

Lukewarm Faith(?)

This being Maundy Thursday, the night we remember when our Lord first instituted His holy supper for us and our forgiveness, commanding us to “*take and eat/drink,*” it seems rather strange—perhaps even a bit wrong—that we would instead focus on the concept of ***spitting things out of the mouth.*** It’s the complete opposite! You spit things out because they’re not good and/or they’re not good for you, whereas Jesus Himself gives us His Word to “*read, mark, learn, and inwardly-digest,*” to feed and nourish our souls. He gives us the very good and life-giving sustenance of His Body and Blood for our eternal good to “***take and eat/drink.***”

Ahh... but there’s a good reason we need take a little time to focus on Jesus’ repulsive reaction to the Christians in Laodicea. You see, the name itself—Laodicea—breaks down to “***the people of righteousness.***” If you were a Christian in Laodicea at this time, you would have a tough time understanding why Jesus would issue such a stark warning to you of all people. After all, you were the picture of success! Your economy was booming. Your businesses were prospering. The black wool from your sheep and the woven garments you made were widely sought after in the Roman Empire. You had a very famous medical school in your midst. In fact, ointments for curing diseases of the eyes and ears were made in Laodicea. The brightest and best in all the known world called you “home.” ***Prosperous, educated, religious, important—how could God not approve of us?!***

And as a congregation... the Christians in Laodicea didn’t seem to be plagued with all the moral and doctrinal troubles of their sister congregations. No one would ever describe the Laodicean Christians as ***idolatrous or immoral or tempted to compromise the Christian faith.*** They didn’t have all those problems. In fact, a visitor to your church might remark, “*What a lovely congregation and what nice people. How prosperous and peaceful. These Laodicean Christians really have a good thing going here.*” Given all this, how could you ***not*** think that God favored you; that you were in good with God?

But that right there was their deadly flaw. They were so self-satisfied that they really had no use for Christ. Sure, they were Christians and they loved Jesus, if you asked them, but actually putting that faith into practice? To the Laodiceans, in theory, Jesus was everything, ***and yet in practice/reality He was nothing.*** He is the “Amen,” the only true certainty, and yet they sought certainty within themselves; i.e., their careers, their prosperity, their feelings. Jesus died to save them from every evil and give them His perfect righteousness, and they wound up looking to their own “righteousness” for comfort and assurance. Christ is the source of all creation, without whom nothing would exist, and they had the gall to pat themselves on the back and say, “*Look what I did!*” They smiled smugly at

their good fortunes, saying, “*I am rich; I have acquired wealth and do not need a thing*” (Revelation 3:17). ***And they wondered why Jesus was about to throw up!*** When you get down to it, they neither loved Him nor despised Him. They neither called on Him nor did they send Him away. Jesus had become just a slogan, a piece of the furniture, a prop in the background of their lives.

Fast-forward two-thousand years. Examine the “Christian” nation you live in. Examine the “Christian” culture, of which you are very much an active participant! Examine your own daily lives. Are things really all that different? Do you/we not have a lot of troubling things in common with the Christians of Laodicea? I know none of us would ever be so bold (or stupid) as to spit on Christ or spit Him out. ***How evil! And yet... isn't that what we do sometimes? Remember: It's not hatred of Jesus that imperils the Laodicean Christians. It's indifference.***

Ask yourself: Whose righteousness/fairness/justice do you hunger and thirst after—Christ’s or your own? When things are prospering and going well, is it “*All glory to God*”? ***You sure about that?*** We tend to take a lot of credit for all the things we most certainly do not deserve; things which our heavenly Father, purely out of undeserved grace, blesses us with. ***What about indifference/apathy?*** What about “*meh... I'm just not feeling it today*”? Here’s Christ with His gifts, and how often we’re “too busy,” or worse yet, “*I'm good.*” How often our response is something similar to a yawn or acting like we have an annoying hair in our mouth, and that’s if we acknowledge Him at all. It’s sad how many “good Christians” are, in reality/practice, indifferent; how many “good Christians” really have no need for Jesus... ***until they need Him.*** Where is your trust and assurance—your joy and peace—grounded and centered: ***on Christ or on the things/ways of this world?*** Would the fruits you bear confirm or contradict the words that so easily come spitting out of the mouth?

But enough about us. Let’s focus on Jesus. Hebrews 2:9 tells us that Jesus endured all that He did in His suffering and Passion “*so that by the grace of God He might taste death for everyone.*” Jesus tasted the demonic delight called death, the soldiers’ spit, their cheap wine, sweat running down His cheeks along with His own blood. But there was more. ***Jesus drank the cup of the Father’s wrath. He drank every last drop. And it killed Him.*** Yet Jesus not only tasted death. He swallowed death up, chewed him up, and spit him out... for you, ***all so that He’d never have to spit you out.***

In 1 Corinthians 15:54 Paul announces, “*Death has been swallowed up in victory!*” Folks: That same feast of victory is here each and every time two or three gather in His name to be nursed and nourished by Him. It was Luther who pounded the table at Marburg with the Latin words, “*hoc est corpus meum,*” which is Latin for “*This is My body.*” The forgiveness and love, mercy and salvation, all accomplished at Calvary, is now really and truly present in the bread

and wine by the power of His Word. ***It is present and real because Christ Jesus says so!*** The Bible/Christ does not teach real absence or mere symbolism, but real presence. “*This is my body. This is my blood. As often as you do this, remember what I have said about this. I am with you always....*” Christ’s true body and blood are here to completely forgive of all your sins and wipe them out forever. Here is God’s gift of grace for you, not just tonight, but every Sunday we celebrate with our Lord at His feast table. Here we find the forgiveness of sins, all sins... including our sin of lukewarm faith and apathy.

All this said, may we come to our Lord’s table, not just tonight, ***but whenever He sets His feast before us***, hungering and thirsting for His righteousness. May our hearts, our minds, and our souls be satiated and filled to overflowing with the incomprehensible gift of love that He feeds us with here. And by this blessed nourishing, may our faith be ***rightly re-oriented and fanned into flame*** so that we would go forth in our daily lives, henceforth and to the end of our days, ***renewed, refocused, and rejoicing always***, showing forth and truly living every moment of every day to the glory of Christ.

In His name... **AMEN.**