

## Where Do You Live?

- ✠ not in Laodicea (vv.14-18)
- ✠ dining with Jesus (vv.19-22)

In the Name of Jesus who is knocking again today at your heart's door, dearly beloved, redeemed:

When Isaiah the prophet saw God on His throne and heard the fiery seraphim calling to each other, ***“Holy, holy, holy is the LORD of Armies!”*** Isaiah was terrified. He cried out, ***“I am doomed! I am ruined, because I am a man with unclean lips, and I dwell among a people with unclean lips, and because my eyes have seen the King, the LORD of Armies!”*** Then one of the seraphim flew to me, carrying a glowing coal in his hand, which he had taken from the altar with tongs. He touched my mouth with the coal and said, ***“Look, this has touched your lips, so your guilt is taken away, and your sin is forgiven.”*** (Isaiah 6:5f EHV<sup>1</sup>) So, **Where Do You Live? Dining with Jesus?** Hopefully...

### ✠ not in Laodicea (vv.14-18)

Here's a challenge: Take a few days to read Revelation, then read Isaiah, then read Revelation again. It's amazing to see the same Holy Spirit behind these Bible books written 800 years apart.

Isaiah, living in the Southern Kingdom of Judah back about 700 BC, was warning God's people of God's judgment from two empires, Assyria then and Babylonia soon after. Everywhere you lived at that time there were altars for idols that demanded sacrifices from young and old. To be “in” with the crowd, the young had to sacrifice their virginity and take part in gross immorality at the shrines. Compulsory sex education was deep in the religion of Baal and Asherah. But did the people care? Do you?

Fast forward to about a hundred years after Jesus was born, and you're living with John, the disciple Jesus loved, on the island of Patmos. By now all the other apostles have been martyred for their faith and many lay Christians too. You're living in the Roman Empire where sworn allegiance to the government is mandatory. That includes worshiping the emperor as god along with all the Roman gods and local deities too. Sexual immorality is demanded. In the end everyone is actually worshiping demons. John says, “No!” He insists on worshiping Christ alone. He cares that much. Do you?

In the bloody persecutions that were coming again God's people needed both warning and encouragement. **Where Do You Live?** Serious warnings and encouraging power came in seven letters, this the last: ***“To the messenger (pastor) of the church in Laodicea write: The Amen, the faithful and true witness, the ruler of God's creation, says this: I know your works, that you are neither cold nor hot. If only you were cold or hot! So, because you are lukewarm and not hot or cold, I am about to spit you out of my mouth. You say, “I am rich. I have become very wealthy and need nothing.” But you do not know that you are miserable, pitiful, poor, blind, and naked. I advise you to buy from me gold refined by fire, so that you may be rich, and white garments, so that you may be clothed and the shame of your nakedness may not become public, and salve to anoint your eyes, so that you may see.”***

Jesus identifies Himself as ***The Amen, the faithful and true witness, the ruler of God's creation. Witness*** as in *martyr* too, saying by His death that life on earth is nothing compared to life forever with God and believers in heaven. Jesus shows God to be absolutely ***faithful*** by fulfilling all the detailed, extraordinary promises recorded for centuries, then carried out to the letter by Jesus with 100% accuracy.

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<sup>1</sup> EHV ~ *Evangelical Heritage Version* (<http://wartburgproject.org>) © 2019. NPH: 800-662-6022; also Amazon-Kindle.

And the greatest proof of God's *faithfulness* occurred on Golgotha. To save all people from sin, God gave His own Son into death for us all. Truly the cross is "proof that cannot be argued away."<sup>2</sup>

Apparently, if you lived in Laodicea, the water was terrible. No hot springs there for soothing mineral baths. No cold mountain springs to quench your thirst. There was only tepid water, the kind that stinks after sitting out on the counter. Drinking it made a riot in your mouth and right up out of your stomach. Way past spit, this was disgusting vomit. **Where Do You Live?**

The more things change, the more they stay the same. Immoral sex education forced into public schools – do you care? Many parents are fighting back. Wickedness in high places – do you care? Or do you excuse immorality for politicians who support your views? Word and sacrament corrupted by human opinion – do you care? Or do you let popular music drown truth in lukewarm **Laodicea**?

### ✠ dining with Jesus (vv.19-22)

*One thing's needful; Lord, this treasure Teach me highly to regard.  
All else, though it first give pleasure, Is a yoke that presses hard.  
Beneath it the heart is still fretting and striving, No true, lasting happiness ever deriving.  
This one thing is needful; all others are vain – I count all but loss that I Christ may obtain.*

Written by a Lutheran pastor, Johann Schroeder (1667-1699). Six months after he was ordained into the ministry his wife died. Shortly thereafter he wrote this hymn (CW 290). Within two more years he himself entered eternity at the age of 32, privileged in the Lord's holy ministry for only 3 years.<sup>3</sup>

You don't have to live in lukewarm Laodicea. There's no life there. Listen. Life is not found in the thunder and lightning of human opinion, but in Jesus' gentle whisper: ***"I rebuke and discipline those whom I love."*** Even in His *rebuke* Jesus is holding out hope as He did through Isaiah 800 years earlier: ***"Come, all you who are thirsty, come to the waters; and you who have no money, come, buy and eat! Come, buy wine and milk without money and without cost. Why spend money on what is not bread, and your labor on what does not satisfy? Listen, listen to me, and eat what is good, and your soul will delight in the richest of fare. [Listen], that your soul may live."*** (Isaiah 55:1-3 NIV84)

In fact, if you care, you don't even have to go out for groceries. Listen. Can you hear gentle knocking? Waiting at your heart's door? He does not force Himself on anyone. Jesus kindly calls, ***"Look, I stand at the door and I am knocking. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will go in with him and dine with him, and he with me."*** Dining with Jesus – oh, so much better here with Him! His *voice soothes our sorrows, heals our wounds and drives away all fear.* (CW 358) With the Emmaus disciples that first Easter, we pray, ***"Abide with us, for it is almost evening, and the day is almost over."*** (Luke 24:29 TPA) Jesus wants nothing better than to come and live in your heart. In the breaking of bread we recognize Him too, giving us His body and His blood in His miraculous Holy Supper.

***"To the one who is victorious I will give the right to sit with me on my throne, just as I was victorious and sat down with my Father on his throne."*** Obviously, this is not just for the pastor. As with all the seven letters, Jesus calls out: ***"Whoever has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches."*** Our dear Savior wants us all to be ***"more than conquerors through him who loved us."*** (Romans 8:37) "Grace teaches us by always pointing to the cross to keep reminding us of what God has done for us." The Gospel motivates and empowers us to say, "No!" to wickedness.<sup>4</sup>

Our Savior's voice raises the head of the sin-dead deaf and races the heart that once beat stone cold. Grace covers our sin and nakedness and gives hope at Jesus' gentle knocking. What else can we say when we hear Him? "Come, Lord Jesus, be our guest. And let these gifts to us be blessed." Amen.

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<sup>2</sup> Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary Professor Richard D. Balge, with the Lord 10/17/2021.

<sup>3</sup> Lehmann, Edward. "The Shepherd's Means of Ministry" – Smalcald Articles.... 4/25/2006, at St. Cloud, MN.

<sup>4</sup> Class notes. Exegesis of Titus, Seminary Summer Quarter Extension (SSQX) @ Martin Luther College, 7/10/2008.

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