

Joke: A farmer named Jimmy had a car accident. He was hit by a truck owned by the Ever-sweet Company. The case went to trial and in court, the Ever-sweet Company's hot-shot attorney began questioning Jimmy.

'Didn't you say to the police at the scene of the accident, 'I'm fine?' asked the lawyer.

Jimmy responded: 'Well, I'll tell you what happened. I'd just loaded my favorite cow, Bessie, into da... '

'I didn't ask for any details', the lawyer interrupted. 'Just answer the question. Did you not say, at the scene of the accident, 'I'm fine!'?'

Jimmy said, 'Well, I'd just got Bessie into da trailer and I was driving down da road. . . '

The lawyer interrupted once again and said, "Your Honor, I am trying to establish the fact that, at the scene of the accident, this man told the police on the scene that he was fine. And now several weeks after the accident, he is trying to sue my client. I believe he is a fraud. Would you please tell him to simply answer the question. '

By this time, the Judge was fairly interested in Jimmy's answer and said to the lawyer: "I'd like to hear what he has to say about his favorite cow, Bessie."

Jimmy thanked the Judge and proceeded.'Well as I was saying, I had just loaded Bessie, my favorite cow, into da trailer and was driving her down da road when this huge Ever-sweet truck and trailer came thundering through a stop sign and hit my trailer right in da side. I was thrown into one ditch and Bessie was thrown into da other.

I was hurt, really bad like, didn't even want to move. However, I could hear old Bessie moaning and groaning. I knew she was in terrible pain just by the sounds she was making. But I couldn't move from all the pain I was in. Felt bad for my old Bessie.

Shortly after da accident, a policeman on a motorbike showed up. He could hear Bessie moaning and groaning too, so he went over to her. After he looked at her, and saw her condition, he took out his gun and shot her right between the eyes.

Den that policeman came across da road, gun still in hand, looked at me, and said, 'How are you feeling?'

“Now you want to tell me what would you say?”

Well it's here. Tonight at 6:30 the big game. Chiefs against the Eagles. **(Talk about normal sermon and not going to do that and party at my place).**

There's something else happening this week as well do you know what that is? Valentine's Day so, guys don't forget.

Play video - The Word on Love

There is one question that really causes me to hesitate answering when someone asks me and that is: what is it you do for a living?

Not the I'm ashamed but most of you know that this is not my full time job. Your pastor has another job that I work as well. It's not that I wouldn't mind doing this full time but we are not at a place where I can be paid to do this full time.

But, when I'm asked that question what is it you do for a living?

I often hesitate. I mean do I say my other job before pastor, do I leave out pastor since it's not my only job, and again it's not that I'm embarrassed being a pastor. But it seems like when I share that detail the conversation often times gets a little, well. . .weird.

It seems that I will often get one of two responses, one response is: praise the Lord. Hallelujah, brother and when the worst part is if I'm at a conference or something I usually get another question, any idea what that one is? How big is your church. And listen if it was all about numbers I wouldn't be here. But I pastor some of the best people in our community.

The other takes a whole different turn, it mostly happens if they don't claim to be a Christian. And what happens is you get that uncomfortable silence.

You know the one when someone just doesn't know at all how to respond and you get that deer in the highlights look.

And then after that uneasy silence especially if they don't claim to be a follower of Jesus I've had them go on and tell me about all the good things that they've done.

They will tell you that they give money to this organization, or that they have a girlfriend but we're not sleeping together, or I bought a meal for a homeless guy the other day.

They seem so excited to tell you about all of their Christian values, morally good things they've done even through they don't claim Christ.

And it just can get so weird so quick.

Their faith story you is like well, I'm spiritual, I guess I'm kind of Christian.

And see that's the thing, I have met a ton of people who are kind of Christian they are sort of Christian they are Christian-ish.

Truth is I was that too.

Growing up we went to church on Easter, Christmas, and when my dad volunteered to work at the Masonic temple cooking pancakes for their fundraiser. We would go have breakfast and then go to church.

And I have met so many people, maybe you have as well, that have called themselves a Christian maybe even been baptized.

They might even say their a spiritual person but if you were to ask their friends or family or co-workers if they are a Christian you might hear them say, you know I'm really not sure.

Today, I'm starting a new series I'm calling Christian-ish.

What does it mean to be Christian-ish? And if I were to define it, it would be someone who wears the Christian label without truly following Jesus. They are sort of Christian, almost Christian.

And if I can be really honest it's like you have enough of Jesus to make you feel good, but not enough that it transforms your life.

You feel you've done what's necessary but it's to get points, and check off boxes and not because you have relationship. You know the book, but not the Author.

And if you have gotten a little comfortable in your faith I want to push you a bit today.

I believe God wants us to be more effective for His kingdom than ever before.

And so today, we are going to look into what was said to a church.

In Revelation Jesus gave seven different messages to seven different churches.

And one of those Churches was a church in Laodicea. That's where we are going to pick up at, Revelation 3 beginning in verse 15 Jesus said this:

Revelation 3:15–17 (NIV): 15 I know your deeds, that you are neither cold nor hot. I wish you were either one or the other! 16 So, because you are lukewarm—neither hot nor cold—I am about to spit you out of my mouth. 17 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.

Now let me pause here for a moment because this verse can, if you just read it and left it there, seems a bit scary. I mean here Jesus says, I am about to spit you out of my mouth.

I mean honestly, that doesn't sound to encouraging. To loving.

And if you read that not understanding the context it might get you thinking you don't measure up because your not doing enough, working enough, being enough.

And let me just say this before I get to far. It's not about what you do, or not do. It's about what Jesus did. It's His finished work on the cross. Not your work in your daily life. I'm not saying don't live right, act right, or be different, but it's from approval not for approval. It's not to earn God's love it's because of God's love.

Truth is the enemy tells us we don't measure up a lot already. He often comes to us and will tell us that what we do is exactly who we are. (**Give examples**). But Jesus comes to us and tells us it's not who you are it's just something you did.

And listen church there's a big difference between those two. The enemy will shame you and tell you what you did is who you are.

But Scripture tells us. . .

Romans 8:1 (NIV): Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus,

The devil will shame and condemn you, God may convict us yes, because He knows that's not who you are. And he knows you better than that thing you did.

And that verse, I am about to spit you out of my mouth could if you don't understand it get you thinking wrongly about who God is and the love He has for you.

And so I need to spend a little time and give you the imagery of these verses.

First let me start with the last verse we read. . .

Revelation 3:17 (NIV) - 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.

What Jesus is trying to highlight is that despite their material wealth, they were spiritually impoverished because they had not yet embraced their need for Christ. They felt that what they acquired was sufficient. All the wealth that they had was enough.

But what they didn't realize is that they are naked without His righteousness, blind without His mercy, wretched without His grace, and poor without His love.

We read in 2 Corinthians 5. . .

2 Corinthians 5:21 (ESV): For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

And so, your accumulation of stuff might make you feel good, might impress your neighbors, but it will never make you righteous. It's in Him that we move and live and have our being.

It is only by His grace and what Jesus did that we are made right with God.

And then the next verse in Revelation 3. . .

Revelation 3:18 (NIV): 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.

In other words don't think for a moment what you have acquired all there is. You need to receive what I'm offering to be clothed in righteousness. It's when God covers you with His Spirit do we truly live and see.

What Jesus is doing is appealing to them and us to open their hearts and receive His grace so he says. . .

Revelation 3:20 (NIV): 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 that person, and they with me.

These verses are there to help us recognize our need for the true spiritual riches and purpose found only in Christ.

Paul tells us who already believe that we are already have. . look at it

Ephesians 1:3 (NIV): Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ.

Who has blessed us (where) in the heavenly realms with (what) every spiritual blessing in Christ.

Now let me deal with the scary portion of our text.

Revelation 3:15–16 (NIV): 15 I know your deeds, that you are neither cold nor hot. I wish you were either one or the other!
16 So, because you are lukewarm—neither hot nor cold—I am about to spit you out of my mouth.

Jesus says, I'd rather you be hot or cold, but if you are lukewarm, Jesus says, that He's thinking about doing what? Spitting you out.

So, to give you a little context, Laodicea was one of the wealthiest cities in the Roman Empire. And about 35 years prior to this message, the whole region was destroyed by an earthquake.

And instead of asking for help the Laodiceans did something else. . .

On their own, without any help of neighboring cities, the Laodiceans rebuilt the entire city with these lavish theaters and stadiums and public baths and shopping centers and they refused the help to rebuild because they had the resources to do it themselves.

So, they rebuilt and their city was impressive. It was a site to see. Think Las Vegas.

And so when Jesus says to this very wealthy, self-sufficient community, you're lukewarm, that analogy of being lukewarm would've been staggering to them, because with all of their wealth they had one big problem. . .

And the problem was they had a very inadequate water supply.

And in order to get water they had to pipe it in from two different places.

Hierapolis and Colossae.

Show map of area

Remember Jesus said you are neither hot nor cold. Think H for hot that's Hierapolis, C for cold that's Colossae.

Hierapolis is about 6 miles away, Colossae about 10 miles away.

So, from Hierapolis they would actually pipe in hot water, and in Hierapolis the hot water had a purpose.

Those hot springs were famous for its healing element.

And then from Colossae, they would pipe in cold water which also had a purpose and that was for refreshing.

But the problem was, by the time the hot water got all the way to Laodicea, it was no longer hot. And by the time the cold water got all the way to Laodicea, well guess what it was no longer cold as a matter of fact it was. . .lukewarm and often contaminated. And it had no beneficial purpose. It was neither refreshing, cleansing or healing. It was actually sickening and undrinkable.

So when Jesus says, I'm going to spit you out He's talking about their ineffectiveness and lack of impact. The water was neither refreshing or healing to anyone. It was stagnant.

In other words, the gospel isn't effective to transform lives.

The whole idea of this passage is to encourage believers to live out their faith with intention and purpose, and rely on the spiritual riches and righteousness found in Christ.

For those of us who are followers of Jesus we need to express our new identity as a follower of Jesus and live out our purpose in Him.

if we fail to do that, if we are lukewarm in our Christianity the gospel isn't effective to transform lives.

Jesus says, you're not hot, you're not cold, and I have a hard time stomaching that life. I would rather you be refreshing or healing to those around you.

Because the hot water had a purpose. Its purpose was to heal. The cold water had a purpose. Its purpose was to cleanse and refresh.

Jesus was saying, You are not fulfilling your purpose.

1 Peter 4:10–11 (NIV): Each of you should use whatever gift you have received to serve others, as faithful stewards of God's grace in its various forms. 11 If anyone speaks, they should do so as one who speaks the very words of God. If anyone serves, they should do so with the strength God provides, so that in all things God may be praised through Jesus Christ. To him be the glory and the power for ever and ever. Amen.

He's saying church use your gifts as faithful stewards of God's grace. Don't let them become lukewarm and stagnant, but rather be refreshing or healing to those around you.

Christian-ish, suggests a half-hearted, convenient, comfortable commitment to receive the benefits of Jesus without fully surrendering to the call of Jesus.

Ephesians 2:10 (NIV): For we are God's handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.

Hear this church, God has a purpose for your life.

Now let me go back to verse 17. . .

Revelation 3:17 (NIV) - 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.

Maybe you know someone who thinks they don't need anything from God, and their saying, I've got what I need. I'm a good person. No one has the right to tell me how to live. I don't need some outdated, irrelevant religion and book to make me feel better about myself.

And maybe they actually do feel that way until. . .

Until you don't. Until you get a bad medical report. Until your job is eliminated. Until you lose someone close to you.

Or it could be that you have everything you ever wanted. You have that car, as a matter of fact you have 3, you have that six figure income, the boat, a house on the lake and your dream vacation. You've checked off all the boxes. And your doing just fine.

And you get all that ever wanted, but when you look in the mirror you realize, I have what I always want I'm comfortable on the outside, but truth is I'm must be missing something because I still feel so empty on the inside.

And it's then you realize, I'm rich in things, but I'm poor in spirit.

See, until you know Jesus you will be missing something.

Look at verse 17 it says, But you do not realize. Say, I did not realize.

A couple months ago I was preaching right here in this same spot I did the whole message and I did not realize, say pastor did not realize, I didn't realize that my zipper was down.

And maybe you're thinking I'm okay. I'm a spiritual person. I mean, I believe in God. I must be okay, right? And you don't realize that you're spiritually poor, blind and naked, and that your zipper's down.

Christian-ish faith is perhaps the ultimate self-deception. It's enough of Jesus to soothe your conscience, but not enough to make you transformed.

And as I try and wrap up today let me ask a question. And listen I'm not saying lukewarm will keep you out of heaven but it will stop you from having the impact God desires and fully fulfilling the purpose God has for you.

We are called to be a light in this world.

So, let me give you 4 signs that might suggest your lukewarm or just Christian-ish.

Number one, you might be lukewarm if you crave acceptance from people more than acceptance from God.

More than trying to live a life that's truly pleasing to God, you would rather be liked by people.

You just would rather fit in, be popular. You want to belong.

Because let's be honest it's easier to go along with the crowd, to fit in, than to stand out by doing something that Jesus calls you to do that's different from those around you.

And church, the truth is not everyone is going to like you when you stand up for Jesus.

But what I want you to understand is that He, Jesus, stands up for us. He is faithful when we are not.

1 John 2:1 (NLT): My dear children, I am writing this to you so that you will not sin. But if anyone does sin, we have an advocate who pleads our case before the Father. He is Jesus Christ, the one who is truly righteous.

Talk about that Scripture

And then in Hebrews we read. . . ,

Hebrews 7:25 (NIV): Therefore he is able to save completely those who come to God through him, because he always lives to intercede for them.

Number two, you may be lukewarm if you rationalize sin.

If there's sin in your life, there's something in your life that is displeasing to God, and you just kind of explain it away thinking, It's no big deal, everyone else is doing it anyway.

And I'm not talking about if we simple make a mistake remember what we just read in 1 John. . .

1 John 2:1 (NLT): My dear children, I am writing this to you so that you will not sin. But if anyone does sin, we have an advocate who pleads our case before the Father. He is Jesus Christ, the one who is truly righteous.

I'm talking about knowingly and not caring and just keep on doing.

And the truth is we live in a culture right now that Isaiah talked about. . .

Isaiah 5:20 (NIV): Woe to those who call evil good and good evil, who put darkness for light and light for darkness, who put bitter for sweet and sweet for bitter.

We have so many today calling evil good and good evil. But we are called to be different Scripture tells us. . .

Romans 12:2 (NLT): Don't copy the behavior and customs of this world, but let God transform you into a new person by changing the way you think. Then you will learn to know God's will for you, which is good and pleasing and perfect.

The third thing is this, you only turn to God when you need something.

He's more like the 911 operator than your Heavenly Father.

Instead of seeking him daily and letting His Spirit guide you, and His Word build your faith and renew your mind, you call on him when you're in trouble. He's something that we use instead of a God that we worship.

And lastly, you may be lukewarm, and it's a close cousin to the last one, and it's if you're not much different from this world.

You call yourself a Christian, but you talk like you're not. You gossip just like everybody else at work, you cuss, you just don't care what you're doing may be dishonoring to God.

You claim Jesus, but your actions say something else.

And listen if this message was a bit convicting, I want you to hear this.

I didn't preach this message today to make you feel shame or anything remotely like that and I want you to know God isn't mad because you haven't done everything perfectly.

And when Jesus spoke what He did to the church in Laodicea He wasn't angry with them either.

He wasn't trying to shame them, He wasn't trying to make them feel guilty. We know there is no condemnation for those of us in Christ Jesus

He was actually loving them, look what Jesus said. . .

Revelation 3:19 (NLT): I correct and discipline everyone I love. So be diligent and turn from your indifference.

Jesus is saying, I'm not angry. I correct and I discipline everyone I love.

As a parent when I had to correct or discipline one of my kids because of something they did. It wasn't out of anger but out of love.

Let me give you an example: I didn't when my kids would run out in the middle of street yell them for doing it. No I would run after them to get their attention so I could stop them from running in the middle of the road so that they wouldn't get hit by on coming traffic. That's correction not anger.

And Jesus loves us too much to have us continue to do things they may not be beneficial for your purpose and destiny that He has called you too. He wants to change our thinking so that we can walk in our new identity as a follower of Jesus. And impact the world around us for His Kingdom.

So, Jesus tells us what to do. He says, Be diligent and turn from your indifference.

That word indifference is striking to me, because if there's one word that captures where a lot of Christian people would be, when it comes to the things of God, they're just indifferent.

Take it if it helps, leave it if it doesn't. Call on Jesus when I need Him and live comfortably when I don't.

Stand by the Word when everyone is on board, compromise when everyone is against me.

(Talk about mom and doctor)

So how do you turn? How do you be diligent and turn? How do you grow from being just Christian-ish?

And listen church, I said this before but it bears repeating, that was me I was just Christian-ish.

And if you find yourself there, what do you do?

I'm just going to keep it simple.

Truth is, If I would have preached this message 30 years ago I probably would have told you to pray for at least a half hour every day, read God's Word daily, and gave you a bucket load of stuff to do. I may have told you just do better, try harder, perform.

And listen, we should pray, God loves hearing from His children. Amen. We should read the Word so we can know what God said and is still saying.

Honestly, you should do those things because they are beneficial to our spiritual journey.

But ultimately it's not about our performance and what we do. It's about what He did.

And I'm not going to give you a long to do list. I want to give you one thing that If you want to grow out of your Christian-ish complacency, and truly be a devoted follower of Jesus, here's what you do. . .Ready? Do something every day that requires faith.

Do something every day that requires you to trust in Jesus.

For you, it might be to do what's right, even if your friends make fun of you, or it might be for you to worship God when you don't feel like He's even near, but by faith you worship him anyway.

It might be to invite someone to church, or share your testimony.

It might be to pray and ask God to do something that seems completely impossible. And in case your wondering Scripture tells us that with God nothing is impossible.

Every day do something that requires faith. And if you do something that requires faith, you won't be Christian-ish too longer.

When you see God show up because you take Him at His Word and trust that He can. It does something in your spirit.

Your faith will begin to grow because you're serving people and you're glorifying God.

And when you're doing something that requires faith, when you're depending on God, suddenly, you're not concerned with what people think. You're more concerned with what God thinks.

And you're living simply to glorify Him.

And you're empowered by the Holy Spirit to do the will of God. To live the life He desires you to live.

And instead of hiding your faith, you're bold in your faith, you're sharing the truth of who Jesus is and what He's done. Your praying for the waitress at the restaurant, or the man on the street corner.

And you don't turn to God only when you need something, but you go to Him because of who He is and not just for what He can do.

You're different, and people know it, they see it.

And some will criticize you for it. True. But others will respect it and be drawn to it.

You're not Christian-ish. You're dead to yourself and alive in Christ.

As a follower of Jesus, we're not going to settle for a faith that looks the part but lacks the power. We're going to refuse to live for a faith that feels safe.

And so Jesus finished his message to those in the church at Laodicea with this. . .

Revelation 3:20 (ESV): Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and eat with him, and he with me.

The word in Greek for knock is a word that means continuous. He keeps knocking and knocking and knocking waiting for you and me to open to respond.

And He's inviting us to eat with Him and be a people that is refreshing and healing to those around us.

Prayer