

## Sermon: The Lukewarm Church

**Text: Revelation 3:14-22**

### Introduction:

Of the seven letters that Jesus wrote to these seven churches nearly two thousand years ago, the letter to the church in Laodicea is probably the most well-known. For two reasons. One—because it contains a verse that is often quoted: *“Here I am! I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in and eat with that person, and they with me.”* (Revelation 3:20) I learned this verse as a child, and can remember that it played a part in my decision to give my life to Christ.

The second reason is because the church in Laodicea is described as being “lukewarm.” Neither hot, nor cold—but right down the middle. And because of this, Jesus forcefully declares that he will literally “spit them out of His mouth.” Wow! That’s just about as strong as it gets.

On the next page, as we examine these nine verses, we’ll explore what this means and why Jesus said what He said. But before we actually dig into the text, I want you to take some time to think about and discuss what being LUKEWARM means for us today. I ran across this list of bullet points describing lukewarm Christians. Read and discuss them. Do you agree or disagree with them?

- Lukewarm people attend worship fairly regularly because they think that is what they have to do, not what they want to do. Lukewarm people have to come to worship. Christians want to worship.
- Lukewarm people tend to choose what is popular over what is right when they are in conflict. They desire to fit in both in the church and outside the church. They care more about what people think about their actions than what God thinks of their hearts.
- Lukewarm people do not really want to be saved from their sins. They want only to be saved from the penalty of their sins. They do not hate sin and are not sorry for committing it. They are only sorry because God is going to punish them.
- Lukewarm people do not believe that the new life in Christ is better than the old sinful life.
- Lukewarm people rarely share their faith with their neighbors, coworkers, and friends. They do not want to be rejected, nor do they want to make people uncomfortable by talking about private issues like religion.
- Lukewarm people gauge their “goodness” by comparing themselves to the world. They are satisfied as long as they aren’t as “bad” as the world. They are not concerned that they are not fully devoted to Jesus like others.
- Lukewarm people say they love Jesus and Jesus is a part of their lives. But only a part. They give him a section of their time, their money, and their thoughts, but he isn’t allowed to control their lives.
- Lukewarm people love God, but they do not love him with all their heart, soul, and strength. They assure themselves by thinking that this sort of total devotion is not really possible for the average person. It’s only preachers and radicals.
- Lukewarm people think about life on earth much more often than eternity in heaven. Daily life is mostly focused on today’s to-do list, this week’s schedule, and next month’s vacation. Rarely, if ever, do they intently consider the life to come or what God would have them do.
- Lukewarm people walk by sight, not by faith. They do not trust their lives to God, but trust in themselves.

## Examination:

- Read **Revelation 3:14-22**
  - What does the word “Amen” actually mean? Why do you think Jesus describes Himself as “the Amen”?
  - What is the job of a witness? If you are called upon to be a witness in a court proceeding, what are you being asked to do? What do you think it means for Jesus to be “the faithful and true witness”? What has Jesus witnessed? (hint: part of the answer to this question is found in the first four words of v. 15)
  - Jesus is also “the ruler of God’s creation.” Let that sink in for a minute. Everything that we see in creation is RULED by Jesus. Do you truly believe that this is true? What are the implications of this truth?
  - As was mentioned in the Introduction, Jesus’ telling this church that they are neither “hot nor cold” is fairly recognizable. But it can also be misunderstood, especially if we aren’t familiar with the actual city of Laodicea. To understand the imagery we need to understand a little bit about the city of Laodicea. The city of Hieropolis, seven miles to the north, was known for its healing hot springs. The city of Colosse, less than 10 miles to the south, was known for its cold waters that were pure and drinkable. Laodicea had the unfortunate circumstance of having neither. When trying to pipe in the hot waters from Hieropolis, the water was lukewarm after the seven mile distance. The water was also dirty and impure once the water got to Laodicea. The picture Jesus is giving is that they are useless and valueless. Hot water has use and value. Cold water has use and value. But you, O Laodicean church, are lukewarm. You are not fit for healing or for drinking. Jesus is not saying, “Be saved or be lost.” Rather, Jesus is revealing the current useless state of these Christians just like their water supply. Why do you think Jesus is so direct with what He thinks about them being lukewarm?
  - Verse 17 speaks to the CAUSE of their apathy and lack of spiritual passion. What is that cause? How easy is it for US, TODAY to be in danger of these very same things?
  - According to verse 18, what is the solution to their apathy? How does this speak directly to the diagnosis of their problems (poor, blind & naked)?
  - Is the church in Laodicea beyond hope? Is there anything they can do to turn things around? (see v. 19) Why do you think Jesus is being so “harsh” with them?
  - What is the invitation that Jesus gives to them in verse 20? Where do you think the “door” is that Jesus is referring to? What do you think Jesus talks about sharing a meal with us?
  - What reward does Jesus offer to the person who remains faithful to Him?

## Application:

The real challenge of this letter is the fact that the church in Laodicea THOUGHT that they were doing just fine. They weren’t aware of their apathy. Take some time this week to meditate on what Jesus says to them (and us!). Take inventory of your own life. Read back through the list of bullets in the introduction, and ask: Is this true of me? And then do exactly what Jesus recommends. Be earnest and repent. Open the door of your heart to Jesus. Renew your passion!