

Main Idea: In the letter to the Laodiceans in Revelation 3:14-22, the Lord extends an amazing offer to a lukewarm church. It’s a letter that reminds us that it’s all about Christ. There are four parts to the letter that we’ll consider together this morning.

- I. The Lord’s description (14)
- II. The Lord’s assessment (15-16)
 - A. He says the Laodiceans were deluded (15).
 - B. He says the Laodiceans were in danger (16).
- III. The Lord’s counsel (17-19)
 - A. Jesus confronted their error (17).
 1. They thought they were spiritual kings.
 2. He knew they were spiritual peasants.
 - B. Jesus called them to change (18).
 1. True change is possible.
 2. True change comes only from Jesus.
 3. True change is a two-step process.
 - C. Jesus clarified the issues (19).
 1. He chastens those He loves.
 2. Those who love Him will change.
- IV. The Lord’s invitation (20-22)
 - A. We must be gripped by who He is.
 1. He is righteous.
 2. He is near (20a).
 3. He is generous (20b-21).
 - B. We must be gripped by what He desires.
 1. We must prize Him (20).
 2. We must live for Him (21).

Make It Personal: Like the Laodiceans, we can respond to Christ’s gracious offer and open the door to Him, or we can ignore His offer and keep right on living without Him being the object of it all.

This is Father’s Day, and there’s not a more fitting subject for fathers to consider (or anyone else) than this one. *Christ: the object of it all.*

Christ is the object of it all, and as such, deserves to be the object of our love and affection and devotion and trust and resolve and everything else. That’s the title of our new summer series, and the purpose of it.

In this series (which I anticipate will take us through September 1), we’ll be looking at *verbs*. Sound exciting? It is. We want to look carefully at the *verbs* that the New Testament uses where Christ is the object, then do an exposition of those key passages, and learn from them how to make Christ the object of our lives.

And where do we begin? By hearing Jesus Himself give us an amazing invitation.
Scripture Reading: Revelation 3:14-22

What’s the purpose of a garage? Seriously, what is its purpose? A garage is a place designed to keep your car, isn’t it? I checked the dictionary and that’s what it said:

“Garage: a shelter or repair shop for automotive vehicles.”²

I checked because if your garage is like mine, it ends up being home to a lot of other stuff besides the car—like paint cans, rakes, the lawn mower, garbage cans, stacks of wood, cases of water, the grill, and so on. In fact, there’s been more than a time or two when our garage had collected so much other paraphernalia that the car couldn’t even fit

^{**}Note: This is an unedited manuscript of a message preached at Wheelersburg Baptist Church. It is provided to prompt your continued reflection on the practical truths of the Word of God.

¹ For a previous look at this passage, see the message at WBC on 9/27/09.

² <http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/garage>

inside! Now that's a problem, when the place designed as a shelter for your car doesn't have room to house your car! And when that happens, it's time to do some de-cluttering.

Garages aren't the only collectors of clutter. About fifteen years ago I was doing some reflecting on my Christian life, trying to figure out why I was feeling kind of stale, and it dawned on me that I had accumulated a lot of Christian "stuff" over the years. Not bad stuff, just *stuff*. I had my Bible, my church activities, my stack of audio sermons, a pile of Christian books, some music CDs, plans for Christian service opportunities, and on and on. And then a phrase came to mind, a simple phrase.

It's all about Christ. It dawned on me, oh yea, that's what the Christian life is all about, or at least, it's supposed to be. *It's all about Christ.*

I took out a piece of paper and started writing down a list of activities that came to mind that the Bible mentions that have Christ as their object. And the list grew and grew with activity and reference, activity and reference, until I had to turn the page over to continue. Here's a sample of what my list contained...

Knowing Christ—Philippians 3:10-11
Pleasing Christ—2 Cor. 5:9
Abiding in Christ—John 15:4-5
Resembling Christ—Romans 8:29
Sharing Christ—Acts 1:8
Listening to Christ—John 10:27
Giving a cup of water to Christ—Matt. 25:40
Remembering Christ—1 Cor. 11:24
Worshipping Christ—Phil. 3:3
Anticipating seeing Christ—Titus 2:13; John 14:1-4
Presenting others complete in Christ—Col. 1:28
Loving Christ—1 Pet. 1:8
Preaching Christ—2 Cor. 4:5
Making every thought captive to Christ—2 Cor. 10:4-5
Triumphing in Christ—2 Cor. 2:14
Denying ourselves for Christ—Luke 9:23
Hating family for Christ—Luke 14:26
Praying through Christ—Heb. 4:16
Obeying Christ—Matt. 28:20
Singing for Christ—Eph. 5:18-20
Submitting to one another for Christ—Eph. 5:21
Doing your job for Christ—Titus 2:9-10; Col. 3:23-24; 4:1
Obeying parents for Christ—Eph. 6:1
Raising children for Christ—Eph. 6:4

It was one of those "aha" moments, you know, like when you realize your car really does belong in the garage, that you used to keep it there and you could put it back in there if you would just take some time to de-clutter the place.

I realized it was time to do some de-cluttering. So we engaged in a series we called, "*It's All about Christ.*" We picked four of the activities from my list, and four texts, and asked the Spirit to use those messages to clear out the clutter and put Christ where He belongs in our lives.

But now it's time to do the same once again, and go even deeper, and broader, with twelve key texts this summer. Here's what's coming, the Lord willing...

June 23 Galatians 2:20
June 30 Luke 14:25-35

Finding Our Identity in Christ
Following Christ and Hating Family for Christ

July 7	Philippians 3:7-11	Knowing Christ
July 14	John 15:1-4	Abiding in Christ
July 21	Colossians 1:24-29	Suffering with and for Christ
July 28	Romans 8:28-29	Resembling Christ
Aug 4	1 Peter 2:21-25	Walking in the Steps of Christ
Aug 11	1 Cor. 11:23-26	Remembering Christ
Aug 18	John 21:15-19	Loving Christ
Aug 25	Hebrews 12:1-3	Running with Our Eyes on Christ
Sept 1	2 Timothy 4:6-8	Longing to See Christ

And we're going to begin our series right here in Revelation 3:14-22, with a message called "*Opening the Door to Christ.*"

In this passage, the Lord extends an amazing offer to a lukewarm church in Laodicea. He tells them 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." That verse is often used as an invitation for the unsaved to come to Christ, but in context, it's an invitation given to a church, and specifically, to the individual members of that church, calling on them to open the door to Christ.

Why would Christ say that, and say it to a *church*, and again specifically, say it to people who called themselves Christians? What offer was He making to them, and by application, *to us*? To answer that, we need to examine the whole letter, a letter that in short reminds us that *Christ indeed is the object of it all*. There are four parts to the letter.

I. The Lord's description (14)

Notice Revelation 3:14, "And to the angel of the church in Laodicea write: 'The words of the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the beginning of God's creation.'"

Laodicea has the stigma of being the only of the seven churches about which Jesus had nothing good to say. Yet, as in the previous six letters, Jesus begins with a description, not of the church, but of Himself. Only when we begin to see Him as He is, will we see ourselves as we are.

First, He says He is "the Amen." That's an interesting title. Literally, He says, "The Amen is saying these things." In Isaiah 65:16, God is called the God of truth, but in the Hebrew, He is called the "God of amen."³ The word "amen" means "true" (in the Gospels when Jesus said, "Verily, verily," He used the word "amen"). In a moment, Jesus is going to tell the Laodicean church the truth about its spiritual condition. Here He reminds them Who He is, the Amen, the truth, the One on whose words we can rely.

Next, He refers to Himself as "the faithful and true witness." The Greek word translated "witness" is "*martus*" from which we get our English word "martyr." Jesus is the faithful and true witness. He sees us. He knows us. His estimation of us is totally accurate. He is One who will be absolutely honest with us.

Then He describes Himself as "the ruler of God's creation" (NIV). The ESV and KJV say, "He is the beginning of the creation of God." Don't misread this statement. It does not mean that Jesus was the first created being, but that He was the source of all of God's creation. He is the One who began the creative work of God. We read in Colossians 1:15-16, "He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. For by him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things were created by him and for him."

³ Barclay, 140

A young pastor once asked Warren Wiersbe, "Why is it that new Christians create problems in the church?" Wiersbe replied, "They don't create problems. They reveal them. The problems have always been there, but we've gotten used to them."⁴

So it was in Laodicea. They had become used to their problems, perhaps as we have. But Jesus is about to reveal a severe diagnosis. His credentials gave Him the right.

II. The Lord's assessment (15-16)

The Laodicean church was located in a city that had several notable traits. Laodicea was a very wealthy city. The city's banking assets are verified by the fact that Cicero cashed huge bank drafts in Laodicea.⁵ So wealthy was the city that after a great earthquake destroyed it (in A.D. 17), the people refused any government aid from the Roman Emperor. They insisted on rebuilding the city at their own expense.

Laodicea was also renowned for having a school of medicine. It was known for manufacturing a special eye ointment called "Phrygian powder" which was famous for curing eye defects. Keep this in mind when we read Jesus' critique of their spiritual, eye problems in verse 18. There was a large population of Jews in Laodicea (Barclay estimates at least 7,500 male Jews).

What was the condition of the church at Laodicea? There is no mention of heresy affecting the church. No mention of persecution. No mention of internal squabbles. But the Master Counselor looked past the facade and confronted two issues.

A. He says the Laodiceans were deluded (15). The Laodicean church had a high evaluation of itself. The members prided themselves on being very "spiritual." Were they? You decide after listening to what Jesus told them in verse 15, "I know your works: you are neither cold nor hot. Would that you were either cold or hot!" In the NIV, "I wish you were either one or the other!"

That's a sober assessment. What does Jesus think of a church that has lots of money, quality programs, and attractive ministries? Friends, those are peripheral matters. Jesus' indictment against this church is that they weren't hot or cold, but rather lukewarm.

The word "hot" [Greek *zestos*, from the verb "to boil"] means boiling hot, and the word cold [Greek *psuchros*] means cold to the point of freezing. Think about it. Food right out of the oven is good, and food out of the freezer is useful, but leave a plate of meat and potatoes on the table for ten hours, and what do you have? Something that will turn your stomach.

We need to understand another feature of the city to appreciate this figure of speech. If Laodicea had one major problem as a city, it was its water supply. They had to pipe their water from springs six miles away by means of an underground aqueduct. The city of Colossae, less than ten miles away, had useful, cool water. The Hierapolis to the north boasted of hot springs. But Laodicea had horrid water that was so insipid that it turned the stomach. It's as if Jesus says, "Such is the Christianity I see in Laodicea."

Spiritually speaking, the church wasn't hot or cold, but complacent, downright *indifferent*. Oh, the profession was there, and the church activity, but the lack of zeal revealed that Christ was not the object of it all. The church was deluded.

B. He says the Laodiceans were in danger (16). "So, because you are lukewarm, and neither hot nor cold, I will spit you out of my mouth." Notice the "since/then" structure. Since this is true, then this will follow. The word "spit" is rather polite. The term means *vomit*.

⁴ Wiersbe, p. 579.

⁵ Johnson, 456

Friends, the Lord hates lukewarmness and will not tolerate it. Whereas He confronted the Ephesian church for too much zeal and too little love, He chastened the Laodiceans for their lack of zeal. "If you don't change, I'll heave you out of My mouth!"

Lehman Strauss had this to say, "The condition of the Laodicean church was nauseating to the Saviour. They were straddlers, fence-sitters, middle-of-the-roaders. Any attitude is better than that of being tepid. A church that is neither enthusiastic nor antagonistic is most difficult to deal with. Half-heartedness will paralyze any effort."⁶

It's been said, "The road to the cross has always been easier for the publican than for the Pharisee."⁷ How true.

John Stott offers this perspective, "The Laodicean church was a halfhearted church. Perhaps none of the seven letters is more appropriate to the twentieth-century church than this. It describes vividly the respectable, sentimental, nominal, skin-deep religiosity which is so widespread among us today. Our Christianity is flabby and anemic. We appear to have taken a lukewarm bath of religion."⁸

There's the Lord's assessment. The Laodicean church members were in danger but didn't even realize it because they were deluded. How do you help people like this?

III. The Lord's counsel (17-19)

To help the Laodicean church, Jesus spells out three issues for them.

A. Jesus confronted their error (17). And what was their error? To put it bluntly, their claims didn't match reality. They made three claims in verse 17, "For **you say**, I am rich, I have prospered, and I need nothing."

These were self-satisfied church-goers. They didn't claim to be perfect, but they did claim to be a *good* church.

They didn't have church buildings yet, let alone church signs. But if they had a sign, what do you think it said?

"Come to our church. We have quality programs, inspiring music, practical teaching, wonderful fellowship dinners, comfortable seats, the best money can buy. And a ten year master plan that's cutting edge. We haven't missed a thing."

1. *They thought they were spiritual kings.* Were they really? No. And it's not that their self-assessment was a little off either. Their estimation was *completely* wrong. And Jesus nailed it.

2. *He knew they were spiritual peasants.* Verse 17 again (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."

In contrast with their three erroneous claims, Jesus laid on the table five indictments. Here's what you really are. *Wretched* (the word means 'miserable, distressed, pathetic;' it's the word Paul used of himself in Rom 7:24, "Oh, wretched man that I am"). *Pitiable* (NIV *pitiful*, meaning "miserable"). *Poor* (meaning "of little value, destitute; beggarly; one who crouches like a beggar"). *Blind* (someone who can't see; can refer to physical blindness and spiritual blindness). And *naked* (can mean "without clothing" or "poorly clothed").

Talk about setting the record straight! These church members made brash claims, and were quite confident about their spirituality (and defensive too). They saw themselves as spiritual royalty, but they were just the opposite, *spiritual peasants*.

⁶ Lehman Strauss, p. 96-97.

⁷ Beasley-Murray, p. 105.

⁸ John Stott, *What Christ Thinks of the Church*, p. 116.

Brothers and sisters, this is what Jesus thinks of the *nominal* Christian, the person who claims something he doesn't really live. Such a person is a naked, blind beggar.

Stott comments, "He is a beggar because he has nothing with which to purchase his forgiveness or an entry into the Kingdom of God. He is naked because he has no clothes to fit him to stand before God. He is blind because he has no idea either of his spiritual poverty or of his spiritual danger."⁹

Remember, friends, Jesus is not talking about the condition of a person who never darkens the door of a church. He's indicting church members who are convinced they are good church members.

One of the great mission fields in the world is *inside* church buildings.

How do you help a person like that, a person who has an inflated, faulty view of their spirituality? Here's how Jesus does it. First, by confronting their error.

B. Jesus called them to change (18). "I counsel you to buy from me gold refined by fire, so that you may be rich, and white garments so that you may clothe yourself and the shame of your nakedness may not be seen, and salve to anoint your eyes, so that you may see."

I see amazing hope in this verse. The church at Laodicea had *glaring* problems, but Jesus hadn't thrown in the towel on them. He counseled them to change. That's remarkable. As the Sovereign Lord, He could *command* them to change. He has the right to issue such orders. But instead, He offers advice. He doesn't force obedience but puts forward counsel designed to produce such obedience.

Look carefully. In verse 18, we learn three lessons about change.

1. *True change is possible.* How do we know? Because God doesn't tell us to do something without also providing the power to do it. Jesus told the church, "Yes, you are poor and blind, but I counsel you to buy real gold and anoint your eyes with salve." The implication? You can change if you want to! You don't have to remain the way you are.

2. *True change comes only from Jesus.* Fix your attention on those key words in verse 18, "I counsel you to buy FROM ME gold." What the Laodiceans needed was available to them only from one source. "What you need you'll get *from Me*," Jesus said.

It's tragic for me, as a pastor, to watch where people who are in trouble turn for help. Far too often they try everything *besides* the One who truly can help.

Jesus says, "Buy FROM ME." He's not talking about paying for salvation. He's using a figure of speech with which these readers could identify. He's saying, "You think you're rich, but what you have is like fool's gold. What you need, I alone can offer. And I do offer it to you! Get the real thing! Buy real gold *from Me*."

Dear friend, Jesus offers us the same today. If you are weary of the consequences of living a lukewarm life, if you are tired of putting on a front and pretending to be something you're not, Jesus offers you precisely what you need this very moment. Will you come to Him and obtain the gold He alone possesses? A third lesson...

3. *True change is a two-step process.* This is so critical. Jesus called the church to take two steps, for it takes both if change is to be lasting. They needed to *reject* and then *replace*, to reject the old and then *replace* the old with something new.

True change requires both. Jesus told the Laodiceans to get rid of their fool's gold self-righteousness. This is where change begins. We must forsake the idols we've been worshipping, like our own reputation. And then, we must come to Jesus for the pure gold of His righteousness.

⁹ Stott, p. 119.

These church members needed to be honest about what they had, and about what they needed. What they had (a pseudo-spirituality) needed to go. What they lacked (true spirituality), they needed to obtain by turning to Jesus.

Reject, then replace. Friends, it's not enough this morning merely to acknowledge we've been playing games. Living rooms are full of people on Sundays mornings who, if asked why they don't go to church would reply, "I don't want to be a hypocrite and pretend I'm something I'm not." Absolutely, it's good that you don't go to church for the wrong reasons, but the solution isn't to ignore Christ and His church. Reject the old, yes. Get rid of hypocrisy. But then replace it. Come to Christ. Receive the treasure that He alone offers.¹⁰

But there's one more piece of counsel. First Jesus confronted the error. Then He called on them to change.

C. Jesus clarified the issues (19). "Those whom I love, I reprove and discipline, so be zealous and repent." Let's not miss this.

1. *He chastens those He loves.* There is no contradiction between true love and discipline. In fact, the opposite is true. Failure to reprimand indicates a lack of true love.

If I as a parent see my child wander off to play by the busy street, and I tell myself, "Oh, if I raise my voice, I might hurt little Johnny's feelings," that's not love. True love chastens (Heb 12:5-7). True love takes action to help those under our care by confronting sin. The Lord chastens those He loves. Consequently...

2. *Those who love Him will change.* How would a true child of God respond if he received this letter from Jesus, a letter which told him, "You're playing games, and I know it. Your life is filled with clutter and it's time to clean out the garage."? When a person who loves Jesus hears those words (and that's what a true Christian is), that person *will get serious about changing*. Why? Because He knows that Christ is the object of it all.

How could we hear the One who died for us, the One who took our place on the cross, the One who endured the hell we were facing, how could we hear the counsel of that loving Savior, and refuse to heed His counsel?

And what is it that He wants from us, bottom line? He tells us in one of the most breathtaking verses in the Bible. Verse 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 him, and he with me."

IV. The Lord's invitation (20-22)

Allow me to make a preliminary observation about this invitation. Christ is not speaking to the non-churched person here, not primarily. This invitation isn't for the *ordinary* unsaved person, and by ordinary I'm referring to those outside the church. Typically, the unsaved don't flock to church but stay away from it. Typically. But there are unsaved people in churches. There are unsaved people who are *members* of churches.

Who does Jesus have in mind in this invitation? I think He's addressing two types of church members, both of whom are deluded. First, He seems to have in mind the churchgoer who thinks he is a Christian, but isn't.

And secondly, He may well be addressing churchgoers who truly know Him who are likewise deluded, for they think they're doing fine spiritually, when they're not.

Jesus is speaking to people who are *lukewarm* (16), whose spiritual condition makes Him *nauseous* (16b). He has in mind individuals who make bold claims about their

¹⁰ Paul gives similar counsel in Ephesians 4:22-24.

spirituality, like “I am rich; I have acquired wealth and do not need a thing (17),” but the truth is they are spiritually bankrupt (in Jesus’ words in 17b, “you are wretched, pitiful, poor, blind, and naked”).

This invitation is for people, then and now, who have made a profession of faith in Christ. But a mere profession doesn't save a person. Praying a prayer doesn't save a person. Only Christ does. Walking an isle doesn't save a person. Only genuine faith in Christ does. Being baptized and having your name on a church membership list doesn't save a person. Only a genuine relationship with Christ can save a person.

That's why Christ says in verse 18, “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, stop trusting in your *fool's gold spirituality*, and come to Me for *the real thing*.

Now let's look at two particulars regarding this invitation.

A. We must be gripped by who He is. What is true of Christ? Notice three traits.

1. *He is righteous.* In verse 16, Christ says He is about to spit out of His mouth the church members in Laodicea. Why? Because He is righteous, and they were not. What did they need to do? In verse 19 He told them, “Be zealous, and repent.” In other words, stop playing the religious game.

2. *He is near (20a).* Where is Christ right now? “Here I am,” He says. He is near. How near? Very near.

And what is He doing? The next statement in verse 20 is mind-boggling. “I stand at the door and knock.” The righteous Lord is pleading with unrighteous people.

Sometimes people will say, “I found the Lord at such-and-such a time.”

The truth isn't that they found the Lord, but that He sought and found them. The Bible teaches that no man seeks after God (Rom 3:11). If it weren't for His sovereign and gracious knocking, we would be eternally lost.

Lehman Strauss said it well, “We speak of sinners finding Christ, as though men go about knocking on doors seeking Him. This is not true. The fundamental fact of Christianity is that this loving Saviour is ever seeking men and appealing to them one by one.”¹¹

Even now, this may be happening in your life. The Lord is standing and knocking at the door of your heart.

You say, “But I don't hear Him.”

Perhaps you're listening for the wrong sound. Don't listen for angelic voices, and don't look for lightning bolts. Jesus calls to us through His Word. We hear His voice when we hear His Word.

And not only is He righteous and near, but...

3. *He is generous (20b-21).* How generous? To the person who responds to His knocking, what will the Lord do? He says, “If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and eat with him, and he with me.”

Eating together meant a lot more in the first century culture than it does in ours. We can munch on our Chic-filet meal at a table right next to total strangers without ever even exchanging words. Not so in that day. Eating together was an act of hospitality, friendship, even intimacy.

The Greeks ate three meals in a day.¹² There was breakfast which was little more than a piece of dried bread. There was the midday meal which a man did not go home

¹¹ Strauss, 104.

¹² Barclay, 147.

for—it was sort of a picnic snack eaten on the run. Then there was the evening meal, the "*deipnon*." That was the main meal of the day. Since their day's work was done, people would linger over the *deipnon*.

That's the word Jesus uses in verse 20. What Jesus invites people to enjoy is not a hurried meal, but one with lingering fellowship. And the focus isn't on the food. The focus is on Him. He offers us Himself.

Is that why you came to church today, because of Him? Is it why you have a daily quiet time, because of Him? Is that why you want to go to heaven, because of Him? Is that why you became a Christian in the first place, because of Him? It's all about Him, beloved. He is the object of it all.

Yet there's more to His generous offer. He says in verse 21, "The one who conquers, I will grant him to sit with me on my throne, as I also conquered and sat down with my Father on his throne."¹³ A "throne" signifies royalty. To sit on a throne is an honor reserved for royalty. And that's the generous offer the Lord extends to us. When we invite Him in, the supper room becomes a throne room!¹⁴

What an amazing offer! The Lord says He will do for the one who opens the door what His Father did for Him. He grants permission to join Him on His throne.

Adam was created to rule the world but forfeited that privilege when he sinned. But the second Adam restores that privilege to all who believe in Him.

Paul explains in Romans 8:16–17, "The Spirit himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God,¹⁷ and if children, then heirs—heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, provided we suffer with him in order that we may also be glorified with him."

Yet there's a second particular in His invitation. First, be gripped by who He is.

B. We must be gripped by what He desires. Two responses.

1. *We must prize Him (20).* Listen again to verse 20, this time paying attention to what the Lord calls us to do. "If anyone HEARS my voice and OPENS the door." How do we prize Christ? By engaging in these two activities. We must *hear*, and *open*.

Don't miss the importance of proper *hearing*. In each of the seven letters, the Lord underscored this, "He who has an *ear*, let him *hear* what the Spirit says to the churches."

Here's a suggestion. One reason some of us are poor hearers is because we have failed to prepare ourselves to hear. Try a couple of practical things next week. Get to bed earlier Saturday night. And get up early enough Sunday morning to prepare yourself to hear. Eat a good breakfast so you're not "starving" by 11:30, and bring a pen so you can take notes.

You say, "Why go to all that effort?" Because proper hearing is essential if we are going to prize the Lord. We must *hear* His Word before we can respond to it.

But even hearing is not enough. Jesus tells us in verse 20 that we must "open the door." Please notice that the Sovereign Christ does the knocking, but He doesn't engage in forced entry. He allows us, indeed He calls us, to invite Him in.

How do we open the door? We do it by faith. It happens when we invite Jesus to come in and take up permanent residence in our lives. *Permanent* residence. My heart is now your home.

¹³ NIV "To him who overcomes, I will give the right to sit with me on my throne, just as I overcame and sat down with my Father on his throne."

¹⁴ Wiersbe, p. 581.

Sadly, some preachers make it sound like salvation is essentially fire-insurance from hell. “You don’t want to go to hell, do you? Hell is a terrible place. But if you’ll pray this prayer, you won’t have to go to hell, but can go to heaven.”

And while that message is true, it’s also incomplete. It guts the gospel. Literally. It takes the heart right out of the good news and reveals a deficient understanding of Christ. Christ didn’t die on the cross and conquer death merely so sinners could escape hell and gain heaven. He died in our place so we could gain *Him*.

To open the door is to invite Him into our lives. And not into the garage, or some room in the back either. He intends to come right into the dining room, where we eat, and talk, and make decisions, and enjoy one another.

That’s what happens at the dining room table, and that’s the place He intends to come in our lives. That’s why I use the word *prize*. To open the door to Jesus is to prize Him. It’s to say with the song-writer...

*I'd rather have Jesus than silver or gold
I'd rather be His than have riches untold
I'd rather have Jesus than houses or land
I'd rather be led by His nail-pierced hand
Than to be the king of a vast domain
And be held in sin's dread sway
I'd rather have Jesus than anything
This world affords today*

This is the proper response. This is what He desires, for us to prize Him. And...

2. *We must live for Him (21)*. Verse 21 says, “To him who overcomes.” True Christians are overcomers. You can tell that they've opened the door to Christ. How? Because they live for Him. They don’t go with the flow in the world. They *overcome* the world.

Make It Personal:

All of us have something in common with the Laodiceans this morning. We’re in church. They were in church. They were church members. Many of you are church members. And some of us may have something else in common with them. We are in church today, but Christ is on the outside.

He may be on the outside because we’ve never invited Him in, meaning we’ve never been saved. Or He may be on the outside in the sense that our lives are filled with clutter.

Thankfully, He is knocking. He’s speaking words of grace to us this morning, offering to come in and save us from our sins, and give us eternal fellowship with Himself.

We have a choice to make. It's very simple. Like the Laodiceans, we can respond to Christ’s gracious offer and open the door to Him, or we can ignore His offer and keep right on living without Him being the object of it all.

Which will it be? I plead with you to listen to Jesus' voice, open the door of your life to Him, invite Him in, and enjoy the thrill of His life-changing presence.

“He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches (22).”

Closing Song: #334 “*Come, Ye Sinners, Poor and Needy*” (all four verses)

Closing charge: Let the redeemed of the Lord...SAY SO.