

Revelation 3:14-22
GOD'S EXCHANGE POLICY

You don't hate Jesus, do you? Of course not! It would simply be silly to assume that you, who have taken time out to sit and hear the heavenly Teacher talk to you, hate the Christ. But oh, that you would! It would be better if you did.

These are the words of the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the ruler of God's creation. I know your deeds, that you are neither cold nor hot. I wish that you were either one or the other! So, because you are lukewarm—neither hot nor cold—I am about to spit you out of my mouth.

Yes, these words were written to the church in Laodicea. The ancient city of Laodicea was nestled between Colosse and Hieropolis. Colosse was known for its cool, refreshing waterfalls and Hieropolis for its warm springs of wellness. Sure, to call Laodicea lukewarm was a bit of geographical, tongue-in-cheek humor, but that isn't truly what Jesus was talking about. He, as always, had much more in mind.

Jesus was talking about their faith-life. They didn't hate Jesus. But they weren't on fire for him either. They were Smack-dab in the middle. They came to church. They read the letters that were floating around from Paul and the other apostles. They knew who Jesus was; they just didn't care all that much.

But, enough of the history lesson. Yes, these words were written to the Laodiceans. But, do you see at least a little resemblance in this biblical mirror? You don't hate Jesus either. But are you on fire? Sure, you come to church. You hear and read the letters of Paul and the apostles. You know who Jesus is, but do you really care?

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

Livonia isn't as affluent as it once was. The economy has been hit hard here just like every other city in America; and especially these here in the Metro area. But, really and truthfully, compared to the majority of the world, you are still quite rich. People going from Ann Arbor to Detroit surely stop to get gas and grab a bite to eat. While it isn't what it once was, the market economy here still supports many of you and makes a mark on the map.

So, your relative security makes you complacent. Your blue collar mentality makes you believe that you deserve the things you work hard for; and you have to get for

yourself all you need to get by. But, just like the Laodiceans, you need the spiritual stuff, too. While financial matters and job security surely ought to have a place of priority in your lives, they shouldn't be at the top.

That's because, no matter how hard you work; no matter what career you choose; no matter how big your bank account balloons, none of that stuff matters. The only thing it does is cloud your vision. It helps the sin shades block out the S-O-N and you only see yourselves. And brothers and sisters, through those glasses, you have perceived a gross misconception of the way things truly are.

But you do not realize that you are wretched, pitiful, poor, blind and naked. By the judges of Hollywood and Wall Street, you may be making hay. You might be seated on the throne of respect and worldly honor. But, the true judge of the world doesn't care. He has much more in mind for you.

I counsel you to buy from me gold refined in the fire, so you can become rich; and white clothes to wear, so you can cover your shameful nakedness; and salve to put on your eyes, so you can see. Jesus isn't talking about investment opportunities, the latest fashion, or advancements in medicine. He is talking about the spiritual stuff, the things you can only get from him. He wants you to buy him.

How can you buy him? Let me remind you of the exchange rate in heaven; God's economic policy. He says that when you turn over to him what is yours, he will give you what is his. In order to buy his gold; in order to buy Jesus, hand over your sins. Exchange your pride, your jealousy, your greed and your self-righteousness, and in return you will receive your Savior. When you do:

1. You will get the "golden" message of the Gospel. Your sins have been forgiven. All of your sins. The ones that you committed along time ago, the sins you committed this week, and the sins you will commit for the rest of your life have all been paid for.

When Jesus died on the cross, he took the punishment that your sins deserved. His perfect, precious blood was the only price that God would accept. And to show that he accepted that price, God raised Jesus back from the dead, proving that death is no longer the punishment that your sins will receive.

Because he died and rose again, when you die, you will rise again, too. You will not die eternally. You will live forever in heaven. Every bit of this golden gospel message is yours when you repent; when you turn your sins over to Jesus.

2. Just like what happened earlier for the baby that we baptized, when you repented and turned your sins over to Jesus, he washed you and made you clean in your

baptism. He got rid of the shamefulfulness of sin that you were forced to wear and instead gave you his clean, white robe of righteousness to cover you. Now, because you have been baptized, when God looks at you—that is all he sees; you, clothed in Jesus.

3. Now I'm sure that, for the Laodiceans, the first time that Revelation chapter 3 was read aloud, it was a painful experience. It cut them deeply. It hurts to hear about your sin. The same is true today for those of you who live in Livonia or the surrounding cities. It stabs at you when you have to stand among your friends and family...and before the almighty God...and confess that you are sinful by nature, shown in your thoughts, words, and actions. But, oh, when you do! When you turn your sins over to Jesus, he applies the salve that saves—the words of consolation and absolution that remind you that your sins are forgiven in his death and resurrection.

It is all so simple. God has taken care of everything. In fact, he's even the one who brings you to repentance; the turning over of your sins. But maybe that's why it is a problem for you. Maybe that's why it is so easy to become complacent. Maybe that's why you are so often so lukewarm.

Like a glass of milk that was left out since last night's dinner, your lukewarm attitude toward Christ and his forgiveness for you makes him want to spit you out. At least if you hated Jesus because you didn't know his love and compassion; if you were ignorant of his mercy, he could feel sorry for you. But you know it. You hear it over and over again, and, many times, it doesn't affect your life in the least. But thankfully God's grace doesn't depend on you. He has taken care of everything. He loves you no matter what. So, in order to cook your lukewarm attitude into a tasty meal for himself, he urges you to be reminded of his love again.

Those whom I love I rebuke and discipline. So be earnest, and repent. 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 him, and he with me.

To get you to stop being complacent with your lot in life, perhaps he has taken away the things that made you feel so secure. Maybe it was your job, your mother, your friends or your health. He didn't make life harder for you because he is a masochist who measures his pleasures by your pain. No, he took those things away because he loves you and wants to enjoy his eternal, heavenly, banquet meal with you, and he doesn't want anything to get in the way of that.

There are obstacles that Jesus allows to be placed in your life. He does it for your benefit. He wants you to overcome them. And there is only one way to do so. Repent. Trade them in. Hand them to your Savior. He will help you through them, and give you

heaven in exchange. To him who overcomes, I will give the right to sit with me on my throne, just as I 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. Amen.