

## **Don't miss out! (Revelation 3:14-22)**

*Don't miss out! The church in Laodicea are complacent and comfortable in their wealthy town. Yet, Jesus warns them that they are missing out on the riches he has to offer them.*

### **Christmas Shopping - Don't miss out on the latest deal...**

Christmas is looming and for many people that means the added stress of Christmas shopping. We want to show people we love them by giving them a lovely present, and the shops are all too happy to offer us a huge selection of possibilities.

And the shops and online stores try and entice us, with the latest deals on good products. The recent Black Friday shopping day is designed to say to us, look here are these fantastic deals - don't miss out. Grab them now while you still can - before they sell out, or the price goes up! Don't miss out!!

And in a way as we come to look at the last of the seven letters to the seven churches, where the heavenly Jesus gives a report on each of the churches telling them what is going well and what needs to improve, the message is simply - Don't miss out! Don't miss out on what Jesus has to offer and on the kind of lives Jesus is calling you to. Perhaps it is a fitting message to round off all 7 letters.

### **Jesus and the Laodiceans - 3 things about this letter:**

The letter to the Laodiceans follows the same pattern as the other letters. Jesus introduces himself with words and images drawn from chapter 1 of Revelation and finishes with promises to the one who is victor. In the middle he says what he knows about their church and how he thinks they need to respond.

Yet there are some aspects of this letter that make it stand out.

- Negatively, this letter has nothing positive to say about the Laodiceans. Every other letter has said something positive about the church, but here there is nothing.
- Positively, though, there is perhaps a greater sense of personal engagement between Jesus and the church. Jesus is offering himself to the church, he even tells them that he loves them and that is why he is rebuking them.
- Interestingly, whereas we have seen there are often hints in the other letters that the message picks up on some of the history and geography of the other cities, that is much more obvious in this final letter.

So, what is it that Jesus does not want the Laodiceans to miss out on?

### **Don't be content with worthless works - 3:15-16**

Firstly, he does not want them to be content with worthless works. He says in verse 15, 'I know your deeds, that you are neither hot nor cold.'

This picks up on the geography of the city. It was one of three cities in the Lycus valley. The other two cities were Hierapolis and Colossae.

Hierapolis was famous as a city with hot springs, that people would travel too to bathe in for their medicinal and healing properties. A bit like the city of Bath in this country.

Colossae, however, was situated nearer the mountains and was fed by streams of cold water, which was pure and drinkable and refreshing.

To try and have the advantage of the water in these two cities, aqueducts had been built from them to Laodicea. But by the time the water reached Laodicea, the cold water had warmed up and the hot water had cooled down. What you were left with was lukewarm water, which was neither refreshing to drink or healing to bathe in. In fact if you tried drinking particularly the lukewarm water from Hierapolis, then the chemicals in it would make you spit it out!

And Jesus says to the Laodiceans, you are like your water - neither hot or cold, but lukewarm. And the result he says is that he is going to spit them out!

It is not so much that cold stood for no faith and hot for a zealous faith, but that cold stood for one kind of good works - cold water refreshes - and that hot stood for another kind of good work - hot water heals, whilst lukewarm water has nothing good about it. And as I've already said, Jesus says nothing positive about the works of the Laodiceans:

- Jesus saw the hard work, perseverance and testing of false apostles in Ephesus
- and that in Smyrna they were spiritually rich
- whilst in Pergamum they remained true to Jesus's name in face of persecution
- and the church in Thyatira was marked with love and faith, service and perseverance doing more than at first.
- Sardis had a few who have not soiled their clothes.
- and in Philadelphia they had kept Jesus's word and not denied his name.

But in Laodicea there was nothing good. Their works were worthless.

So, in verse 19, Jesus calls on them to repent and be zealous.

- And the question for us is are we missing out on doing the good and making a difference as Christians?

Are we cold and pure offering refreshment to others - by standing purely for the truth about Christ and offering a fresh hope to a lost world?

Are we hot and healing showing God's love to the world in good deeds that seek to offer healing to a troubled world?

Or are we lukewarm, just engaged in a bit of religious activity, but no different to the world around and doing no good for the world?

Let's not be content with worthless works.

Don't miss out on the good works Jesus is calling us to - both hot and cold!

**Don't be satisfied with meaningless riches - 3:17-18**

Secondly, Jesus says don't be satisfied with meaningless riches.

Laodicea did not have a great water supply, but it was much richer than its neighbours, because of was strategically placed to make the most of trade.

In fact when there was an earthquake that devastated the area in AD61, Laodicea refused financial aid from the Roman Empire, because they said they has enough money to pay for it themselves! This was a wealthy town and clearly its smug-well off attitude had rubbed off on the Christians, because Jesus says in verse 17:

"You say, 'I am rich; I have acquired wealth and do not need a thing.'"

It was also a city that had a reputation for certain economic activities:

- It was a banking centre
- It was famous for making cloth and carpets from a fashionable glossy black wool from the local sheep.
- It also had a medical school. People would come from far away to train there as doctors. The school specialised in ophthalmology, the treatment of eyes and Laodicea was a good place to get hold of a popular Phrygian eye-powder.

Whether it was for gold, clothes or eye-treatment, Laodicea was the place to go!!

But look at what Jesus says in verse 17:

"You say, 'I am rich; I have acquired wealth and do not need a thing.' But you do not realise that you are wretched, pitiful, poor, blind and naked." (Revelation 3:17)

Their bankers were rich with gold, but spiritually they were poor.

Their doctors were experts at eye treatment, but spiritually they were blind.

They had the most fashionable clothes, but spiritually they were naked.

In other words amazing as all the material wealth was that the Laodiceans had and were proud of - in spiritual terms they were all meaningless.

Jesus says don't be satisfied with these meaningless riches, because you'll miss out on what really matters. You will miss out on the heavenly riches that I can give you.

So, Jesus says rather than focussing on shopping in the markets of Laodicea, they need to come and shop with him.

And Jesus says to us, rather than making Christmas just about what material provision you need - good food, nice presents and lovely decorations, seek the true wealth that only Jesus can give!

So, he says come to me for gold refined in fire. The gold of this life is fleeting. Some people in the pandemic have seen their incomes slashed and their businesses destroyed. Earthly wealth does not provide true security. But Jesus offers gold refined by fire. He is the one that went through death itself and out the other side, the riches of eternal life that he offers have been refined by the fire of the cross. Nothing you can buy can give you that. Don't miss out on his gift of eternal life.

He says come to him for white clothes to cover your nakedness. Jesus death on the cross means that he can take away all our sins and cover them with his perfect purity. Nothing you can buy can deal with the shame of your wrongdoing. Don't miss out on his gift of freedom from shame and guilt.

He says come to him for salve to put on your eyes so you can see. Jesus offers us the truth of the one who comes down from heaven. He can give you a perspective on life and the world, that no-one else can buy. No medicine you can buy can help you see the truth like Jesus can. Don't miss out on his gift of enlightenment.

- So are you satisfied with the meaningless riches that are offered us in the consumer Christmas. Jesus says don't miss out on the true riches that I can offer you.

**Don't shut out the one who loves you - 3:14, 19-20, 21-22**

Finally, Jesus gets really personal and says don't shut out the one who loves you.

As we've gone through the letters or reports to the churches in Revelation, we have seen many challenges.

- The church in Ephesus was told to love as they did at first,
- Smyrna had to be faithful to the point of death
- Pergamum and Thyatira needed to repent of accepting false teaching about compromising with idolatry.
- Sardis needed to repent of their unfinished works
- Philadelphia had to hold on to what they had!
- and now Laodicea are called on to be earnest and repent!

Now I've said these are challenges, but often they feel a bit like being told off. And no-one likes being told off. These days where a lot of communication is through social media or broadcasting and we have a wide choice of who to listen to there is a tendency to switch off those who challenge us, to shut out those we might disagree with. It's so easy in the context of our world, but it is nothing new, Jesus says, the Laodiceans are shutting him out. They don't like to be challenged, they don't want to be told off, so they are keeping Jesus away.

And it may be that, although you are a Christians, you are becoming like the Laodiceans, you are becoming increasingly uncomfortable with the challenges of being a Christian and much prefer the comforts that our material consumer world provides and as a result you are beginning to shut Jesus out of your life.

But look at what Jesus says in verse 19:

"Those whom I love, I rebuke and discipline."

Jesus's words of challenge are because he loves us. They are for our good, they are to help us not to miss out on what really matters in life, spiritual riches and worthwhile works.

A good parent will tell their children off, they will make them eat food that they don't like because it is good for them and stop them eating too much of the food that they do like because it is bad for them. They will challenge them about not doing their school work, because they want them to make the most of their talents and they will want them to have a good nights sleep, by going to bed on time, because they don't want them to become tired and unable to cope with life. A good parent does all this because they love their children. True love is often tough love.

And as adults as much as children we need tough love, we need to be challenged, we need to be made uncomfortable so that we don't miss out on what really matters.

So, Jesus says to the church in Laodicea and he says to us:

"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)

They did not want to be uncomfortable, they were sadly content with being lukewarm in their christian works and satisfied with the comforts that material wealth brought them. But the result was they were shutting Jesus out and missing out on a chance to dine with the ruler of God's creation, and Jesus says they are missing out with a chance to sit with him on his Father's throne.

These are immense privileges that the one who loves us beyond what we can imagine is offering us. He is standing at the door and knocking. What are you going to do? Will you keep him shut out? Or will you let him in and discover the true wealth and the worthwhile life that he is calling you to? Are you going to miss out on Jesus?