

“Standing at the Door and Knock” // Rev 3:14–20 // *The Revelation of Jesus (at Christmas)*

Announcements

Good news/bad news/good news.

Start with GN: 15K tickets were released this past Monday and were gone in **less than 90 minutes**.

Band news: I know **many of you were unable to get tickets** for a number of different reasons. DPAC requires that we run all of our ticketing through Ticketmaster, and the **Ticketmaster site** (not ours) crashed right at noon and I know that **caused some of you difficulty** and I know how frustrating that must have been!

GN: Our teams have been **coordinating with DPAC all week** and there are two major things we are excited to announce:

1. **DPAC has graciously agreed to let us ticket our team's dress rehearsal on Saturday, Dec. 22nd @ 7pm!**

If you are **familiar with how a dress rehearsal works**, it is intended to look, sound, and feel exactly like the normal services. We just **stop occasionally** and yell at each other. So, we're going to make these tickets available on **Wednesday, December 12 at noon. Say it with me: Wednesday, December 12 at noon.**

And, we're giving you a few days to think about who you will invite, get commitments, and then get on the site and reserve them.

To note, there will be NO childcare during this service. Of course kids are welcome to attend the dress rehearsal as long as they have a ticket.

So if you are still looking for tickets—or if you have extra tickets that you won't be using—*please please please* go to **christmasatdpac.com** for information on how to **get tickets, exchange them, or return** ones you know you don't need.

Also, **DPAC has agreed to let us livestream** both services on Christmas Eve, December 24.

We are **grateful DPAC has given us this opportunity** and are excited for you to get a little behind-the-scenes look. And I'm **praying that thousands** would hear the gospel this Christmas for the very first time.

Introduction

Revelation 3, if you have your Bibles, for the most unusual Christmas series you've ever heard.

- BTW, I'm **not singing again** today in the message. I know some of you were scared of that. One time thing, not new-found confidence.
- May or may not be **doing a spoken word** at DPAC...

Rev 3... I have a very unusual question for you, and I promise I'm not trying to be childish or provocative... How many of you have a **weak stomach? If so, what kinds of things trigger it? **It makes sense** that if you eat something bad, your body would want to purge it. But the impulse to empty the contents of your stomach can be triggered by a lot of other things as well.**

- *For example, some of you are afraid I'll sing, b/c last week you threw up a little...*

- I've known people who would **wretch because they were nervous: first impulse**
- Some when they are **extremely sad or upset**
- **At my gym, I've known people who vomited because they were so tired.** (Sometimes you look over at a new guy and you think, "They are not going to make it. Let me make sure I stay in front of them." Then they disappear and come back, trying to act like nothing happened. And you're like, "Hey man, we understand. We've all been there.")
- Of course, a lot of us have this reaction when we **encounter something really disgusting.** You **feel the lumps** when you take that swig of milk from that carton you weren't sure how long it had been in there.
- I **always thought I had a strong stomach,** but then I had 4 babies and the requisite diaper-duty that goes along with that. I'd go in there and think, "How did (little tiny) YOU produce all that?"
- **Once my wife left town and I had to call a friend** over to rescue me from a runaway diaper. I was like, "Has this kid not had a bowel movement for 6 weeks?" One of those ones where you **bypass the wipes,** throw the outfit away, and just go hold them up in the shower. Shoot, I think eventually we just took the kid out and **squirted her down** with a garden hose.

Here's the point: **when something is so offensive to you that it makes you want to wretch,** it is serious business. So, **if Jesus says something makes him feel this way,** we'd be wise to pay very close attention to it.

And he does, **in Revelation 3.** What do you think makes Jesus feels this way?

- Christians too political/ political about the wrong things
- C's that don't give
- Come late to church
- Cheesily adapt culture: Yoo-Hoo Jesus died for, come to him

It's the lukewarm Christian.

- A **lukewarm Christian** is an oxymoron.
- You know an **oxymoron**: It's when **contradictory terms appear in conjunction,** like "jumbo shrimp;" "tight slacks," "government efficiency," "airline food," "adorable cat," or "Microsoft Works."
- **The biggest one of all:** lukewarm Christian: someone who believes in Jesus but **doesn't want to follow him whole-heartedly.**

In Revelation 2 and 3 contain Jesus's words to the **7 churches in Asia Minor.** These were actual churches in existence at the time, but most scholars see them as representative of all churches in every age.

We're using the Christmas season to consider a handful of pictures of Jesus given to us in Revelation—Revelation is all about the second coming of Christ, and you can't really understand the first coming of Jesus apart from his second one.

Today **we're going to see a picture** of how Jesus feels about a church that is lukewarm in its passion for him.

So, vs. ¹⁴ **"Write to the angel of the church in Laodicea:**

- Angel means **'to the leader' or 'to the representative.'** It could be the pastor or a literal angel assigned to watch over the church.
- **A few things to know about Laodicea:**
- First, LD was **extraordinarily wealthy.**
 - **Years before this,** it had been **burned to the ground** and had then been rebuilt from scratch by one of the wealthiest families in the Roman Empire, named the **Zionads.** **Think Dubai:** It was a new city built from scratch with a sudden influx of money.
- Secondly, it was **an important textile center.**
 - They produced this **fine black wool** that came from a rare breed of sheep that lived in the mountains surrounding LD. Rich people came to shop there. It was like the Anthropologie or the Lululemon of the ancient world.
- Finally, it was the **medical center of the Roman Empire.**

- These **mountains contained a lot of hot mineral springs** as well, which were thought to have healing qualities, so LD became a medical center and a number of legitimate medical cures were developed there.
- **Essential oils** and stuff like that.

There was a church there, one of the offspring of Paul's missionary journeys. (In fact, in Colossians Paul refers to a letter that he wrote to the Laodicean church that evidently didn't survive.)

To that church, **Thus says the Amen** (a word that means **certainty** or 'end of story' or 'my face is on the box of the final season'), **the faithful and true witness, the originator of God's creation:**

¹⁵ I know your works, that you are neither cold nor hot. I wish that you were cold or hot. ¹⁶ So, because you are lukewarm, and neither hot nor cold, I am going to vomit you out of my mouth.

Neither hot nor cold:

- **6 miles SE of Laodicea was the mountainous region of Hierapolis**, which contained all these boiling, mineral springs that were believed to have healing power.
- **And 6 miles to the NW were the tall mountains of Colossae**, out of which flowed streams of ice cold water that came from melting snow.
- The two kinds of streams flowed down into these pools outside of LD where they combined to form stagnant ponds of tepid water—Neither hot, and good for bathing, or cold, and good for drinking.
- **Either hot or cold is good**, but lukewarm is no good for anybody.
 - **Like coffee:** Man, there is nothing better than a piping-hot triple shot Americano in the morning; unless it is an ice-cold salted caramel cold foam cold brew in the afternoon.
 - **I love hot coffee; I love cold coffee**—but if I find a cup of coffee that has been sitting out on the counter all day, room temperature... the thought of drinking that makes me want to vomit.

- **Jesus uses this image to describe the believers at Laodicea.**
 - **You are lukewarm, he says**, characterized by neither the warm passion that fuels sacrifice nor the awakening refreshment of a cold shower.
 - **There is nothing distinctive about you.** You feel just like the environment around you.
 - **You claim** to flow (originate) from me, but you feel and look more like your environment than me.

What he says next is very important, because it explains why they are lukewarm: ¹⁷ **For** (See? This is WHY you are lukewarm) **you say, 'I'm rich; I have become wealthy and need nothing,'**

- I told you the **Laodiceans were rich**. Here's **how rich**: In A.D. 61 there was an earthquake in the valley that measured 8+ on the Richter scale. **Every city in the region was destroyed** and Roman federal funds were granted to **each one so they can rebuild**. But LD wouldn't take it, saying, "*We don't need your money. We can handle this ourselves.*"
- *Has that ever happened in the history of the world? Turn down free money? But LD was proud. Self-sufficient.*

That sense of self-sufficiency pervaded the church. They thought, "We're all right. We got this." They weren't people who cried out desperately for God because they usually had it all under control.

and you don't realize that you are wretched, pitiful, poor, blind, and naked.

- **Blind:** The **LD's had developed this eye** salve that could cure a lot of vision ailments in those days, such that people from around the world came there to get it. **Jesus says**, "*The irony is* that you are blind, and your eye salve won't help with that."
- **Naked:** Jesus says, "You clothe everyone with this fine, black wool but in my eyes you are naked."

¹⁸ **I advise you to buy from me gold refined in the fire so that you may be rich,**

- You need a **different kind of gold**.
 - You ever noticed that **sometimes the richest people** have the worst family relationships? That's because earthly gold can't fix soul brokenness. They can't make you kind, loving, or even make you satisfied.
 - **Summarize: Isaiah 55:1**, "Ho, everyone who thirsts—come to the waters! And you who have no gold—come, buy and eat."² Why spend money on what is not bread, and your labor on what does not satisfy? Listen, listen to me, and eat what is good, and you will delight in the richest of fare.
 - There is a **food that satisfies**, garments that cover, treasures that gives security—but you gain it through money! You **have to receive it by faith and surrender**.

You need...white clothes so that you may be dressed and your shameful nakedness not be exposed...

- Revelation says that those who stand in God's presence are dressed in spotless white raiment: "These are they who... have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb." Rev 7:14
 - If you wash something in blood? What can wash away my sin...?
 - The **kinds of clothes** we need come not from the wool of rare sheep but the skin of the spotless Lamb of God—

You need...and ointment to spread on your eyes so that you may see.

- The **problem is not your physical eyes**; the problem is the eyes of your soul. You love the wrong things. You evaluate things poorly. **Medicine** can't help that!

²⁰ Behold! I stand at the door and knock.** That's a **jarring image**: What is Jesus doing on the outside of the church? Even worse, they have gotten so self-sufficient they don't even realize that he's **not there anymore!**

I always heard this about SALVATION. He knocks at the door of the unbeliever. That's fine as an application, but here specifically it is about the church—a church so satisfied and complacent they don't even recognize Jesus isn't there!

Can you think of a better picture of believers in the American church?

- **When Christians in poorer parts of the world come to the US and visit our churches, they're appalled** by our lukewarm-ness—by how little we pray, how little we give, by how much we spend on ourselves... what we think we can't live without.
- They are appalled at how afraid we are to identify ourselves as Christians in public when some of them are literally being persecuted for their faith. (I told you about one of our missionaries...)
- We are **in every way Laodicea**.

Note: **Lukewarm does not mean hypocritical**. A hypocrite is a liar: these people were pretty consistent—they don't feel desperate for God, and that is reflected in the lukewarmness of their obedience and the lameness of their worship.

Jesus says the most negative thing he could have said. He doesn't say *I'm angry with you or disappointed with you*. He says, "*You make me want to vomit.*" That's something **personal and visceral** about his reaction.

Vomiting is usually not a conscious choice. You don't say, "That is disgusting. I choose to vomit."

Now, Why? Why do you think he has such a visceral response?

- **I have to think, first, Jesus sees it as a disrespectful response to grace.** After who he claimed to be, and what he did: **only 2 responses to Jesus make sense**:
 - **Worship/Mockery.**

- **What doesn't make sense is boredom. People in the NT are never "bored" with Jesus.** They either passionately hated him and called out for his crucifixion or passionately loved him and fell at his feet in worship. But never were they bored.
- **Yet that's precisely what** lukewarm people are with Jesus.
- **Which means** they must not really understand who Jesus is or understand the desperate condition they were in without him.
 - **I've asked:** Guy on porch who paid your debt.
 - **You're acting like he paid a stamp.** Where would you be without Jesus?
 - **Make up your mind**—is he who he said he is? Did he do what he said he did? Is eternity what he said it is?
- **The second reason I think it makes him want to vomit... It tells the world a lie about him.**
 - The **single biggest cause of atheism** are people who claim to know God but are not distinct in any way from the world. Listen to them! They usually grew up in Christian homes/churches, but they were around people whose **passions are not boiling hot** for Jesus; nor is their behavior and their moral like an awakening cup of cold water in the face. **They are the temperature** of everyone around them.
 - **When people know you are a Christian** but you are not that passionate about him, it tells people that there is not that much to be excited about with Jesus!
 - **Our lives—our morals, our giving—were supposed to scream his worthiness!**
 - It's **why worship is so important**. It puts the worth of Jesus on display. (WORTH-SHIP). Lukewarm worship tells people that God is not that great and hasn't done that much for us.

I remembered this section from MLK's *Letter from a Birmingham Jail*, "There was a time when the church was very powerful--in the time when the early Christians rejoiced at being deemed worthy to suffer for what they believed. In those days the church was not merely

a thermometer that recorded the ideas and principles of popular opinion; it was a thermostat that transformed... society ... Small in number, they were big in commitment. They were too God-intoxicated to be "(numerically) intimidated". By their effort and example they brought an end to such ancient evils as infanticide and the gladiator games.

Things are different now ... And if today's church does not recapture the sacrificial spirit of the early church, it will lose its authenticity, forfeit the loyalty of millions, and be dismissed as an irrelevant social club with no meaning for the twentieth century. Every day I meet young people whose disappointment with the church has turned into outright disgust."

Irony: we thought the more we became like them, the more they would accept us. But we became irrelevant to them and disgusting to Jesus.

What does a lukewarm Christian look like today?¹ (w/ help of [F Chan](#) and [C Groeschel](#))

1. Lukewarm Christians... crave acceptance by people more than God

- We are people who crave the approval of others, which is why we **put up a selfie** and are instantly try to figure out how many likes we get... and if we get a lot, we are on cloud 9; if not our self-esteem is toast.
- Or, we **don't want to be regarded as weird**, so we conform my morals to everyone else's.
 - I'll **take my cues** for what to be offended by from the culture, not from the Scriptures.
- **The point is your life is shaped by** what other people think, not what God thinks. **When you are making decisions**, your first thought is not how God feels, but what other people will think.

¹ Adapted from Craig Groeschel, "Believing in God, but Don't Want to Go Overboard," Revelation 3:15-20 and Francis Chan, *Crazy Love*. 91ff.

2. Lukewarm Christians... rarely share their faith in Christ

- They consider themselves Christians, but don't want to **make people uncomfortable** by talking about religion so they rarely bring it up.
- First, do you **really believe the gospel is true?** How could you really believe the gospel is true and just not tell anybody about it?
- Jesus said, *"If you confess me before men I will confess you before my father. But if you do not, I will not confess you before my father in heaven."*
- I think **a lot of the reason lukewarm Christians are like this** is that they say they believe the gospel, but they've never really felt its power transforming their lives, which is **why they don't** tell others about its power to transform theirs.

3. Lukewarm Christians... rationalize their sin

- Lukewarm Christians don't really hate sin; they **just don't want** to be thought of as bad people. So, they are constantly asking, *"How close can I come to sin without being thought of as a bad person?"*
- When you ask that, you are showing you are not really moved by love for Jesus. **If I love my wife**, when I take her out on a date, I'm not asking what is the minimum amount I can put into this and get away with the evening.
 - What's the cheapest meal I can buy her?
 - What's the minimum I have to talk with her?
 - What's the maximum I can flirt with the waitress?
- **If I'm motivated by love**, I want to draw close. I want to please her.
- When **you're not motivated by love** for Jesus, you are thinking, *"How close can I get to sin and still be ok?"*
- I've heard it said: **"Lukewarm Christians don't really want to be saved from sin, only from the penalty of their sin."** Francis Chan (We don't hate sin; we hate the thought of going to hell)

4. Lukewarm Christians... think more about life on earth than eternity in heaven

- **Paul said, "To live is Christ and to die is gain."** That meant life on earth was fine (he got to serve Jesus). But heaven was an upgrade.
- *What attitude do we see in America? I don't wanna die. I don't wanna die. I have to **lengthen my life** as long as possible. I'd rather be 105 and wear diapers than I die.*
- We try to **hold onto our youth as long as possible**, and **cram as much in as possible** into their lives because they don't want to miss anything because this is all there is!
- Real Christians live as if eternity is just around the corner—they love life but they are not obsessed with bucket lists because they know they'll get all that in eternity.
- NOT YOLO, but YALF***

5. Lukewarm Christians... only turn to God when they need something

- **I see it all the time:** a **need brings you back** to God: joblessness; divorce; kids; health scare. And you get **on fire** for him.
- And that is fine—it's great when needs bring you back to God. **But are you just trying to use him to fix something—or do you realize** that he is life, and that the whole point of your life is living for him?
- Lukewarm Christians only turn to God when they need something or feel like they are in trouble. **Time-out?**
 - God stays in time-out until we need him.
 - The time he gets a "get out of time out free" card is when we sin... and we figure out quickly how to get him back in
 - I want to keep God from cursing me; keep him off my back

6. Lukewarm Christians... give only when convenient

- **They** will give if it makes them look good or feel good. But they are like, *"Don't push me."* This is my stuff.
- They **give God the leftovers**—not their first and best.

- Again, Francis Chan: “Lukewarm Christians love their luxuries and rarely give to the poor in a truly sacrificial way.”
- Lukewarm Christians are **moved by stories about people who do radical things** for Christ, yet they do not do radical things themselves.
- We’ve **seen the problem with this**. God says, “If it doesn’t represent your first and best I don’t want it!”
 - The **prophet Malachi talked about a bunch of priests** who gave an offering to God, but kept the best animals for themselves and passed on to God the less desirable animals. They **assumed God was pleased** because they had at least sacrificed *something*. **Yet God described this practice as evil.** (Malachi 1:8)
 - **Not merely inadequate**; from God’s point of view, **but evil**.
 - **If your giving does not represent your first and your best**, it is evil to God.
 - Stop calling your complacency and apathy “a busy schedule” or “bills” or “forgetfulness.” Call it what it is: *evil*.²
 - Don’t throw in your lunch money as a penance offering. Jesus wants, deserves, your first and best.

7. Lukewarm Christians... are not much different than the rest of the world

- Remember, the **water in Laodicea was neither hot** like the springs in the south nor cold like the rivers from the North. It was room temperature; indistinct.
- **Lukewarm Christians are like that** in relation to the world around them. They look the same as everyone else. They watch the same movies as everyone else, listen to the same music, use same filthy language, possess the same morals as everyone else, raise their kids like everyone else, prioritize what everyone around them prioritizes. We **spend our money** on what they spend their money on, **use our homes** like they use theirs, and **plan our retirements** like everyone else.

- If we have **difficulty in their marriages**, we turn to divorce just as often as everyone else. I’m not saying that’s not a complex question and I’m not trying to give a blanket judgment... just saying that we’re **not that distinctive**. We’re more like **them than him**.
- We live **comfortably, self-sufficiently**—indistinct in our passion, our morality, or our sacrificial way of living.

*These are the kind of people Jesus calls lukewarm, and they make him want to vomit: It’s an **insult to his majesty and grace** and **confuses people about who he really is**.*

I can tell you with pretty good accuracy what a lukewarm Christian looks like because in many seasons in my life I have been one.

- Even **after becoming a pastor**. There has been a tendency, for example, to let my ministry-work replace my relationship with God.
 - I would **read the Bible to preach**, not to love and walk with Jesus.
 - Not interested in people’s lives. “praying for ya” but not really!
 - **Here’s a statement I heard someone else make that really got ahold of me: “You’ve become a full-time pastor and a part-time follower of Jesus.”**
 - One pastor said: **“The way I was doing the work of God destroyed the work of God in me”**
 - **Maybe this phrase could hit many of you, “You’ve become a full time mom/businessman/student and a part-time follower of Jesus.”³**

It’s **not a coincidence** that Laodicea was wealthiest, with the best resources, best singers, best facilities, funniest preachers, and biggest budgets, and **they were the ones** that are lukewarm.

² Chan, 91.

³ Thanks for help on this section to Craig Groeschel, Ibid.

Pride and self-sufficiency always breed lukewarm passion.

- **The poor, the desperate, those consumed by guilt** or regret—they know they need God and cling to him. You could no more separate them from God than you could separate a scuba diver from his air tanks.
- **But those who are accomplished; those praised by the world;** those who have it together; those who are financially secure; those who feel like they are generally good people... they are the ones who grow lukewarm.
 - They never outright deny him, but they marginalize him.
 - They fulfill their religious duties, but their lives are not characterized by sacrifice or great ventures of faith.
- **Why we did FIRST...Me and V:** Is he first? Are we trusting him?
 - **One of the things we are starting to do** (from John P.) (**Hope this doesn't freak you out**) "Is this the year you want us to move?" Not to become satisfied. To be listening to God for his direction in our lives realizing how desperate we are for him and how if he takes his hand off of we would shrivel up and die.

MUSIC

Well, this passage, as jolting as it is, ends with good news: ***¹⁸ ...If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and eat with him, and he with me. ¹⁹As many as I love, I rebuke and discipline. So be zealous and repent. ²⁰See! 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.

- Good news: **He wants to come in!** He wants to wake you up. Will you let him in?
- **How might he knock? Through...**
 - **Consequences** (discipline). Maybe that is happening today?
 - **Circumstances** (like I said above...). **Difficulty.** Problem with kids.

- **I felt:** Someone here is experiencing a crisis moment in your marriage. Maybe health scare. That's God knocking, trying to get your attention!
- **Conviction.** Maybe everything is going well in your life, but you are sitting here and **God is saying**, "This is you. I am not first in your life and I should be."

²¹ "To the one who conquers I will give the right to sit with me on my throne, just as I also conquered and sat down with my Father on his throne."

²² "Let anyone who has ears to hear listen to what the Spirit says to the churches."

Lukewarm Christian is an oxymoron. And, it's a miserable person.

- **Spurgeon: No one more miserable** than the half-committed Christian. Just enough into God...; just enough into world...; you never get to experience the joy of sacrifice; the joy that comes from feeling his pleasure!
- **Like a man on a dock. "Better to be even a little on the boat":** No! it's just going to tear you in two! On or off!
- If you're going to be saved, be saved all the way.

Ours is a Jesus that deserves more than lukewarm devotion: He died for us. Healed our diseases through his pain. Clothed us with his own flesh. Gave us riches at the cost of his poverty. **When you realize that, what more can you say? Were the whole realm...**