

Guest Preacher Rev. Kenneth M Ferguson

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Preacher: Rev. Kenneth M Ferguson

[0 : 00] Let us now read a portion of God's word from the book of Revelation and chapter 3. The book of Revelation and chapter 3.

Reading at the beginning. And to the angel of the church in Sardis write, the words of him who has the seven spirits of God and the seven stars.

I know your works. You have the reputation of being alive, but you are dead. Wake up and strengthen what remains and is about to die.

For I have not found your works complete in the sight of my God. Remember then what you received and heard. Keep it and repent. If you will not wake up, I will come like a thief.

And you will not know at what hour I will come against you. Yet you have still a few names in Sardis, people who have not soiled their garments.

[1 : 11] And they will walk with me in white, for they are worthy. The one who conquers will be clothed thus in white garments. And I will never blot his name out of the book of life.

I will confess his name before my father and before his angels. He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.

And to the angel of the church in Philadelphia write, The words of the Holy One, the true one, who has the keys of David, who opens and no one will shut, and who shuts and no one opens.

I know your works. Because I have set before you an open door, which no one is able to shut. I know that you have but little power, and yet you have kept my word, and have not denied my name. Behold, I will make those of the synagogue of Satan, who say that they are Jews and are not but lie. Behold, I will make them come and bow down before your feet, and they will learn that I have loved you.

[2 : 19] Because you have kept my word about patient endurance, I will keep you from the hour of trial that is coming on the whole world, to try those who dwell on the earth.

I am coming soon. Hold fast what you have, so that no one may seize your crown. The one who conquers, I will make him a pillar in the temple of my God.

Never shall he go out of it, and I will write on him the name of my God, and the name of the city of my God, the new Jerusalem, which comes down from my God out of heaven, and my own new name.

He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. 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.

I know your works. You are neither cold nor hot. Would that you wear, either cold or hot. So because you are lukewarm, and neither hot nor cold, I will spit you out of my mouth.

[3 : 32] For you say, I am rich. I have prospered, and I need nothing, not realizing that you are wretched, puttable, poor, blind and naked.

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.

Those whom I love I reprove and discipline, so be zealous and repent. 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 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.

He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. Amen. May God bless to us that reading of his word and to his name be all the praise.

[4 : 47] Let us now call on the Lord's name in prayer. Let us pray. Lord our God, we thank you for the privilege that we enjoy together here this morning, in being able to gather to the house of God, and being able to read and hear God's holy word.

Lord our God, we thank you for the grace of God.

In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth. And we know that you sustain all that you have made, from the minutest subatomic particle to the greatest object visible to man throughout the universe.

It is our God who upholds these things and maintains their order. And we thank you for the grace of God. And we thank you for the grace of God. And we thank you that you are also one who creates new life in the experience of your people.

You give us new life in Christ Jesus. And apart from the hand of the great creator, in a work of grace, we would remain dead in trespasses and sins.

[6 : 35] But when you speak the word in season to our souls, new life enters, and our life changes, in such a way as to honour you and seek to magnify your great name.

Help us to confess our need of your saving grace today and every day. We are all sinners by nature and practice. There is none righteous.

No, not one. We have all sinned and come short of the glory of God. But we thank you that you have appointed a mediator, even the Lord Jesus Christ, who is the God-man mediator, who came into this world in the fullness of times and who took the sin of his people upon himself and who bore their sin every step of the way to the cross, where he made reconciliation and peace by pouring out his life as a sacrifice to satisfy divine justice and reconcile his people to God.

Give us to thank you for Jesus Christ today, the only name under heaven given among men whereby we must be saved, and we thank you that that was true at the beginning of this world's existence, that there is only one name commended to people as a saviour, and that is Jesus Christ. And today, in our day at this moment, there is no other name commended by the scriptures but Jesus Christ alone and him crucified. We thank you for the expression of the Apostle Paul of old when he said, oh, that he might be found in Christ, not having his own righteousness, which is of the law.

[8 : 32] And we pray that we might echo that prayer and that desire in our own hearts and lives, that we also might focus upon Jesus and look to him alone and receive him as he is freely offered in the gospel.

We pray for your blessing to be upon us here this morning. We thank you for the children present and every adult present also. We pray for your blessing to continue upon this congregation and bless the minister of the congregation where he is.

And as he continues to serve you in this place, we pray that you would make his ministry powerful and give him to be the channel of blessing to many souls throughout this community.

Remember those who aren't able to be with us physically here today. Bless them where they are. We thank you that you're able to visit every individual and do for them according to their needs as you see them.

Remember those who are ill, who are laid aside, who cannot come to the house of God anymore. Bless them, O Lord, we pray, with eternal and covenant blessings.

[9 : 44] And remember those who still are strangers to your grace. We ask, Lord, that in a day of your power you would pour your spirit upon this place and upon our island and upon our whole nation.

Oh, we stand in such need of an outpouring of your Holy Spirit in our day. When God seems to be left out of so many decisions, left out of so many situations, where the word of God doesn't speak or are allowed to speak into the situations that trouble our society.

We ask, Lord, that you would strengthen your people, that they may be strong witnesses in our dark day and that many would turn to the Lord Jesus Christ and find in him a hope for eternity.

We pray for your blessing to be upon us now as we open your word to further sing and to meditate upon it. We ask, Lord, that you would accompany the word with the mighty working of your Holy Spirit through our eternal benefits and forgive every sin, we pray.

In Jesus' precious name we ask it. Amen. We can turn back to this portion of scripture we've read together in the book of Revelation and focusing at chapter 3 on what the Lord Jesus Christ says to the church in Laodicea.

[11 : 28] And we read a few verses from verse 14 and we'll touch on a few points throughout what the Lord says there to the end of the chapter. 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.

I know your works. You are neither cold nor hot. Would that you wear either cold or hot. So because you are lukewarm and neither hot nor cold, I will spit you out from my mouth.

For you say I am rich. I have prospered. I need nothing. Not realizing that you are wretched. Pity I will prove blind and naked. And then this counsel to the church.

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.

Those whom I love I reprove and discipline so be zealous and repent. 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.

[12 : 56] one or two thoughts in relation to these words. The beginning of the book of Revelation highlights to us that it was a time of great persecution and trial for the church of God.

John himself had been banished to the Isle of Patmos because of the Word of God. It seemed that those who were enemies of the church wanted him out of the way so that he could not influence the communities of believers for their good.

But the Lord was not bound in any way. The Lord made himself known to John in the island of Patmos and he commanded him to send letters to the seven churches of Asia.

This was an area in modern day Turkey on the southwestern corner of Turkey as you look at the map and the seven churches there obviously had been set up with the blessing of God.

But seemingly worldliness and various other worldly influences had prevailed upon some of them and the Lord through John's revelation here he addresses the seven churches focusing on the needs that they had and his own willingness to deal with the needs that they had.

[14 : 44] The church of Laodicea is one of these churches to whom the Lord speaks and he introduces himself at the very beginning of this section from verse 14 saying to the angel of the church in Laodicea write the words of the Amen the faithful and through witness the beginning of God's creation.

This is the title he gives himself the one who is the Amen the one who is the beginning of all things and the end of all things and then he says he is the faithful and through witness what he is about to say to the church it cannot be denied because he sees things exactly the way they are and he speaks to the very point at which they need to give notice.

He speaks regarding their need as individuals and they are bound to take his word as truth. And under three headings I'd like to say one or two words.

First of all he talks about the situation of the church in Laodicea as he says it. And secondly he makes recommendation or commendations to the church.

He gives a counsel when he says I counsel you to buy from me gold refined by fire and so on. And thirdly in verse 20 number 20 he stands at her door and knocks.

[16 : 39] If anyone hears my voice and opens the door I will come in to him and eat with him and he with me. So he tells her what he sees about her.

then he counsels her to look to himself and come to himself and it looks thirdly as if she had refused to obey or comply with this counsel because we find him having as it were followed her home to her door and her door has been closed and he stands outside of her door knocking knocking knocking firstly he says in verse 15 I know your works you are neither cold nor hot would that you wear either cold or hot so because you are lukewarm neither hot nor cold I will spit you out of my mouth the world and worldliness seems to have cooled her love for the Lord

Jesus Christ worldliness has come in and captivated the mind and the lifestyle of these people we are reminded by historians that this area of Laodicea was a prosperous area they were rearing sheep and there was huge business in woolen manufacture in that area particularly black wool from black sheep and secondly there was a very prosperous banking area in the city and around the city of Laodicea and also more than that there was a famous medical school there and in the medical school and its researches they had discovered an ointment that was very profitable for people who had eye problems so the whole area of Laodicea was vibrant from the point of view of industry and money and prosperity and the church in the middle of that situation seems to have suffered quite

drastically because the

Lord says I wish you were cold or hot you were just lukewarm just like the springs in the vicinity of Laodicea like geysers that were producing warm water and nobody wanted to drink that water because it wasn't refreshing and the Lord here uses that picture regarding these people who make up the congregation of Laodicea he says you're just like that tepid water really that is not pleasant to have at all and that's the way I see you the world has crept in made inroads into your lives in such a way that you are not committed to the Lord the way you ought to be just give one example of somebody who was committed to the Lord and the apostle Paul writes to him writes concerning him and he's giving praise to the

Lord for a man who refreshed his spirit by his fellowship he refreshed his spirit these people they were so tepid and so non-committal in the things of God that the Lord finds fault with them to that extent he would want to spew them out of his mouth and what is their own opinion of themselves that's the Lord's opinion of them what's their own opinion of themselves verse 17 the Lord says you say I am rich I have prospered I need nothing they think they're doing very well prosperity gives them to feel they're on the up and up but really spiritually they're on the down grade and slide the Lord tells them although they think themselves they are rich and have need of nothing the Lord says you are wretched and pitiable and poor and blind and naked what an amazing summary of the sins and failings of this people they think they're it but the

[21 : 56] Lord says you really are a pitiful group of people and in a sense that is a reflection of many people in our world today people who may be well healed as it were with this world's riches and maybe who have a position in society and really who don't need anything from anybody they are almost self-sufficient but at the same time in the eyes of the Lord Jesus Christ who sees the things exactly the way they are they are as it says here wretched and pitiable and poor and blind and naked I wonder if there's anybody in here this morning who fits that bill who is tepid non-committed to the things of

God while at the same time thinking that they're doing all right in life well when the Lord puts his searchlight upon the innermost recesses of our souls and our lives he sees things the way they really are and graciously he addresses now with words of counsel these people in Laodicea that's our second point he gives them counsel what does he say well he says in verse 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 annoy into your eyes so that you may see the Lord focuses on three areas as it were of their lives that he is able and willing to help them with and he says

I am counseling you first of all to buy from me gold tried in the fire that you may be rich what does the Lord mean I mean he has just said to them how poor and impoverished sin has left them and now he is saying come and buy gold from me what does he mean what gold does the Lord Jesus have that will really enrich people's lives not in monetary terms really but in spiritual terms and in a view of eternity well the Lord Jesus Christ he went to the cross of Calvary as the sin bearer bearing the sins of his people and he went to

Calvary to suffer in their room and in their stead and on Calvary among other marvelous words which he spoke he spoke these words it is finished he had made peace with the just and holy God by the blood of his cross and now he makes available to us these wonderful riches that he has bought at such a great price I counsel you to buy of me gold refined by fire the fire of Christ's sufferings unto death made sure that he made available to those who believe in him riches that this world cannot compare with and riches that death cannot take from you and riches that will enrich you for time and throughout eternity that's why the apostle

Paul was saying that I might be found in Christ not having my own righteousness which is of the law these people in Laodicea they seem to be leaning upon their own righteousness and upon their own affluence as something that was going to last them but he says really if that's what you're leaning on and hoping in it won't last you very long I counsel you to buy from me gold right in the fire how can you confess our sins he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and cleanse us from our unrighteousness the blood of Jesus Christ God's son cleanses us from all sin I counsel you he says to buy from me gold how can you buy anything if you've got nothing to purchase if you have nothing to buy something with how can you buy something well Jesus here says that there is a possibility and the possibility is that you come with your emptiness and with your nothingness and with your sin and with your need and you say to the Lord

[28 : 03] Jesus Lord take me as I am I have nothing to commend to you but myself in all my brokenness and in my sinfulness and my lostness you are a willing saviour you call me as a sinner to yourself and I come in response I give myself to you that is the great transaction that is the great buying and selling as it were and the Lord here says I counsel you to buy from me gold refined by fire eternal life the prophet Isaiah uses another picture and he says come buy wine and milk without money and without price the second point here under this second broad point is he says white garments so that you may clothe yourself and the shame of your nakedness may not be seen this is a reference

I think to the very amply produced black garments from these black sheep that populated the hills around Laodicea the industry was a booming industry and many people used that wool to cover themselves but the Lord says your black wool really is indicative of the sin that has saturated into your lives and into your society he says buy from me white garments that you may clothe yourself and the shame of your nakedness may not be seen he makes available to us the white robes of righteousness that he died to procure for all who believe in his name it is of these people we're happy enough with their own self righteousness that's the way we are by nature we're happy with our own best efforts self righteousness and God commends to us there is a better righteousness than you can ever produce because you cannot fully fulfil every aspect of God's law by your own efforts but Jesus through his sufferings and death and resurrection he makes available to us a righteousness that clothes us and gives us a standing before God whereby we are not condemned God as our judge he announces and declares those who believe in Jesus righteous because the righteousness of Christ is imputed to them and they are receiving it by faith alone and then also having said that about the garments he says buy from me salve to anoint your eyes so that you may see this salve I think it's an oblique reference to this ointment that had been produced in the local medical school that was such benefit to many people with eye problems in that area and in that day and the

Lord said well you have eyes to deal with physical blindness and short sightedness and whatever I have a better eye salve for you I wonder what eye salve the Lord has well the psalmist says that the entrance of thy word gives light in other words when the word of God enters into our mind and into our heart and into our being it floods us with light the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ and he's asking them to draw near the word of God and may the word of God flood your whole life with light so that you can see clearly isn't it amazing that when the spirit of God comes to teach us he shows us first of all our own impurities and our own lostness and our own sinfulness and it's not the way the catechism puts it in relation to the effectual calling of God upon sinners convincing us he says of our sin and misery and then enlightening your minds in the knowledge of Christ and renewing your wills persuading and enabling us to embrace Jesus Christ freely offered in the gospel and if you want to see yourselves as God sees you you have to ask him to flood your mind and heart and life with his own light so that you see things exactly the way they really are not the way you think they might be or want them to be and then when you see yourself in such need as a sinner he points you to Jesus and Jesus receives sinners and eats with them he receives sinners and eats with them I often think of the account we have in the gospel of the thief on the cross who had misspent his life right up to the point of his crucifixion seemingly because he himself admitted that he was suffering justly for all the wrongs of his life but then at the eleventh hour he looks at Jesus and he said

[34 : 50] Lord remember me when you come into your kingdom and Jesus turns and he said verily today you shall be with me in paradise I have come into this world for people just like you who see their need and who call upon me and are out of need and I will answer them so his counsel to have to buy from him gold refined by fire white garments that they may be clothed and the shame of their nakedness may not be seen and salve to anoint your eyes so that you may see but then thirdly we see that in verse 20 he has come to stand at her door and I think it's

Robert Murray Mac Chain who makes the point in some comments he's been making on this particular part of scripture that it looks as if the Lord is as it were following her home having commended himself to her by his counsel and it's as if she has turned her back and has not listened at all to his counsel and she has just gone home and closed her door just like the church in the song of Solomon when the saviour comes to her door and he knocks and she said I'm in bed but he knocks and he says my head is wet with the dew of the night and he knocks that's the kind of saviour we have a saviour who will follow us and make another appeal having had been rebuffed

before evidently she hasn't listened to him at all and he stands at her door and he knocks I was thinking this morning I'm going to suggest that the door has two panels as he stands outside the door one panel that he knocks on is the panel of memory Jesus comes to remind us of things that have been in our lives down through the years privileges opportunities opportunities words spoken by godly parents prayerful parents who have prayed for years over us and he comes and he reminds us these things are true and you still haven't repented you've still left the door closed upon me and the other panel on this door is the panel of conscience he knocks at the door of my conscience or at the panel of conscience upon my door and I realise how ashamed I have to be and I need to be of all the opportunities I have bypassed and I haven't taken up all the situations I could have capitalised on and I've just left them I would prefer to go into the world and embrace things of the world enrich myself with aspects of worldliness and I have left aside the prayerful parents and the word of exhortation from pulpits down through the years the Lord is still knocking at our door he's knocking by his word every time you open the Bible it's as if the Lord is knocking at your door of memory at your door of conscience calling you to repent calling you to himself calling you today is the accepted time today is the day of salvation today if you hear my voice don't harden your heart you've hardened it often enough already now commit yourself to me I'm able to give you a new heart he's the greatest heart transplant surgeon that ever was he takes away the heart of stone and he gives a heart of flesh whereon his own word and commandments are written he knocks by his word he knocks by his providences every time you hear the voice of death in the community maybe close friends of yours relatives those whom you knew so well called away some of them suddenly that's another knock behold I stand at the door and I'm knocking it may be same trials into your life things that you didn't want nor did you expect them to be in your life they might have been in other people's lives but not really in your life but he sends things in his providence these things are like knocking for your attention at the door of your life maybe he's knocking today with that kind of knock maybe he's knocking through the preaching of the gospel the convictions that are associated with the preaching of the word of God when the word of [41 : 40] God comes in on you and finds you and you realize he's speaking to me the scripture here is a scripture for me he's knocking deep into your soul why would you turn away why would you let him go away because it says here he is standing at the door and knocking as if he is ready to move off if the door doesn't open isn't it terrible that the Lord would visit our door and knock in these ways and you refuse to open it and he goes away and doesn't ever come back again I stand at the door and knock if anyone hears my voice and opens the door you have to open the door you have to respond what does it say if you open the door

I will come in to him Jesus says and eat with him and he with me what an amazing picture that is it is if Jesus is willing to come in and eat with you sup with you have a meal with you and you with him I was thinking of this some time ago and it's as if the scripture here is saying that we are expected to bring something to this meal and Jesus brings something into the meal also I mean see the way it's written I will come in to him and eat with him and he with me it's as if we have brought something into this situation Jesus brings something he brings his blessing he brings his fellowship he brings his love he brings his peace he brings his forgiveness what are we to bring we cannot earn any of the blessings that Jesus brings but for us to really sit with him at this meal we have to bring an obedient spirit a spirit of repentance a spirit whereby we are submissive to him who is inviting us and calling us to fellowship with him that's what these people were missing they didn't have a submissive spirit they had a worldly spirit prevailing they were neither cold nor hot they were really just doing their own thing for the most part and Jesus highlights their problem to them and he gives them words of counsel which they seem not to have embraced at all but then he follows them home as the long-suffering saviour that he is he follows them home and he knocks and he knocks again and he knocks again how long will you leave him outside of your door how long he's the greatest and most glorious personage who's ever walked this world he's the holy one of Israel he's mighty to save to the uttermost all who come unto God by him he is able to calm the storms of your life that he calmed the seas of Galilee when the disciples on board their boat felt they were ready to be drowned and he stood and he says peace be still and the waters and the wind died down and there was a great calm a mega calm as it says in the original there was a great calm and if you read in the gospel of Mark in the beginning of chapter five that's the end of chapter four in Mark the stilling of that storm chapter five begins with him casting out legion of devils from the man in Gadara a legion of devils a legion of soldiers and the army of Rome was ending up to 6,000 men

and that poor man in

Gadara he was inhabited by all these terrible spirits of darkness but at one word Jesus expels them and at the end of that chapter five in Mark we see him raising a little girl from the dead the daughter of Jairus and he said to her little girl I say to your eyes and she was 12 years old she rolls from the dead that is the quality of saviour and salvation that the gospel offers this day are you willing to leave such a mighty saviour behind your door maybe he won't knock for much longer these three points then he tells the church in

Laodicea just the way things are she thinks differently she thinks she's doing all right but he says you're really poor and miserable and wretched and blind and naked that's her picture and then his council was so lavish buy from me gold and marvellous clothing that will enliven you and give you real standing in the presence of God righteousness of Christ and also the anointing of the eyes that you might see and then he comes to knock out door may the Lord enable us when we hear his knocking through the gospel or through his dealings in providence may we readily with the hand of faith turn the latch and receive him in he will come in then and sup with us and that will be the most joyful day of your life in this world and a precursor and an earnest of the glorious reception you will receive in heaven at the marriage supper of the lamb may each of us be found there let us pray help us oh Lord to be thankful for all the kindness you've shown us this day we praise you for your word for Jesus Christ who cares for sinners and who calls sinners to himself we pray that we might have hearing ears receptive hearts that we may hear and live and live for our Lord every step of our way we pray for your blessing to be upon the congregation here and as they anticipate the service in the evening we ask that you will bless your servant who is to preach go before us now Lord and forgive our sins in Jesus name amen we'll sing from the Scottish psalter and the whole of psalm 130 psalm 130 Lord from the depths to thee I cried my voice Lord do thou hear unto my supplications voice give an attentive ear Lord who shall stand if thou O Lord should mark iniquity but yet with thee forgiveness is that fear thou mayest be I wait for God my soul doth wait my hope is in his word more than they that for morning watch my soul waits for the Lord I say more than they that do watch the morning light to see that Israel hope in the Lord but with him mercies be and plenteous redemption is ever found with him and from all his iniquities he is real shall redeem the whole of psalm 130 in the Scottish psalter Lord from the depths to thee I cry Lord from the depths to thee I cry

[51 : 47] in my voice for to hear Lord he Lord Lord, who shall stand if thou, O Lord, should life in equity?

What the heavenly forgiveness is, that fear thou mayest keep?

I wait for God, my soul not weak, my hope is in this word.

More than the land, or more in a world, my soul is for the Lord.

I sing, O Lamb, in a duper, the morning light you see.

[53 : 43] Let Israel open the door, for with mercy be.

On plentious redemption is ever found with him.

And from all his equities, Israel shall be healed.

Now may the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God the Father, the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, rest upon and abide with you all, no one forevermore.