

Room for Jesus ~ A Mutiny

Revelation 3:14-22

You see in your bulletins that we begin 2017 where we left off in 2016 – with Room for Jesus. We will return next week to the Book of Acts and Paul standing before King Agrippa and his boarding a ship for Rome. But this message today is to set our hearts straight as we look forward to a new year.

Is Christ dwelling in our hearts by faith? Or is He, as Revelation 3 tells us, standing outside the doors of the church, knocking and seeking entrance?

It is one of the saddest pictures – and yet we see it all the time: people living without Christ. Can we even call it living? No wonder the world mocks the church when we have no real presence of Christ with us! They see through that, don't they? Here we are recommending an absent Savior! A Redeemer with no power or presence in our lives! A throne with no King in it! Is it then any wonder that we start sounding like the dark world around us – we start saying that everyone's okay, everyone is fine – no real need for Jesus! But are we? Is our world fine? Are we not dying men in a dark world, facing a judgment to come?

When we see ourselves properly, broken by sin, limbs missing, impoverished, weak, helpless; dead even, in sin – then the real Jesus of the Bible and the peace of His gospel becomes real to us. Our warfare is not between ourselves. How many of us regularly think this way: “my life would be just so complete if everyone else would

change!” Our warfare is right here [point to your heart], and it is not with one another [point to the audience] as much as it is with our Lord, our God [point to the skies].

Jesus came to bring real peace, everlasting peace, peace on earth. This peace has an “already” and a “not yet” quality about it. The full effect of Jesus as our peace awaits a new heavens and a new earth, when our world, the good creation now fallen beneath a curse, will be released into the liberty of God’s children. The earth groans for that. But this is already in the hearts of those who welcome Christ in; who truly embrace Him as their salvation, as their full remedy of sin. Christians are to have a peace that passes understanding here and now.

Why don’t we have that peace? Is it because Christ is not in us? That is the point of our message today from Revelation 3.

This is part of the awesome theme we have been exploring – that Christ has come into the world, of sinful, broken men, taken our flesh, in order to dwell in us, in our very hearts. In our sinfulness, we have no room for Jesus. But in salvation, Jesus enters and makes us His own. We saw the necessity and the nature of this wonderful indwelling – Christ in us, the hope of glory. Room for Jesus is a Must, and Room for Jesus is the most Magnificent reality of our lives, that God would make us His temple to dwell in. Then we considered on Christmas morning the fruit of His being in our hearts – how can anything remain the same when He dwells in us? We saw Room for Jesus is a Manifesto, a constitution, in our lives.

Today we turn from the delights of His inhabiting us to the dangers of leaving Him outdoors. Here is a church – Christ’s church, the

Laodicean Church, but Jesus is not indoors, but outdoors, and is knocking to gain entrance. Why? Because there has been a **mutiny**, an overthrow of Jesus amongst His people.

What is left of the so-called Christian without Him? See in this 7th and final church that having the name “church” or “Christian” cannot save you! Having a mere name is not the same as having the Savior Himself! And if those who have a Christian profession, who say they have Christ with them, are not saved, then where will the ungodly come in?

So let us go to a different church today than the one I hope Jesus finds here in Westminster – let us go to church in Laodicea and learn from her. For this is given, not just for them, but for us.

This city was dressed, like us, in the robes of power, wealth, and health. She had stood with Rome when others defected, and when Rome rose to power, Laodicea did as well. She was wealthy – the banking center of that region. She was well-known for her wool industry, producing a raven-black wool unique to their city. She was also the medical center there 100 miles east of Ephesus. Especially known for what was called “Phrygian Powder” – a compound to treat eye-diseases.

Her disadvantages were earthquakes and a poor water supply. Yet, when the city was demolished in 60 AD, Rome’s offer of help to rebuild her was refused: the wealthy people replied, “We have need of nothing!” But she did need water, and instead of seeking an canal from nearby Colossae – known for crystal clear and cold springs to the east – they built one to connect with Hieropolis to the north, famed

rather for their hot springs. Drinking this sulphuric water would make you vomit. So their fresh water supply from that region was lukewarm at best, and unhealthy at worst.

But it was here, according to Colossians 4, that Epaphras and others planted and nurtured a church. Living waters were brought to her. But as is clear from Revelation, over the years the church had taken on the features of her culture; as she said ‘no need’ to Caesar, so the church now says, ‘no need’ to the Savior. And instead of Christ dwelling within, He is found outside His own people.

So here is what keeps Jesus out of the heart of men – complacency, self-satisfaction, an improper enjoyment of the world and one’s self in it. Notice that they are not marked by any particularly foul thing like Jezebel living there, no Nicolaitan error. Yet they are empty, hollow, lukewarm. Their circumstances made for this condition; their prosperity was like a smooth pillow as they carelessly slept and slipped from their Savior. This self-confidence fed indifference and then an irreverence to the riches of the Word of God.

Neither hot or cold probably refers to two good things – cool springs or hot springs. Jesus is certainly not saying He would rather we be cold to Him! They are neither zealous for what they, like Paul, should be willing to die for, nor cooled, refreshed by springs of grace and peace flowing to our souls. Having Christ is a call to the highest service and sacrifice for things above; but complacency, self-indulgence, self-contentment, rules us, and becomes a blinding, deceiving state of mind. We don’t see our own poverty and misery and shame. No! in fact, we transform it into our riches and glory!

And what are the riches and glory of man? Is it not Christ **in** doors? Christ **in** you, the hope of glory! No Christ ~ no Glory! If you do not have Him, you do not have glory, whatever else you may have besides!

These things form the locks on the doors of our hearts – the bolts against Christ coming in to our hearts. What are they in particular? Let us for the remainder of our time consider them. And most importantly, have we left Christ outside? Are we beginning this new calendar year without Him, again? Is the door of our heart opened to Him, or are we keeping Him away?

Where do we begin? **First**, not believing His assessment of our poverty, of our lost estate. See the significant title that He takes to Himself: He is the faithful and true witness. Jesus sees not as we see. He is the very truth, the Amen; and He is so as the Lord of all, the beginning, or better, the ruler of the creation of God. We believe our assessment of ourselves, and we reject His clear, accurate and authoritative diagnosis. Man in the flesh is notorious for minimizing his sins, and maximizing his achievements.

And what are our deeds? **Secondly**, we boast in our self-confidence, that we are the toast of heaven, when we actually are ready to be spewed out of Christ's mouth! Our righteousnesses we pile high, but it is so much wood, hay and stubble. The Lord calls them "filthy rags" when we choose our works next to His perfect redemption for us. See how we refuse a negative assessment of what we do as being somehow harsh, or mean-spirited, contrary to the pampering we give ourselves. And yet Jesus insists that such reproof, such rebuke, such discipline, is of love, and not hate, not disdain.

When our doctor has to hurt us to heal us, do we say to him, ‘You hate me?’ When our dentist drills on our teeth, is it some kind of a meanness about him? Of course not. Jesus is the Good Physician, and it is out of love for holiness and for us that He will rub and scrub you hard to remove sin from your life. And He does so especially to those sins which we believe are most important to us.

So, we don’t hear Him, we don’t trust Him, and **Third**, we don’t hope in Him as our reward. Jesus lovingly calls us to a higher throne than what our hands can make; a greater victory than what Rome or all nations could assemble; to put on a righteousness not our own, a life not our own, an armor not our own, fruit not our own, to attain a crown not our own – yet it is our own, since it has been given freely to the truth believer by the sovereign hand of grace! Verse 21

Until we repent, until we are changed, and until we welcome Christ in, we are doomed. This is why the Bible says: “Examine yourselves, whether you be in the faith; prove your own selves. Do you not know your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you, except you be reprobates?” That is, unless indeed you fail the test? (2Co 13:5 KJV)

Turning now to the positive, to the opening of the door to Him, Revelation 3:20 calls us to three things: look, listen, open.

Look – *Behold*, literally, see for yourself – Jesus has come, He has come into the world to save sinners like you, like me; to be the good physician to heal and bring peace. But it is not enough to see this; you must next

Listen – hear His voice who speaks as no man ever spoke, the very Word of God Incarnate! The Wisdom of God! The Light of the World!

And He speaks to you that you might hear; He comes to your door, your heart, and would find entrance. His knock and His voice are one, saying, “any one home?” That knock you hear tells you you are not alone! Help has come! But to listen is not enough, for you must

Open – arise now, says the text, and open, act upon this call! Open your heart to Him – come to Him now – give Him the keys of your heart – go to Him and say ‘I am tired of running my life, my heart, by myself – how I need Jesus!’ Turn from your ways, your control, your self-trust, and turn to Him who has come for you.

That’s what we must do to reverse our muting from Him. And what will He do then? What will happen? Read it for yourself: “And I will come in to him!” – not, I **might** come in, or, I will come in only to my elect, or I will come in for a season but leave you again?

No – this is a body which had become estranged from the Lord they professed; these are unbelievers in the church; and that is why, by the way, this passage should be used for unbelievers in the world – Jesus has this free offer for those who are near as well as those who are far off!

And what more is to be found here, for Jesus doesn’t stop with merely entering in. What kind of fellowship will follow? Why, there’s eating, dining, supping! Jesus comes with chopsticks! He with me! And I with Him!

Think of it as one old and faithful writer put it, that when Christ comes into a soul, He does so in this manner – as a friend, a husband, a King, a conqueror, with inestimable glory, as the possessor of our souls. All of this is couched in richest love, mercy, kindness, and grace.

Jesus is not only our Host and our Table and Chair, He is our banquet, our food, our drink, our joy, our peace, our all in all.

And the more we welcome Him – that is, the more we act true faith toward Him, saying, “Come, Lord Jesus, welcome” – the more we will enjoy this fellowship – a fellowship with no end, a fellowship with no disappointments, a fellowship that will never grow stale or dull.

Now doesn't this sound wonderful? Doesn't this thrill your heart? Why then do believers not have more of His presence as they walk day by day? Why is it that our culture seems to get the best of us and make us lukewarm? Is Christ weak? Is He incapable of giving us peace?

We know the answer to this, don't we? Jesus told us that in the world we will have tribulation. But we are to be of good cheer, for He has overcome the world. Greater is He that is in us than He that is in the world. Why then are we overcome? Why are we not of good cheer, but depressed, or angry, or living for the flesh? Is it not because Jesus is outdoors, and we are not willing to suffer for Him, to sacrifice for Him – who sacrificed all for us?

How many have said, ‘I tried Jesus, but He didn't work.’ So, either God is a liar, or man wants to be saved his own way, and he winds up falling on his own face. I think we know the answer to that one.

The Prince of peace speaks of real and everlasting joy, comforts that are glorious, peace that passes understanding. All must be well for those who hide beneath His wings. But maybe we are not hiding there, and it shows.

There is an old saying: “Heaven must enter you before you can ever enter heaven!” Jesus is heaven for us; He is the way, the truth, and the life – no man comes to the Father but by Him. If He enters you, you must one day hear Him say to you: “Well done, good and faithful servant – enter into the joy of your Lord!”

But if heaven enters you now, then must hell and the devil’s ways be put out? Absolutely! If Jesus dwells in you, He casts out the wicked one’s dominion in your life. God puts enmity between us and our old ways. And that is a very good thing.

In what way will Jesus fill you in the coming year? Where must you welcome Him more fully, more deeply, more completely? Where must the world, the flesh, and the devil be shown the door in your life as Jesus comes in? Let us act faith, swing wide open the doors of our hearts to Jesus in prayer and praise, and expect great things of Christ in the coming months. Amen? Let him who has ears hear what the Spirit is saying. Amen.