

## “THE SAVIOR IS WAITING” REVELATION 3:19-22

A number of years ago, a loved one stole something from me that he knew was very important to me - and he stole it knowing full well that I would eventually discover the theft and that he would have to face the music. I was close to this person. We had what I thought was a very open, transparent relationship and we spent a lot of time together, including time praying and studying the Bible.

When I discovered the theft, it hurt so badly I literally felt sick to my stomach. I felt betrayed and defrauded. But I did not immediately confront him; I intentionally waited to see if and when he would initiate a conversation about his transgression and try to make things right. Weeks went by, and even though I saw him frequently, even though there were plenty of occasions when we were alone and he *could* have talked to me about it, he didn't. He pretended that nothing had happened and nothing was wrong; he went about his business and talked to me as though everything was fine between us.

You know something? That pretense and deception hurt *far* more than the offense itself. The theft was a selfish act and I just happened to be the victim. But choosing to live a lie, choosing to let our relationship suffer because he was unwilling to resolve it, was an indication that this loved one didn't value our friendship and our fellowship the same way I did. And with each passing day my grief intensified because the wall between us got bigger and we grew further and further apart.

As I was going through that painful ordeal, I was conscious that our Lord experiences this very thing all the time with many of His loved ones. Often one of His children will sin against Him and then do nothing about it, knowing full well that He knows about it; knowing full well that one day he/she is going to have to face the music. They live their lives and go about their business as though nothing has happened, as though everything is just fine, as though time will erase the guilt or heal the wound or repair the rift. And Jesus waits...and He waits...and with each passing day the wall between Him and His loved one gets bigger, and the separation gets wider.

How do you think Jesus feels when that happens? Do you think He is so accustomed to this kind of treatment by now that He just shrugs His shoulders, blows it off, and diverts His attention, instead, to His more obedient and responsive followers?

I want to suggest to you that the incredible sorrow I felt when *my* friend ignored the offense and I felt like our relationship was deteriorating is only a fraction of the sorrow our Lord feels. You know why? Because His love is far deeper than my love. He loves perfectly. And the relationships He has with *all* of His children are so precious to Him that when *one* of them is unresponsive or hard-hearted it breaks His heart.

Last week we began to look at an entire church that had broken Jesus' heart because it was living a lie. The church at Laodicea was a church that thought they had it all together. They had a rich history, they had an abundance of wealth and other resources, and they considered themselves a thriving community of faith. But Jesus says in **verses 15-16**. ***15 "I know your works: you are neither cold nor hot. Would that you were either cold or hot!" 16 So, because you are lukewarm, and neither hot nor cold, I will spit you out of my mouth.***

Jesus was literally saying that this church made Him feel like throwing up. Vomiting is a metaphor that is intended to communicate that something is so disagreeable, so distasteful, and so revolting it produces a violent internal reaction. And that is how the church at Laodicea made Jesus feel. He is expressing, in the most vivid way possible, His absolute abhorrence for the spiritual condition of this church. It made Him sick.

So, what was it that was so displeasing to Jesus? I believe it is explained in **verse 17**. ***17 For you say, I am rich, I have prospered, and I need nothing, not realizing that you are wretched, pitiable, poor, blind, and naked.***

The problem in the church at Laodicea was self-delusion. They were deceived into thinking that things couldn't be better when, in fact, things couldn't be much worse. They were living a lie and they didn't even know it. They were no longer being sustained and nurtured by their relationship with Jesus. They were no longer living by faith.

Instead, they were self-sufficient, self-reliant, and self-assured. And because of these things they became spiritually smug—a smugness that greatly distorted their thinking and their perspective.

**Verse 18.** ***18 I counsel you to buy from me gold refined by fire, so that you may be rich, and white garments so that you may clothe yourself and the shame of your nakedness may not be seen, and salve to anoint your eyes, so that you may see.***

This is advice to invest in what Jesus has to offer. They were poor but Christ has gold - real gold, not

the gold of this world which will one day be destroyed, but gold that will last for eternity. It's the treasure of an intimate relationship with him.

They were naked but Christ has clothes - not the expensive black garments that were so fashionable in Laodicea at this time, but white garments, representing his righteousness, that covers our spiritual nakedness and gives us access to God and eternal life.

They were blind but Christ has a salve that can make them see. Not the "wonder drug" for weak and ailing eyes called *Tephra-Phrygia*, for which Laodicea was famous, but something that is far better. A salve that can heal their spiritual blindness, open their eyes to spiritual realities, and let them see things from His perspective.

Why would Jesus offer them these riches and these remedies after the way they had ignored Him and offended Him and made Him feel like throwing up?

**Verse 19a.** ***19 Those whom I love, I reprove and discipline...*** Some who read this verse might be confused. "If Jesus *really* loved them, wouldn't He have been less condemning and more affirming? If He *really* loved them, wouldn't He have validated them with kind and tender words?"

We have a distorted view of love in our culture. We get it mixed up with flattery and leniency and tolerance. We think that people will do best if all we give them is positivity and affirmation.

And so, to accommodate this concept, we've got the emergence of a new kind of church. I call it *Church Lite*. It tastes great and is less filling. It has half the content of the regular church - the half that's upbeat and uplifting. All the heavy stuff has been extracted - the stuff that makes people uncomfortable, the stuff that's upsetting or convicting. And people are soaking it up - so much so that they have become intoxicated with sentimental half-truths. The problem is that these sugar coated platitudes amount to little more than sweet talk, which doesn't provide any real nourishment.

A famous preacher of a mega-church was asked why he was so successful. "It's simple," he said, "I give the people what they want." This preacher may have succeeded in filling the pews in his church, but he's failed miserably as a shepherd who is supposed to love his flock. You don't love people when all you do is give them what they want. That's a form of abuse. You love them when you give them what they *need*, for the one who loves you most is the one who tells you the truth, even if it hurts.

It was precisely because Jesus loved them that He rebuked them. They needed it. What kind of Shepherd would He be if He saw His sheep headed for a precipice and all He did was tell them how fine they were and how good they looked because He didn't want to hurt their feelings?

Jesus loves His church so much that He cannot ignore our problems. He's compelled to confront us in order to restore us to a healthy state. And so, He says, **verse 19b.** ***...Be zealous and repent.*** Repentance means that we renounce and forsake the things we are presently doing and do something different - whatever God wants us to do. It means that we turn from the direction we are presently going, and we go the other way - God's way.

And the reason for this repentance is not merely so that we can avoid His wrath but that we can enjoy His company. It's not merely so that He can tolerate us, it's so that He can take pleasure in us. Look at **verse 20.** ***20 Behold, 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.***

It's pretty obvious that this "door" is a metaphor. But what is it? Is it the door of the church at Laodicea? I don't think so, even though Jesus has been addressing the church up until now. Just prior to making this statement Jesus admonished the church to repent. But repentance is a very *personal* matter. If it is to be genuine, it must occur in the hearts of *individuals* who comprise the collective community called the church.

Then, after telling them that He stands at the door and knocks, Jesus says, "If *anyone* (singular) hears my voice...I will come in to *him*..." (singular). This door is the entrance into an individual's heart and soul. That is where Jesus wants to enter.

By the way, we often interpret this verse in relation to evangelism - that Jesus is offering Himself to unbelievers who need to receive Him for salvation. But this verse is written to believers. Jesus is offering Himself to His followers who need to be restored to Him.

Notice, however, that Jesus does not force His loved ones to repent or be restored. The text does not say, "I break down the door and barge in unannounced and uninvited." No, Jesus is not an intruder. He stands at the door. And as He stands, He knocks. Why does someone knock on a door? Two reasons: One, to try and get the attention of the person inside. And two, to wait for an invitation to enter.

That is what Jesus is doing. He is knocking in order to get the attention of His loved one. And the tense of this verb indicates that this is not a casual, occasional rap, where Jesus knocks a few times and then

says, "Well, I guess nobody's home - I'll just move on." No. This is a persistent, continuous knock by One who knows the occupant is home, and who is so eager for a response that He refuses to give up and go away.

When we lived in Nairobi many years ago, visitors came to our home at all hours of the day and night. Several of our friends had a habit of showing up at 10:30 or 11:00...at night. Since it was customary in that culture to eat dinner at 9:30 or 10:00 and then after dinner to take a little stroll through the neighborhood, if they saw any lights on in our home, they figured it was a good time to drop by. But we didn't particularly like to visit at 11:00 at night. And so, on more than one occasion when they would come around and bang on our metal gate late at night (which could be heard throughout the whole neighborhood), I would say to Mindy, "Let's hide." We'd tip toe into a dark room where we couldn't be seen and be very still. And they would continue to knock...and for the next 15 minutes we'd wait it out. They knew we were inside; they just didn't care that we didn't want to be bothered.

That was baffling to me. I thought, "Can't these people take a hint? Don't they know they're not wanted right now?"

Jesus is even more persistent than our inconsiderate friends. And what is so amazing to me is that He is the King of glory, the One who reigns in unrivaled Majesty and splendor. Yet He waits to be wanted by puny, pathetic creatures like us. Even when we ignore Him, or when we've got the noise turned up so loud that we can't hear Him knocking, or when we hear Him knocking but just don't *want* to invite Him in.

Incredible! And all the more when you consider that He is addressing people that made Him sick. But instead of keeping His distance from people who are spiritually nauseating, He takes the initiative to draw near to them. Which reveals the depth of His love. Which reveals how eager He is to forgive His wayward people, to be restored to them, to be in their presence, and to have fellowship with them.

I have been to several Hindu temples. Whenever the priest or the worshiper approaches that sanctuary, they ring a bell. Do you know why? Because they're trying to get the attention of the god. He or she might be sleeping. He or she might be occupied with other matters. He or she might not notice the worshiper, so he has to do something to call attention to himself, to make himself noticeable, to arouse the god's interest. He's got to say, "Here I am!"

But Jesus, the eternal Son of God says to *us*, "Here I am! I'd love to spend some time together. I'd love to talk and reveal my heart to you and have you reveal your heart to me."

The Savior is waiting to enter your heart, why won't you let Him come in? Why would we ever want to keep Him out? All He wants is to let us experience what we were created for - intimate fellowship with Him. All He wants is for us to relax in His presence and get to know Him and enjoy Him. That's what He implies in verse 20 when He uses the metaphor of dining. *"If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and eat with him, and he with me."*

Those of us who live in the fast food generation can hardly appreciate this metaphor without some explanation. We're accustomed to sticking some pre-packaged food into the microwave and scarfing it down on our way out the door. We rush through dinner so we can get on to something else.

But it's not that way in Middle eastern culture. Dining is the high point of the day. It is an unhurried, leisurely affair in which, after a hard day's work the people come into the home and recline at the table. And when there is a guest invited for dinner, it is an event. Mindy and I have been in middle eastern homes where the dinner lasted four or five hours. After one course is prepared and served you linger for a while until the next course is served.

And we learned that it is rude to try and hurry things along; it's inconsiderate to look at your watch at the first lull in the conversation; it's offensive to get up and leave before your hosts are finished entertaining.

Do you understand what Jesus is saying here? He's not just stopping by to say "hello" on His way to do something else. His destination is your heart. He wants to come in and sit down and stay awhile. He wants to linger and talk and have a good time together. He doesn't have an agenda. He's not coming as a house cleaner or a building inspector or a landlord or a detective. He's coming as an intimate friend.

You say, "Well, what about my sin? What about my inadequacies, and my failures?"

Don't forget, Jesus is addressing people who have blown it big time. Their attitudes were so revolting they made Jesus feel like throwing up, and yet He tells them that if they repent, that's it. They are 100% forgiven, accepted, reconciled. No conditions, no penance, no strings.

You see, it all goes back to where our sufficiency is. If I thought that *I* was sufficient to be in fellowship with Jesus I'd be deluding myself. In and of myself I am not sufficient. But Jesus has made me sufficient by transferring His sufficiency to me. Remember I'm clothed with a white robe - His righteousness, so that I'm

totally acceptable in Christ. I have inherited His riches, not because I earned them, but because He has adopted me as His son.

When we grasp who we are and what we have in Jesus, it liberates us to enjoy intimacy with Him. And that is what the Christian life is all about. That's why He created us. That's why He saved us - to discover and enjoy Him.

How would you describe your relationship with Jesus? Do you take the time to cultivate an intimate relationship with Him? Are you responsive when He knocks at the door of your heart?

Oh, I know, you've got places to go, people to see, things to do. You've got appointments to keep and deadlines to meet and a business to run and a family to raise. There are bills to pay and obligations to fulfill and... You don't have time to cultivate that relationship; you'd be content to just catch your breath.

May I remind you that the only way we will experience real and lasting joy, the only way we will be truly at peace is when we choose to make our relationship with Jesus our highest priority. That's why all those other things we pursue and spend our time on end up leaving us somewhat empty and hollow. Because we were created for fellowship with Him. And we'll never be truly fulfilled, truly happy, truly content, until we open the door of our hearts and let Him in, and get to know Him, and delight ourselves in Him, and enjoy sweet communion with Him.

The Savior is waiting to enter your heart, why don't you let Him come in?

**Verses 21-22.** *<sup>21</sup> The one who conquers, I will grant him to sit with me on my throne, as I also conquered and sat down with my Father on His throne.*

Don't forget that Jesus was rebuking the church at Laodicea for being lukewarm. I told you last week that lukewarm means they were not doing what they were supposed to do. They were neither therapeutic like the mineral hot springs from nearby Heirapolis, nor refreshing like the icy-cold waters from nearby Colossae. By the time the waters from those two cities were piped into Laodicea, they were lukewarm, and good for nothing.

Jesus says that those who overcome this "lukewarmness," those who once again find their sufficiency in Jesus will inherit a position of great honor in His kingdom. *<sup>22</sup> He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.*"

### The Savior is Waiting Revelation 3:19-22

Main Idea: Though Jesus initiates opportunities for intimate fellowship with Him (even after we've sinned), He never forces Himself upon us, but waits for our response.

Review: The Church that made Jesus sick  
Nauseating lukewarmness (15-16)

Living a lie (17)

Real riches (18)

The Motive for this rebuke (19a)

Quickly changing course (19b)

Knocking on our heart's door (20)  
Waiting to be wanted

The benefits of inviting Him in  
Sitting around the dinner table

Sitting on a throne (21)

How do we make Jesus feel?