# Belief - Part 4

## https://www.cccemmitsburg.org/s/cc_images/cache_17661160.jpg?t=1508818369Lukewarm

## (Revelation 3:15-20)

Welcome to Christ’s Community Church. We’re wrapping up our message series on “Belief” with a message entitled “Lukewarm”.  I believe this is my favorite of these four messages or at least maybe a close second to last week’s message on “Our Mission”, because I learned so much and my heart was so moved for the people of Haiti. But this week, this is just so practical, because in so many ways I think we all find ourselves on different levels living our lives in this cycle of passion for God, zeal for God, when suddenly we find ourselves like our morning coffee, just lukewarm.

That’s what we’re going to look at today in the Word of God, where Jesus dictated seven letters to seven churches, and the last letter was to this one church, the church of Laodicea. That’s the letter that we’re going to look at today in Revelation chapter 3, but before we get started I want to give you the context behind the Scripture. Much of the ruins of this city have been excavated today, and Laodicea had a beautiful Main Street lined with polished marble columns in front of predominantly large homes. And so, what’s really interesting about Laodicea is that, unlike many New Testament cities, this was actually a very wealthy city. They’ve even uncovered ancient pipes revealing a centralized water system with indoor plumbing, and so not only was this a wealthy city, but it was a highly developed city. What we find in Laodicea is that the engineering and architecture were quite sophisticated, this was an advanced culture, and you could say this city was the Beverly Hills or the Manhattan of its day. Businesses in Laodicea were very successful and it was known for its massive theaters, stadiums, and public baths, and so the people had all the best food, the best drink, and the best entertainment.

And yet here in Laodicea, Jesus has something important to say.  He had a message for this church in Revelation chapter 3, and he said to this very wealthy, very blessed group of people in verse 15,

“I know your deeds, that you are neither cold nor hot. I wish 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. You say, 'I am rich; I have acquired wealth and do not need a thing.' But you do not realize that you are wretched, pitiful, poor, blind and naked” (Revelation 3:15-17).

And then he says something, he gives an invitation that’s often used within evangelical circles to invite people to respond to Jesus. In verse 20 he says,

“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” (Revelation 3:20).

It’s an amazing invitation, but we often get it wrong, because he’s not inviting those who are outside of the church. Jesus is actually knocking on the door of the church. He’s knocking on the door, because he’s been locked out of the building that has his name on it. Even today, there are some professing churches, certain denominations, that are rebelling against the God of the Bible, and the truth is that Jesus has nothing good to say about them. And so, he’s knocking, he’s saying to the people of Laodicea, “I know your deeds, not what you say you believe, but I know how you live.” And the important thing for us to know is that there’s a really big difference.

Jesus said, “I know your deeds, that you are neither cold nor hot. I wish 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” (Revelation 3:15-16).

Again, this is where it’s really important that we understand the context, because Laodicea was located on a plateau, a large area of raised ground overlooking the plains.  As you can imagine, fresh drinking water was just a little scarce, and so they had to pipe their water in.  Because they had money and because of a nearby mountain range, there was the possibility of getting cold water.  But then again, because of the distance and depending upon the ambient temperature, there was also the possibility of getting what would be considered fairly hot water. And so, one of the greatest complaints of the citizens of Laodicea was that it was really difficult to enjoy the water. Even though they had built a very complicated aqueduct system so that the water could be brought there, by the time the hot water reached them it was lukewarm, and by the time the cold water reached them it also was lukewarm. And so, that’s the context and we can understand that, because a hot drink is good and a cold drink is good.

Some of you like ice coffee or hot coffee, but you probably don’t go to Starbucks and order a lukewarm caramel latte; but that’s what the Laodiceans always got. And so, Jesus knowing them, knowing their culture, and knowing their deeds, communicates to them in a way that they would understand. He says, “You know how every morning you like to have hot water for your coffee or maybe cold water for lunch, and you’re always complaining and you’re frustrated because it’s just not good.” Well, Jesus says, “Your church is just like that to me.  Your devotion, your sacrifice, and your commitment are lukewarm and it’s not good. As a matter of fact, it’s repulsive.”

This past week I was grabbing some leftovers out of the refrigerator for lunch and I found a Ziploc bag in the very back with two hard-boiled eggs in it. As I pulled that bag out and looked at it my stomach tightened up, because I recognized the potential for something really nasty if I were to open up that sealed bag, because, as most of you know, we were away the week before on vacation, and these two eggs had been neglected in the refrigerator for several weeks and were now a strange color. You know not quite Easter egg colors but a bluish greenish color and just the thought of that smell was repulsive and that’s what Jesus said,

“I wish you were either one or the other! But because you are lukewarm — neither hot nor cold — I am about to spit you out of my mouth” (Revelation 3:15-16).

Now, when he says spit, that little Greek word is used only one time in all the Bible and it’s not really one of those words that you find commonly used in church, but it means to spit or vomit, utter rejection, or supremely repulsed. It would be like, if I had opened up that zip lock bag containing those two hard-boiled eggs I found this week and had taken a bite. That’s what I would have done and that’s what Jesus is saying. “When you’re lukewarm, when you don’t show any desire for me, when you’re indifferent, when you’re self-satisfied, when you’re comfortable with your life and you quit seeking me, I just can’t stomach that. I’m repulsed by it, I get the gag reflex, I cannot tolerate it, and I’m going to spit you out.” And so, Jesus in the most graphic way possible communicates to them what it’s like to be their God.

Now, of course, to be a lukewarm Christian really can’t be, and so that’s what we’d call an oxymoron. You know, when you put two different words together that are polar opposites; words like clearly confused… alone together… deafening silence… or maybe even government efficiency. And so, a lukewarm Christian really can’t be and they are those like the apostle Paul warned Timothy about saying, “In these days…

“People will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money … lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God— having a form of godliness but denying its power. Have nothing to do with them” (2 Tim 3:2-5).

And yet, a lukewarm believer wants to be accepted by others, they want to be loved, and they fit right into our selfie-centered generation. You know, everything is about how many likes you can get on social media. And yet, Jesus actually said in Luke chapter 6,

“What sorrow awaits you who are praised by the crowds” (Luke 6:26, NLT).

Woe to you when all men speak well of you. You see, a lukewarm believer longs for the approval of others more than the approval of God. They think more about life on earth than eternity in heaven. They’re fearful of death, because they’re loving life, loving the things of this world, and they’d rather be in a wheelchair wearing diapers at 99 than with the Lord in heaven. And yet the apostle Paul said it this way, here’s the Christian perspective…

“To me, to live is Christ and to die is gain” (Philippians 1:21).

You see, the lukewarm believer loves the things of this world more than the presence of Jesus. And honestly, they’re not much different from the rest of the world. Actually, no different at all, because they use the same trashy talk at work, have the same lack of morals, and raise their kids like everybody else. They get divorced just as often as anybody else, watch the same movies, and even listen to the same music; because they’re just like everybody else. It’s a comfortable lukewarm belief that’s just hoping to get enough Jesus to get into heaven and keep them out of hell. But Jesus calls this kind of person lukewarm and said they make him want to throw up; so he tells the church in verse 17, he gives them some advice saying,

“You say, 'I am rich; I have acquired wealth and do not need a thing.' But you do not realize that you are wretched, pitiful, poor, blind and naked. 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” (Revelation 3:17-18).

Now, this is interesting, because so often we’ve heard Jesus say, “He who has an ear let him hear” but now Jesus says I want you to see. I want you to see how “wretched, pitiful, poor, blind and naked” you really are. You see, they were very affluent, they were rich, and Jesus points out that they may be materially rich but spiritually they’re very poor, because Jesus sees into their soul, he sees that there’s no growth, there’s no life. They’re physically clothed, their pockets are full, but their hearts are empty, and so he tells them that they’re spiritually naked. It’s just as the Lord had said to Samuel,

"The Lord does not look at the things man looks at. Man looks at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart" (1 Samuel 16:7).

And so, you can look rich and powerful. You can be successful, educated, and still be spiritually bankrupt… blind, naked, and poor… lukewarm toward the things of God.

So, Jesus counsels them to come to him for true riches, so that they could be clothed in his righteousness, and that they would have ointment for their eyes so that they could see. Because they had essentially closed their eyes to Jesus, becoming blinded to the fact that they were sinners and that they needed a Savior. In their stuck-up, pride-filled, materialistic comfort and lifestyle, they had surrounded themselves with saviors of success, saviors of comfort, saviors of pleasure, and saviors of plenty. And so, the real issue here is that they were worshiping comfort instead of Christ, they were in a place of complacency where home was a little bit like heaven. It wasn’t Christ whom they lived for, but comfort that they lived for, and Jesus comes to the church and says in verse 19,

“Those whom I love I rebuke and discipline. So be earnest and repent” (Revelation 3:19).

That’s a good word for the church today, because so many of us are in positions where we’re never rebuked and nobody ever gets to discipline us. You know, we’re the parents, we’re the bosses, we’re the ones who’ve organized this, and so nobody has the liberty to say, “You know, I love you, but we really need to talk about this.” And Jesus says, “Those whom I love I rebuke and discipline... I’m going to point out your flaws, I’m going to correct you, so be earnest and repent.” And he invites them to change.

Martin Luther nailed his 95 Theses to the door of the church in Wittenberg marking the beginning of the Protestant Reformation and the opening statement basically said, “All of a Christian’s life is one of repentance.” And the truth is, the moment you stop repenting, you start growing lukewarm. If you’re always defending yourself, always right, always blaming others, always judging others without judging yourself, always overlooking your faults and your failures; that’s how you become lukewarm. The way we stay on fire for Jesus is through repentance. That’s where we turn from sin and we come back to Jesus who said in verse 20,

“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” (Revelation 3:20).

And here, the image is of Jesus outside of the church, banging on the door, because he’d been locked out. What he had to say was too controversial, too opinionated, and to divisive. They didn’t want to hear what he had to say to them because they knew he would tell them what they were doing wrong, what they should do, and that they should repent. And today there are denominations like that, there are churches where Jesus is just a little bit to divisive. They don’t want people to get offended, but the bottom line is that it’s all about Jesus, it’s always been about Jesus, and it will always be about Jesus.

The hope for people is Jesus and for us Christianity is not just a lifestyle, it’s not just a social club, or a way of living that’s good for the family; but it’s really about meeting Jesus, having him take away our sin and giving us his righteousness. It’s about Jesus filling us with the Holy Spirit so that we’re on fire for God and that by the grace of God we grow to become more and more like Jesus. That changes our life, changes our family’s life, our church’s life, and by the grace of God our community’s life, but it’s all about Jesus.

Therefore, our response today should be the same as the response when the church of Laodicea received this letter. And maybe some of you are feeling that gentle conviction of the Holy Spirit and you’re recognizing, maybe I believe in God, but I don’t really know him, because you’re not fully committed to him. Well, today you need to know that Jesus is patiently waiting, he loves you, he wants to come in to fellowship with you, and he gave his life for you. All you need to do today is humble yourself, tell him you’re sorry, and invite him in. Jesus said, “If anyone hears my voice and opens the door I will come in.”

And so, it’s your move, you don’t have to get your act together, you don’t have to be perfect, but you just let him in. And he’ll come, because he accepts you, but he won’t leave you there, he’ll transform you and suddenly your sins are forgiven and you’re no longer the same. You become a new creation in Christ. That’s what the Bible tells us,

“Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come!” (2 Corinthians 5:17).

And so, you recognize that Jesus is still there, he’s still knocking, he’s still waiting, and you run to the door like a little kid when daddy comes home from work. That’s what you do. You run to him and tell him, “I need you in my life. I want to be close to you.” And when you seek him, you will find him. If you don’t know him, you listen for that voice, and you open up your heart to him. If your love has grown cold, like the prodigal son, he’s ready to embrace you. Jesus came to give you life and to give it abundantly.

Unfortunately, we live in a world where so many people are comfortable. They’re happy with their faith, that form of religion.  But I’ll tell you that when you recognize who Jesus is and what he’s done, that God became flesh in the person of Jesus and gave his life so that we could live, our only reasonable response is to surrender and give all of ourselves to him. Just as Jesus gave his life for us, we give our life for him.

Pastor John Talcott

Christ's Community Church

303 West Lincoln Avenue

Emmitsburg, MD 21727

October 22, 2017

[www.cccemmitsburg.org](http://www.cccemmitsburg.org/)

Graphics, notes, and commentary from LifeChurch, Ministry Pass, Preaching Library, and PC Study Bible.

Scripture from the New International Version unless otherwise noted.