out of my mouth. That's what He says and why? Because for many of us, we think that the opposite of love is hate and the opposite of love is not hate. The opposite of love is apathy. The opposite of love is indifference, right?

Done a lot of marital counseling with couples, right? When you meet with a couple and they're going at each other, "He's driving me crazy." "She's doing this." You guys ever had that happen in your marriage? Don't leave me alone up here, I know you guys have perfect marriages, I don't. I mean, sometimes I don't like the way she did it.

Sometimes she didn't like the way he did that. We've got to have a talk about That's okay. What's really damaging is if you're counseling somebody and one of the two couples says this, "I'm so upset about this, I just don't like the way she, I don't like the way he," and the other person says, "I don't care. I'm done. I don't care. You can do whatever you want. I don't care. I don't care." That's apathy.

This is a church that is known for its apathy. Jesus is saying, "I want to be in the center of the church, I walk among the churches, I hold the pastors in my hand," and they're like, "Yeah, We don't care." "We're not interested in what you want in your church, Jesus. We don't care about what you want." That's where this church is at. They're apathetic, they're complacent, they're lethargic, they just don't care. And the indifference is nauseating.

What's indifference look like? Indifference looks like this. It looks like half-hearted, going halfway, being half-baked. Some of you that play sports, they would talk about your posterior being half something, right? That's where this church is. They're not all in with Jesus. This church is basically saying, I'll give what I wanna give when I wanna give it. The biggest thing is I'm aware of what God wants, but, I know I should serve more in the church 'cause God's gifted me through his Holy Spirit, but, I know I should be more generous with my resources, but, I know I should be more fervent and my worship for Jesus, but, I know I should be more regular and gathering with God's people to celebrate Him and worship, but. In other words, I know exactly what God's convicted me of and maybe someday I'll get around to it, but today is not gonna be that day 'cause I really don't care.

Jesus' half brother, James, under the inspiration of the Holy spirit wrote this in James 4:17, "Anyone who knows the good he ought to do and does not do it sins." You know what that means? Procrastination is the bedrock of apathy. When you know what God's calling you to do and you're convicted about what God's calling you to do and you shelf it and put it on the back burner and say, "Yeah, I'll get to it later, that's apathy."

Remember when I was in college, I went to the student union one time and I was joking with my friend that he needed to manage his time better. So I pulled off these two little pamphlets to take to him. One was on time management, one was on overcoming procrastination. And I remember taking it to him, "My bro, you need to look at these." He's like, "Yeah," he goes, "That time management one looks good." He goes, "I'll get to that overcoming procrastination one later."

And so that's how many of us are in church. I know what God's saying to me. He's been saying it to me all week, He's been saying to me all month, He's been saying it to me all year. Every time I open God's word, He's showing me this, but you know what? I don't care because I'm not into what God wants, I'm into what I want, I'm into myself. It's a half-hearted idea.

When you study the people that Jesus chose as his followers, what was He looking for? He was looking for people that were all in. Follow me, I'll make you fishers of men. They gave up everything. They dropped their nets and they followed Him. When Jesus met people, like the rich young ruler, "Hey, I'll follow you, just tell me what

I need to do." It's like I'll tell you what you need to do, go sell everything you have and come follow me now. Now why would Jesus say that to somebody? Because he could see inside the heart of this man that he was greedy and that wealth was what kept him from giving full allegiance to Jesus. And Jesus looked at him and loved him and said, "Hey, that's getting in the way of full allegiance to me. So when you're ready to get full allegiance to me, come back. Otherwise, don't worry about it.

I mean, when Jesus taught about His body and blood being what people needed to feast on and that spiritually, they needed Him and Him alone, many of his disciples left and said, we want nothing to do with you. And he looked at his other disciples His 12 and said, "You don't want to leave too, do you?" And Peter's like, "Where else are we gonna go? You have the words of eternal life.

Jesus wasn't in the business of chasing down people that didn't want all in with Him. He set a standard and invited people into that standard. That's who he is.

The apathetic church says we don't care about whatever standard Jesus has, we just wanna do what we wanna do. We've created religion in our own image, we created our own activities, we created our own way to sing, we've created our own way to worship, we've created our own version of what we wanna speak about and we're not so concerned about what Jesus says about it. That's the apathetic church. That's the lethargic church. That's the church that says, "We're not so into Jesus, We're just into our thing."

And here's what Jesus says, "Pick a side, pick a side." Nothing bothers Jesus

more than lip service. It's nauseating to him. I know your deeds. I know what you say and I watch what you do and they don't even align. You're neither hot, you're not cold, you're just . I mean, when it says here that I wish you were one or the other, but because you're neither hot nor cold, I will spit you out of my mouth. That word spit means vomit.

So I did a study this week on vomiting because I wanted to be helpful to you. There's a lot of words for that. There's emesis, there's puke, vomit, throw up, up chugging. There's so many I didn't want to talk about. I mean, like you have your own little vernacular, like calling out to the seals or whatever it is. You know what I mean? But isn't it true when we talk about this? I mean, there's nothing cool about throwing up. There's nothing. It's not like it's an activity that you can do while you're just walking around. I mean, if that's what hits you, you really have no control over it and it is super humbling because you are willing to kneel, you are willing to get private, you are willing to make sounds, you are willing to shake. You're willing to do anything to get that gross stuff in you, out of you. And when you get it out of you, you know what you say? I feel way better now.

What was Jesus saying? You make me sick to my stomach. This church made Jesus sick to his stomach. What makes you the sick to his stomach are people that honor Him with his lips whose hearts are far from Him, makes Him nauseous. And Jesus said, because of that, I'm about ready to vomit you out. I don't want that, that's not who I am, That's not representative of me. I don't want people walking around declaring that they're Christian and then don't live like it at all. That nauseates me, that

makes me sick, right?

That's what he's saying. I mean, it's a strong rebuke because in this church, unlike the other churches where there's at least some strengths, I mean even the dead church in Sardis had some people that knew the Lord that he was calling to wake up. This church has no commendation, no good things He's talking about. It's sickening to Jesus. I don't like the picture in my own head that I can make Jesus sick, that I can make God's sick to his stomach by how I live my life.

I mean, what this should cause us to do is to take a deep look and allow the Holy spirit to show us areas in our life that aren't aligned with Him. So that God can show us, "Hey, this is an area of your life that's really making me sick. This is an area of your life where you're apathetic. This is an area of your life where you're complacent. You're so lethargic here. I'm showing you things, but you don't seem to care. You're just going through the religious motions. God doesn't care about your religious activity, He wants your what? He wants your life, He wants your heart, He wants the entirety of you. He wants your thoughts, He wants your actions, He wants your motivation to be reflected of who He is. And so he's rebuking this church because He's worthy and He's sick and tired of their lethargy. He's sick and tired of them walking through the motions. He's sick and tired of them just being kinda not really for either team.

I mean, it's interesting, but I played sports growing up. I mean, I've gone to different games. If you go to a game where it's a home team, do you ever notice that the home team, all dresses the same? They all wear the same colors, they all cheer the same cheers. Even people my age will wear jerseys as if they were cool enough to

actually be out there and playing. I mean, have you ever see this? And everybody thinks they're part of it and they're all this. And if you're rooting for a team, if you have conviction about something, it bothers you if somebody else is wearing a different color and somebody else is shouting differently than you. It'll bother you 'cause you have conviction about it. But then there's other times you can go to a game and it's like, I don't care. Last week was super bowl Sunday. How many watched Superbowl? People asked me who you for? I'm like, I'll sleep well either way. There's some guys I like on both teams. I hope it's a good game, but even if it's not, I'll sleep well. I slept well. Didn't bother me. Wasn't wearing a Jersey, wasn't rooting for either team, but for people that were, it meant something to them.

Here's what Jesus is saying, I wanna mean something to you. I want you to be dressed in my righteousness. I want you to live for me in such a way that when other people don't, it will bother you. You'll want to see others live for me. You'll know that you're on the winning team and you'll want other people to be on the winning team too. I want you to walk with me in such a way that you pick me and that you live for me and that you love me and when you see other people that don't, you'll want them to because you'll know how good it is in your relationship with me. That's what he's saying. He's like, I'm sick of your lethargy, sick of it.

And as he talks to us here, he goes on and it's so awesome because I love God's word because God doesn't just set a standard, God helps us with His standard. If God just left us alone and said, "I'm worthy and I'm sick of you." I mean, great

message that is, doesn't help me at all. I mean, the beauty of this is that we're to honor and glorify Jesus in His church. Not only because He's worthy, not only because He's sick of our lethargy, but because he's able to diagnose and remedy your condition.

Jesus Christ is able to diagnose and remedy your condition. Nobody knows you better than Jesus. And if you allow him to speak into your life, He can speak to you in a way and in a level that nobody else can. Notice what He says, "Because you say I am rich and have become wealthy and have need of nothing and do not know that you are wretched and miserable and poor and blind and naked, I'm gonna advise you to do something." Notice how the way in which this church viewed themselves and what they were unaware of and how Jesus viewed them were two entirely different ways.

Here's how this church viewed themselves, "Because you say I am rich and have become wealthy and have need of nothing." Here's how this church viewed themselves. We're doing well, we have jobs, we have favor, God's blessing us, we have everything we need, we don't need anything else. Self reliance, self satisfaction, self, self, self, self self. We're good. We're good.

What the prosperity gospel teaches is this, prosperity gospel teaches you're fine in your sin just the way you are and if you start following Jesus, He'll even make your life better. That's prosperity gospel. And when you do follow Jesus, you'll never have need of anything. When you follow Him, you'll always be healthy. When you follow Him, you'll always be highly blessed and favored. When you follow Him, tribulations will fall away. When you follow Him, I mean, you fill in the blank, you'll be rich and you'll have

everything you need. That's called prosperity gospel.

Here's what Jesus says to that church. You like the prosperity gospel, here's what you're unaware of. He says, you're unaware of the fact that you are wretched and miserable and poor and blind and naked. That's what Jesus thinks about the prosperity gospel. So let's just talk about what that means.

What does it mean to be wretched, miserable, poor, blind, and naked? Wretched means this, pathetic. It means you're pathetic. When Paul says, "What a wretched man I am, who can rescue me from this body of death?" Here's what he was saying, "I am by myself in my sin, pathetic." He says, "You say you're rich, but you don't know that you're pathetic." From my perspective, from heaven, looking at your church, here's what I think about y'all, you're pathetic. That's what Jesus is saying to the church in Laodicea. That's not a comforting thing but he loves you enough to diagnose you. Good doctors love you enough to tell you hard things if they're true things. If you had cancer in your body and the doctor's like, "Man, I love this person so much. There's no way I'm going to tell them they have cancer. You look great because I'd hate to be the person to break the bad news. I want them to like me." That's not a good doctor, right?

Jesus is a great physician. You think you're wealthy, you think you have all that, you think you have no needs, I just want you to know you're absolutely pathetic, you're wretched. Then what is He saying? He says, you're miserable. Now, you say, I don't feel miserable. He's not talking about that kind of miserable. Miserable means pitiable,

it means having sympathy for one's condition. If you see somebody that's less fortunate or very unfortunate, perhaps you see somebody that hasn't showered in weeks and doesn't have any money and he's laying on cardboard mat outside a negative six degrees and you say that's pitiable. I mean, I feel sorry for them. I mean, somebody help them, they're in such need.

That's what Jesus is saying to the church in Laodicea, not only are you pathetic, but you're pitiable. Like I see you and I see all your needs and I know that you need me and I know that I can help, but you don't even realize that you need my help. I mean, you think you have it all and you have nothing.

You're wretched, you're pitiful, what does He say third? You're poor. Poor? They're the wealthiest suburb in all of Asia Minor. What do you mean poor? We have everything we need. No, you're poor. Jesus says this in the sermon on the mount, "Blessed are the poor in spirit." Blessed are the poor. Blessed are those who recognize their spiritual poverty. You don't realize that you don't have anything. "No, you don't understand Jesus, I'm a millionaire. You don't understand Jesus, I'm a billionaire." And he's like, "You don't understand that apart from me, you're gonna spend eternity in hell. You don't understand that all the wealth in the world can't buy for you what I can give. You are poor. You are wretched, you are miserable, and you are spiritually poor, and guess what else you are? You're blind."

They would say, "Blind? Jesus, we have a medical school here, we help people see, that's what we do, that's what we're known for." He's like, "No, you're spiritually blind. You need to get some eye salve and you need to put it on so that you can see.

You are blind, you don't even see what's going on. You think that this whole world is about you and being successful in this world and you don't even realize that you're gonna stand before me in all of my glory and you're not gonna be able to stand. And I'm telling you, I love you enough to tell you from my perspective, looking at you is very different from your perspective, looking in the mirror. Your perspective, looking in the mirror is you're rich and you have need of nothing. My perspective is your wretched, miserable, poor, blind, and guess what you are? You're naked." Jesus, you don't understand Jesus, we make black wool. We make the finest wool. We're clothed better than anybody. We dressed to the nines here in Laodicea." He's like, "You may dress that way outwardly, but inwardly, when I look at your spiritual condition, you're stripped bare, you don't have anything on the inside."

I mean, this is the diagnosis of the prosperity church that says, "We have everything we need, we don't need anything." And Jesus is like, "Here's the problem. You don't have me and when you don't have me, you are wretched and miserable and poor and blind and naked because without Christ, you have nothing." That's what He's saying to this church.

But isn't it beautiful that Jesus doesn't just tell them what their diagnosis is, He gives them a cure? So he goes on to tell them, "I advise you, let me give you a little help here. I advise you to buy from me gold refined by fire so that you may become rich and white garments so that you may clothe yourself, and that the shame of your nakedness will not be revealed and eye salve to anoint your eyes so that you may see."

So what's His advice? His advice to a wealthy church is to buy gold from God refined in the fire so that they may become rich. His advice to the wealthy, and just so you know, let's be really clear on what wealthy means, okay? There are certain cultures in this world, there are several of them where if you made \$600 a year, that would be your annual income and that's fairly average in lots of countries.

Let me tell you this 'cause sometimes we hear the word rich and most of us think, "Well, that's not me, that's those millionaires and billionaires out there, I'm not rich." If you're American, you're rich. Because most of you that woke up this morning did not wake up thinking, "I hope I have enough food today to make it till 3:00 in the afternoon." Most of them you woke up today and know that you could find a place to have shelter. And if you couldn't, you know somebody who could help you with that, most of you. I mean most of us are more self-reliant and self-sufficient than we ever even realized.

And He's telling this group of people that are wealthy, "Here's what you need, because you're not wealthy and I consider you poor, you need to buy gold from me." Well, what's the gold from Jesus? It's His life. You need the righteousness of God, you need the purity of God, you need that which is refined by the fire, that has nothing wrong with it. You need eternal gold. You need the gold of the Lord, Jesus Christ.

He's saying, "Come to me, come to me. You think you're rich? I'm telling you you need to get gold from me." What else does He them? You need white garments so you can clothe yourself. Yeah, I know you make black wool, I know you have nice clothes

down here, that looks great, but what you need is the righteousness of God. You need his purity. You need to put on the banqueting clothes that are gonna be ready for the marriage supper of the lamb. And I know that you have doctors and I know that you help people with their sight, but you need some eye salve to anoint your eyes. So you can see 'cause spiritually are absolutely blind.

2nd Corinthians 4:4 says it like this, "The God of this age blinds the minds of unbelievers so they cannot see the light of the glory of Christ. One of the strategies of the enemy is to spiritually blind you. That's why the hardest group of people to reach are people who think that they're saved. It's religious people who do religious activity, who go through the motions, who do all this stuff, and then you tell people like that, "You need to repent and trust Christ."

And like, "What are you talking about? I was born a Christian. I've always gone to Church. I've always been, are you saying you're better than me?" "No, I'm saying I'm alive and you're dead and you need to repent and trust Christ." It's a hard group of people to reach. People that are far from God who realized their centers are way easier to reach than people who think that they're Christian because of their religious activity and are offended by the fact of the gospel.

It's like inoculations. Like when you were a little kid and you take a certain vaccine, they give you the disease so that your body will fight it so that if the real thing ever came in, you could fight off the real thing. There's enough people that have been inoculated with a little bit of Jesus so when the real thing, the true gospel of repentance and faith in Christ alone, by grace alone, through faith alone comes, people are

offended by that, they fight it off because of their religious activity.

Friends, nobody is born a Christian, you're born dead apart from Christ. Nobody becomes a Christian by your religious activity. You become a Christian when by God's grace, He shows you your sin and you turn from your sin and you trust Christ alone. And when that happens, you are born again. That's the gospel. So He's telling this church that's the gospel and you won't hear it and I'm telling you, that's what you need.

When I read through this church, I say to myself, and as I read through these seven churches, the problem is not now nor has ever been the local church. The local church is what Jesus Christ promised that he would build. He promised no other vehicle. He says in Matthew 16, "I will build my church and the Gates of hell will not prevail against it."

See, the problem is not that the local church is bad, the problem is when local don't make Jesus preeminent in the church, when they don't put Jesus Christ upfront in the church. It should bother you when you gather for religious services if Jesus Christ is not being exalted in honored. It shouldn't bother you if when somebody is proclaiming from the front and it sounds just like CNN, MSNBC, or Fox News. It should bother you if it sounds the same as the social media that you've been reading all week.

See, God's word is different. God has a word from us to us from heaven through a preacher to tell you here's what God is trying to communicate to you. And it should sound different than anything else that the world is saying. And we should have conviction about that.

I remember about 20, 30 years ago, they were selling books in Christian bookstores and teaching pastors. You should study the movies of the day so you can put cool video clips of the current movie so that the people that you're talking to will know that you're relevant so that you can connect with them. You should study the theater of the day and the plays of the day so people know all about that. You should study the athletic teams and know all the different people so that people think that you as a pastor can relate to them. And that way, if you relate, then you can really get the gospel in there.

Friends, I've seen as many movies as anybody. I love the theater, I know every word to Alexander Hamilton and Lamyths, okay?" I watch the Superbowl, I can break it down for you. I'm not here today to talk about any of those things because what I have is way more important than that. It's the gospel of Jesus Christ, the God who died for you, buried and rose and in Him and in Him alone can you have life?

Some of you here don't like theater. Some of you here, don't like sports. Some of you here don't like movies. It doesn't matter. I don't care whether you do or not. I want you to love Jesus Christ. It's Him.

So a conviction I have is that the word of God is true. A conviction I have is the preacher should preach the word of God. A conviction I have is if you're not opening this book, reading from it, and teaching from it, what in the world are you talking about? Like, what are you sharing? Here's what I believe, this is my personal conviction, and it's only growing and I'm 50 years old and if God gives me another 30, I

can't even imagine how I'm going to feel at age 80.

But when I watch somebody come to a pulpit and do one of these or doesn't even have one of these, here's what they're doing even though they're not gonna do this, they're saying, "Hold on, wait for a minute. Hey, Jesus, come with me over here. Here's a folding chair. I want you to sit down over here and watch how awesome I am while I go to work. Because I know Jesus that if I preach what you want to preach, some of these people won't come back again. And I know Jesus, a lot of things that you say go different against the culture and I'd hate to lose people and my job Jesus is to keep growing a crowd because when I draw a crowd, I feel better about myself. So Jesus, no, you're getting too close Jesus. Go sit back in the back, go sit over there because Jesus it's about growing the body and healthy things grow." And I would say this cancer grows. You can build a crowd without Jesus, but you can't build disciples without Him. Amen.

- [Congregation] Amen.

- So for me, it fundamentally like bothers me from the bottom of my feet to the top of my head when I watched somebody trying to communicate that doesn't use this book. And I would tell you this for as long as I live, if I ever stopped preaching this or whoever succeeds me as a pastor here, if they stopped preaching this, run for another church because Jesus isn't here anymore. Do you understand?

It's the word of God. Jesus diagnosing the problem, He's saying, "Here's the remedy. I'm telling you what you need to do." And then he gives it to us. Notice verse

19, "Those whom I love, I--" What do you think He would say? I mean, if you hadn't read it already, what do you think He'd say? "Those whom I love I highly favor and bless. Those whom I love I always give enough money. Those whom I love will always have perfect health. Those whom I love will never have any problems in this world. Those whom I love will always experience satisfaction, joy, and bliss every moment of their life." No, "Those whom I love I reprove and discipline, therefore, be zealous and repent."

Those two words in context there mean to punish and penalize, punish and penalize. I love you so much that I'm willing to punish you. I love you so much, I'm willing to discipline you. It means this, if you're a Christian, you need to know this, God spans every single one of his children. Do you know why? Because God loves you enough to bring you into His family just the way you are, but God loves you enough not to keep you there.

Things are really cute and stuff when three-year-olds mock you and make fun of you. And some of you have squirrely kids like my youngest and they make you laugh even when they do something wrong. It's kinda cute at age three and four. It's not cute at age 19 and 20. It's certainly not cute at age 30. It's not even fun anymore, right?

Why does God disciplined us? Because God wants to take us when we're young believers and say, "You may think that's cute, but it's not gonna help you. So I'm disciplining you because I have better things for you. And if you'll lean into the discipline and endure the discipline and you'll repent and you'll turn to me, I will turn you into what I want you to be. And there's great joy in doing it my way, right?"

I mean, friends, we live in a culture that hasn't been disciplined at all and I'm telling you that just free of charge. You got that from me extra today. And people that think they can do whatever they want, it's cute and all these different things and that's why we're in the mess that we're in. And Jesus doesn't want his kids to be that way. I'm telling you when I grew up, I didn't go to a church that preached the word, I didn't know any better. My wife went to a church that was similar, she didn't know any better. I mean, I could sin like whatever I wanted on Saturday night. I never felt conviction at church like ever. It was more like, "Jeff, we're so glad you're here, a great football game on Friday night, it was great." "Yeah, it was great. Glad to be here. I mean, it was awesome."

When I got saved I felt conviction of sin about everything so much so when I would read the Bible or I'd hear somebody preach the Bible, I'd be like, , again, I can never get anything right. But what I didn't realize at the time was that was God's love for me, that was his grace for me. That wasn't Him showing me I don't like you. That was showing me, "You're my son, I love you so much, I just don't want you to stay that way. What I have for you is so much better, so I need you to lean into this. I need you to become something different. I need you to let me turn your life my way."

And what God's looking for when we do that is to turn back to Him. That's what it means to be zealous and repent. That means be earnest and repent. That means when God shows you something, it's not, "Yeah, I'll get around to that. Yeah, that's probably not the best. I'll work on that, I'll work on this. Maybe someday I'll get," no,

repentance is different. Repentance means that I become very aware of my sin and I'm turning from it. Faith means I know who I'm turning to when I turned from my sin. Repentance is I'm leaving the sin behind 'cause it's killing me. Faith is I'm going to Jesus 'cause he has life. And both of those two go hand and glove, repentance and faith. I'm turning from my sin, I'm turning to Christ. I'm turning from my sin, I'm turning to Christ. Not I repented 30 years ago, I did that once. It's ongoing in my life as God loves me enough to show me areas of my life that are out of kilter, areas of my life that are not aligned with Him.

God wants us to be the kind of people that honor Him. He's able to diagnose and remedy your condition. That's why if you come to Brave Church when the word of God is preached, there will be Sundays that you leave and say . But God doesn't want you to leave with a weight on your shoulder. God doesn't want you to leave like I feel terrible, I feel so beat up. God's showing you things so that during the service you can say, "Lord, that's me, you got me. Well, I repent of that, I'm turning to you. Thanks for your grace, thanks for your fresh Mercy's again. Thanks that you love me no matter what. Thanks for continuing to walk with me even though I'm not acting like you designed me to be. Lord, you're awesome, your mercies are new every day."

That's what God wants you to hear. God doesn't want you to carry more guilt around. God wants you to be released by bringing that back to the cross and experience the fullness of God's grace and forgiveness. He's able to diagnose and remedy your condition.

Let me give you a final reason, in this text, why Jesus is saying He wants to be

central, He wants to be honored in His church. And it's because of this, He's seeking a relationship.

He's seeking a relationship. Listen to verse 20 of chapter three. You've heard this before, "Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come into him and will dine with him and he with me." By show of hands, how many have heard that verse? Any good news proclaimer, any evangelists worth their soul, uses Revelation 3:20 is an invitation to come to Christ. And it's a good verse for that 'cause Jesus is saying, "I'm knocking on the door of your heart."

Some of you that are here today and listening online, you're not saved, you think you're saved, you're just religious, but you're not saved. You've never turned your heart and life over to Christ. You have no desire to live for Him. It's just a sham, it's just a spiritual sham. And God's knocking on your heart saying, that's you, that's you, that's you and you're bothered by that. But the cool thing about God's word is no matter where you go and no matter what you do, that's all you're gonna hear. Turn from your sin and turn to me. Yeah, but I already did this thing, I already been baptized. Yet turn from your sin and turn to me. Yeah, but I already been to church. Yet, turn from your sin and turned to me. That's what God does.

But here's my question. Why is Jesus knocking on the door to His own church? Do you know why? 'Cause nobody will let Him in. He's been edged out. Because when no longer puts Jesus Christ in the center and church no longer makes Jesus Christ prominent, here's what happens. We have the unholy Trinity of church, which is me,

myself, and I. And we sent her all of our religious activity on what I want and what I want to hear and the songs I wanna sing and the way I wanna do religion and all those things.

So church becomes a place of self-help, church becomes a place of self-reliance, church becomes a place of self-serving, Church becomes a place of self satisfaction, churches becomes a place for yourself. And the more we do self, we just kinda edge Jesus out in the door. Now, you would think if we kicked Jesus out of the church, He would say, "Enough for you guys, I'm done." But we see in this book, He's walking among the churches, He's walking among the churches, and even the church that's kicked Him out of the door due to their selfish religious activity, what's He doing? He's outside going like this please let me in. I still want to have relationship with you. Please let me in. Please let me in. You're doing all sorts of religious activity, but I'm telling you who's not there, it's Jesus. Please let me in. We you let me in? We you let me in?

And doesn't that show the beauty and humility of Jesus that even in churches that have kicked Him out that have made it about self, that have made it about prosperity, that it made it about living in this world now? Jesus is still trying to knock on the door saying, "Let me in my church. Is anybody home, will anybody answer, is anybody listening? That's what he's saying. He says this, if you hear my voice, I'll come in. If you hear me knock, open the door. I'm not gonna barge it down, I'm not knocking it down, I'm not doing that, I'm inviting you to allow me back in.

That's what He's saying, He's outside because we've edged Him out. Now here's an interesting picture that the new Testament gives that we, as the church, are

oftentimes seen as the bride of Christ. We're the bride of Christ that God is going to present us without stain or wrinkle as this bride. Men, for those of you, who are married and for younger men, those of you who desire to be married, think about what you remember about your bride on your wedding day or what you want your wedding day to look like if you're single. I mean, do you want a bride that is yearning for her husband? Do you want a bride that when she's coming down the aisle, I remember exactly what my wife looked like on our wedding day. I saw the picture in my head with her dad walking down the aisle and a big smile on her face, I'm like, she's mine. She's coming to me. This is my bride. What I didn't see and what I'd never wanna see and what none of you would wanna see is a dad grabbing his daughter by the arms and, "You're marrying this guy no matter what, let's go." "No, dad, I don't want to," kicking and screaming, right? And just a little healthy piece of advice if that happens, you don't want to go through with that, okay?

As the bride of Christ, Jesus is saying, "You make me nauseous? I'm not even part of what you're doing . Do you hear me, will you let me in? Will you go all in with me? Will you be either hot or cold? Will you give me 100% of your life? It's Jesus' way of putting an examination on our heart. It's asking us the question, when you think about all the different phases of your life, like your singleness or your marriage or your money or your job or your career or your vacations or the things that you do for fun, is there any area of your life where Jesus Christ is not 100%? Your talk, the things you share, is there any area of your life that you're not fully living with Christ?

This is what he's trying to wake that church up to. Saying, "I love you enough to

tell you where you are, but I also love you enough to let you know I'll still continue to knock on the door of your heart until it's too late." He wants you to have a relationship with Him. He's seeking relationship. And that's the beauty of the gospel. The beauty of the gospel is not just a preacher saying, "You're a sinner, you're going to hell and God wants to take you to heaven." The beauty of the gospel is this, Jesus is telling you that you're dead in your sins, that you're already dead and He came to die on the cross and be buried and be raised to life so that you could have life and have life in His name both now and forever more. And he loves you enough no matter who you are to give you life. And Christian listened to me, for some of you, you're Christians, you know you've trusted Christ for the forgiveness of your sin. You know you've received his grace, you know that if you died you'd go to heaven, but you wandered. And when you wander, you hear the voice of the enemy in your head, saying, "Maybe you were a Christian, but maybe you're not a Christian anymore. And you were a Christian, maybe you're not.

And if you were a Christian, then how come you still struggle? If you were." Here's the knock, just let Him in. I wanna come meet with you. I mean, in the first century to eat a meal together, it was a sign of fellowship. I mean, it's just like it's different from us to know each other on a Sunday seeing each other, then if we sat down and had a meal together and we talked and we got to know one another. Jesus saying this, "I wanna have a relationship with you. I wanna know you. I mean, I know everything about you, but it would mean a lot to me if you want to know everything about me too and we can do this together. 'Cause I'm looking forward to the day that

I'm coming for my bride and behold, he says, we'll see in this book, He's coming soon.

He's coming soon. I'm not telling you this to scare you. I'm telling you this because the word of God tells us that we need to be aware that even on our best days, we can tend to drift and God wants us to be ready for Him. He gives us a promise, notice verse 21, "He who overcomes I will grant to him to sit down with me on my throne as I also overcame and sat down with my father on His throne."

Friends, there is one day in the new Jerusalem where Jesus Christ will sit on His throne on planet earth and he will rule and reign and all of us who have lived for Him and that yearned for Him will be co-heirs with Christ and all of His riches. And we will reign with Him on this planet and it's gonna be a beautiful day.

And He ends by saying what He said to every other church, "He who has an ear, let him hear what the spirit says to the churches." He's saying to us this, "Listen up, spiritually, listen up." Spiritually, he's saying, "If that's you and you've become complacent or apathetic, listen up, Jesus knocking on the door of your heart."

Some of you that aren't saved, today needs to be the day that you give your life to the Lord, Jesus Christ, and start walking with Him. Some of you that know Him, but have kinda gone, "I'm kind of in, and I'm not so much in or I got about 72% in." Here's what Jesus is saying, "Go all in." And I know the lie of the enemy while you sit there 'cause I used to hear the same lie, "You give your life to Jesus, you get too close to Him, He's gonna take all your money, He's going to make you move to some remote hut village in Africa and you're going to give up everything and life's gonna be

miserable." It's not true? Whatever you're called to do if you give Jesus your highest and best, it doesn't mean you're going to go into full time vocational ministry. It may be that just doing what you do, you do differently for the sake of the gospel of Jesus Christ. And whatever God designed you to do, that's what you want to do anyway.

I mean, there's only one thing I did not wanna do with my entire life and that was full-time ministry. And other than that, I was cool with whatever God chose. But I would tell you this, I love what I get to do. I love what I'm seeing God do, I love what he's building in His church? It's not a hassle for me. I don't kick and scream coming into Brave Church on a Sunday even when it's negative six degrees leaving in my house. I'm excited. I was getting texts this morning, are we still having church? I'm like, "Yeah, we might have that when hell freezes over party, but we're having church." We're gathering today. 'Cause I love doing this and I think God is alive and He wants us to know that He's alive and He wants us to respond to Him.

And wherever you are today, that's what God would have for you. God wants you to respond to Him in a way that you would be hot or cold, that you would be on fire for Him, that you would be soothing to Him, that you'd be in a relationship with Him, that you would know Jesus and I, we're walking together. Has nothing to do with me. It has everything to do with what He's done, but I love Him and I'm living for Him and I want Him.

And friends, if you're here today and you've never trusted Christ, make today your day. And if you know Christ, experience his forgiveness and His freshness and His mercies all over again today. He wants you to know that He loves you with an

unconditional love. When He forgives sins, He forgives past, present, and future, which means this, you no longer have to walk in shame, you can walk in the grace and the knowledge of the Lord, Jesus Christ, amen? I'm gonna invite you to stand at this time and as we pray, I just want you to respond to the Lord any way that you want. So I just encourage you to close your eyes and think about what the Holy spirit has shown you.

Lord Jesus, we come before your throne right now. And Lord, we all come from different places, but some of us here today recognize that we are separated from you in our sin and that we will not have a relationship with you either now or in the future. And we're so aware of that, we want that to change in this moment. And if that's you, here's how you can pray, Lord Jesus, I know I'm a sinner, I know I'm dead spiritually and I'm separated from you. Lord Jesus, I want to repent of my sin and by faith, I want to trust you. Come into my life and be Lord of my life. Lord, for some of us here today, we would identify with the apathetic. We would say, Lord, I know you, but I've drifted. Lord, this area of my life that you've been putting your finger on, I've done nothing with it, I've just procrastinated. And then Lord would say, "Hey, repent of that today and trust me, I'll make it different." Lord, do a work inside each one of our hearts, Lord, so that we can be as your bride ready for your return, yearning for you to come, looking forward to you when you will present us without spot or blemish or wrinkle before the Father with exceedingly great joy. Lord Jesus, we know you're coming soon. We pray Brave Church will be a church that is ready to welcome you with open hearts, yearning for the day that you return. And we give you all the praise and glory for all you're gonna

do in Jesus name. Amen and amen.

We praise God today?