

November 11, 2018

Revelation 3:14-22

Remember back with me. Remember back to a time you took a bite, a taste, of something that looked so good. You tasted it, you felt it in your mouth, and you just had to spit it out. You might have been at a restaurant, or company at someone else's house. Maybe you tried to be couth; maybe you tried to be refined. Or maybe the taste in your mouth, the feel in your mouth, just had to go. Do you remember that time? Maybe that taste was too hot and it burned; maybe it was too cold and it hurt your teeth. Do you remember that taste, that feel in your mouth? Something had to be really wrong to spit it out, right?

That's not a proper topic for church talk, is it? But in our lesson what does Jesus write to his church in Laodicea? **"I am about to spit you out of my mouth."** Jesus had a taste of his church, and he couldn't stand it. He had to get that taste out of his mouth. Why? It wasn't that they were bitter and bitey, although that's an awful taste. It wasn't that they tasted slimy or skunky, although that can make our skin crawl. Here's what it was: **"Because you are lukewarm - neither hot nor cold - I am about to spit you out of my mouth."** They weren't dead-set cold against Jesus, but they weren't on fire for Jesus either. They were just lukewarm to Jesus. Jesus called, and they shrugged. Jesus forgave, and they shrugged. Jesus promised heaven, and they shrugged. They shrugged at his promises; they shrugged at his blessings; they shrugged at his call to action. If it were a choice between church or sports, more often than not, sports won. If it were a choice between church or sleep, more often than not, sleep won. If it were a choice between working for self or working for Jesus, more often than not, working for self won. Oh, they would say nice things about Jesus, but they liked their excuses more. They would say nice things about Jesus, but they liked their distractions more. They might even be there for church every Sunday, but their minds were a thousand different places. No, they weren't dead-set cold against Jesus, but they sure weren't on fire for Jesus either. They were lukewarm, complacent, and for that Jesus was about to spit them out of his mouth.

How did they get that way? In Laodicea, life was good. Laodicea was

a banking and finance center. Their textile business was good; their cloth and clothing businesses were doing well. Their medical and pharmaceutical businesses were doing well; they had a special salve for the eyes - people traveled for miles, for days, for the medicine that Laodicea offered. White-collar jobs, blue-collar jobs - Laodicea was flush. Life was good. The people were well-off; they had more than they needed. So why be on fire for Jesus? What did they need Jesus for? Sound familiar? “Forgive us, Lord, for shallow thankfulness, for dull content with warmth and sheltered care.”

The people thought they were set. Jesus saw things differently. People who shrug when Jesus calls, people who can hardly be bothered to answer Jesus, it doesn't matter that they're not dead-set cold against Jesus. They might even say nice things about Jesus; they might think they're set with Jesus. But Jesus sees them, calls them bankrupt, bare, and blind.

How does Jesus see you? Do you ever shrug when Jesus calls, and think you're ok the way you are? Are you ever too distracted to be bothered with Jesus? ... too busy to be bothered with Jesus? ... full of excuses when Jesus calls? That's most all of us some days, isn't it? But do you ever go on then like that's ok, like it's ok to coast with Jesus? The people in Laodicea thought they were set with Jesus, and what did Jesus say? “You're bankrupt, bare, and blind.” They thought it was fine to coast with Jesus, but what did Jesus say? **“I am about to spit you out.”**

Does that sound harsh? I wonder if Jesus sensed that. So Jesus added: **“Those whom I love I rebuke and discipline. So be earnest, and repent.”** Did you notice? Jesus didn't pull back. Instead Jesus calls us out. Why? It is better to be called out than spit out. It is better to be called out than spit out.

And Jesus is calling. Up here on the screen we have a famous picture of Jesus. He's standing at a door listening, listening to hear if anyone will answer. Who's on the other side of the door? I imagine some guy on a couch, eyes glued to a screen. Somebody too busy, too busy to bother answering the door. Someone waiting, waiting for someone else to answer the door. On the other side of the door are people stuck on themselves, afraid

of missing out on what they're doing. The sad thing is that they will miss out on something better than what they're doing. Because Jesus has a promise, and his promise isn't for those who don't answer his call. Jesus' promise is for those who do answer his call.

Do you remember his promise? You get to, we get to eat with Jesus. I read that and I catch myself almost shrugging: "What's the big deal?" So what is the big deal? If Mike Ditka invited you down to Chicago to eat with him, if Aaron Rogers invited you up to Green Bay, if President Trump or Robert Mueller invited you to Washington, if Tom Sellick invited you to New York, if Taylor Swift invited you to a concert and supper ... most all of us have someone we'd travel to see, don't we? What if that one you would travel to see were at your door knocking, waiting to come in and eat with you? We'd get up off the couch, we'd stop whatever we were doing to open the door, wouldn't we?

Now think about it. You have Jesus, the Son of God - he doesn't just put on a good show, he created all the universe! - and he's promising to come to you, to eat with you. You have Jesus, the Son of God - he's not just powerful in Washington, he rules the universe! - and he's waiting for you, to eat with you. Even better, you have Jesus the Good Shepherd - he doesn't just play games, he gave his life for you! - and he's looking to eat with you, to have a drink with you, to go for a walk with you. He's worth more than a shrug, isn't he? For him, we stop whatever we're doing to answer him, don't we?

And what do you suppose he will say? Are you feeling nervous about being face to face with God? Listen to Jesus promise: "Peace." Are you feeling guilty for those times you blew him off? Listen to Jesus promise: "I forgive you." Are you hoping for some help in life? Listen to Jesus promise: "I'm here for you; talk to me." Are you looking to do something that matters? Listen to Jesus promise: "I have a place for you in what I'm doing; work with me on this." Are you hoping for some clue as to what's to come? Listen to Jesus promise: "I'm coming back for you."

"I'm coming back for you." And whoever answers my call, I have a

special place for you on my throne. Whoever gets past their busyness, whoever gets over their excuses, whoever gets past the distractions, whoever gets over themselves, you get to rule with Jesus. Instead of being ruled by the stuff and busyness of the world, with Jesus you get to rule a far better world. Instead of grasping for crumbs here, with Jesus you'll get to share the throne of the King. And that's nothing to spit at, is it?!

Whoever has an ear, listen to what the Spirit says to the churches!