

Guest Preacher - Rev Dr. Malcolm Maclean

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Preacher: Rev. Malcolm Maclean

[0 : 00] We can turn back to the passage you read, Revelation chapter 3, and I'd like us to think briefly about verse 18.

! Where Jesus says to the church, I counsel you to buy from me gold refined by fire, so that you may be rich in white garments, so that you may clothe yourselves, and the shame of your nakedness may not be seen, and salve to anoint your eyes, so that you may see.

The church in Laodicea had begun about 30 years before this letter was written. It's mentioned by Paul in his letter to the Colossians in chapter 4, and it was located near the village of Colossae and the town of Hierapolis.

And in each of these three places, Paul tells us in Colossians 4.13 that a church had begun through the ministry of Epaphras.

And he mentions about Laodicea that they met in the house of a lady called Nympha.

[1 : 39] And he also says in that chapter, in Colossians chapter 4, that he had actually written a letter to the church of Laodicea.

And we don't have that letter now, but it shows that they had what shall we call a very good beginning.

They had received the gospel, and the church was there. And as with all churches, when they start, there's always the possibility of a good outcome.

But 30 years later, things are very different. And as we read this letter in Revelation chapter 3, it looks as if there's no one in the church interested in Jesus.

Isn't that extraordinary? Here was a Christian church not interested in Jesus. And the Savior, as we can see from verse 20, has to, as it were, come down to the level of speaking to individuals and just asking, is there anyone willing, anyone in the church, we have no idea where they're meeting by this particular time, but he comes to the door of the church and asks if there's anyone inside that will come to the door and let him in.

[3 : 41] And that's a very sad declension, isn't it? And yet, to them, Jesus gives this wonderful package, we might say, offer of a package here in verse 18.

A three-fold package. He offers to them gold. He offers to them garments.

And he offers to them I salve. And he's not saying to them, take your pick. He's not even saying to them, take two of them.

It's a package. You have to take the three. You can't get one of them without the other two. And you can't get two without the remaining one.

And of course, when Jesus is doing this, he's referring to local situations. What was the Lady of Sia famous for? It was a very prosperous city.

[5 : 00] At one time, it had an earthquake. And when the Roman emperor offered to pay for the restoration of the city because of the damage of the earthquake, Laodicea said, no thanks.

We can do it ourselves. It was a very wealthy city. It had a banking industry. It was also famous for its wool making.

It's wool making. Well, it didn't make wool, but it was famous for what it did with wool. Its woolen products were renowned throughout the empire. If you wore a Laodicean garment, you had the best of attire on.

And thirdly, it was a place well known for treating problems with eyesight. They had developed some kind of ointment that helped people with their vision.

And Jesus alludes to these local practices here when he offers them gold. That's the banking illusion. He offers them white raiment. That's to the woolen industry.

[6 : 10] And he offers them eye salve, their medicine, medicinal development development that they had. In the seven churches, Jesus does that all the time.

As he addresses each local church, he always refers to something that's happening in the location so that they will understand what he's getting at.

And of course, they would have got the point of this verse immediately. He was offering them something much better than the things they were good at.

The rest of the country around them would have said, what does Laodicea famous for? And back would come the answer, it's famous for gold, it's famous for clothes, and it's famous for its eye, its vision-solving ointment.

And Jesus says, I can give you something better than your best. So I'd like us to look at these three items that Jesus offers.

[7 : 31] As long as you bear in mind that it's a package that we've been getting, and we can't say at the end of the service, well, I'll take one of them. I can't even say at the end of the service, I will take two of them.

We've got to take the three, and if we get the three, we're very blessed. And remember, he's offering these blessings to a church that won't let them in.

He's knocking at the door of the church, and they won't let him in. The gold.

Well, it's not actually gold. It's refined gold. Gold is, or at least it used to be, the most valuable of metals.

gold. But all gold has got things wrong with it. And therefore, it has to be refined, purified. And Jesus here is offering to them refined gold.

[8 : 46] That means gold with no defects. Something that's very valuable, most valuable. I mean, if somebody came up to a person from Laodicea and had in one hand gold, and another hand refined gold, they would choose the refined gold.

It was much better than just mere gold. It had no defects. I wonder what that points to.

Something that Jesus has. In Moses, when he's writing the book of Genesis, and he talks about the rivers that flow out of Eden, he refers to one of the rivers that goes round the land of Havilah, and the gold of that land is good, he tells us.

If we were to ask Google, tell us where the best gold is. It might come out with a whole range of countries where gold can be found, but Google is unable to tell us where the best gold is found. Because it comes from heaven. It comes from a different country altogether. We could say it's perfect gold from the perfect country.

[10 : 15] What's that picture of? Well, I think it's a picture of salvation. And Jesus, as part one of his package, is offering these people in Laodicea who for some reason or other have left him outside.

He's offering to them perfect salvation. some people say that Laodicea was suffering from second generation syndrome.

The first generation, they embraced the gospel eagerly, passionately, thankfully. They were full of gratitude.

But here we are now with the second generation. and maybe they're just there because of custom. Maybe they're just there because their parents were there.

But the one thing that they didn't deem necessary in their church life was to have Jesus involved in it. Which we may regard as extraordinary.

[11 : 38] And it is extraordinary. that it may be that none of them had yet fully realized what salvation means.

But Jesus comes with this perfect salvation. And he offers it to very imperfect sinners.

And he tells them it can be yours. I'll give it to you. He counsels them.

He says to take this gold refined by fire to go to him and have a personal dealing with him.

To buy of him gold tried in the fire. To have personal contact with a living savior. what is God's salvation?

[12 : 49] How do we describe it? Well, we suppose there's various ways people have done it. We could say it's what God planned from eternity.

He knew all that was going to happen when he planned salvation. We could say it's what Jesus purchased when he paid the penalty for our sin. We could say it's what's offered to us in the gospel freely, full pardon.

And we can say that one day it's going to bring about perfection. And imagine these people in Laodicea one day being perfect.

Imagine ourselves one day being perfect. It's a marvelous blessing that Jesus is offering to them, isn't it?

We could say he's offering to them incalculable and unlosable riches. To give to them a full bank account for eternity.

[14:00] I mean, that would appeal to people in a banking city, wouldn't it? Laodicea was rich, but none of them were as rich as Jesus could make them.

But if he gave them his salvation, they would be rich forever. And of course, it's good for us to look at Laodicea and say, oh, what a mistake they made.

But what about ourselves? Have we ever spoken to Jesus personally about his salvation? salvation? We have to speak to him if we haven't got it yet.

And if we have got it, we have to keep speaking to him about it. Because it is a great blessing to have a full bank account for eternity.

[15:12] As I said, it's only part, the third of the offer. Jesus also offers to them white raiment.

We might say, well, as he describes it himself, it is, garments you may clothe yourself and the shame of your nakedness may not be seen.

He was offering them a garment that would cover everything, everything about them. And of course, there's, from a spiritual point of view, he's saying, he's offering them a garment that will cover all their sins.

Each of us knows some of our sins. Our neighbors probably know some of our sins. God knows all of our sins.

Jesus knows all of our sins. Every single one of them. He doesn't just know all our sins, he knows the effects of all our sins. Who knows what the effects of one sin are?

[16:28] None of us has any idea. But Jesus knows. And he's not offering to us a cover-up, but he is offering to us a covering, a garment that will cover every area of defect in our lives, inwardly and outwardly.

That will, as it were, hide the sins of our hearts and of our minds, as well as our outward sins. Hide them from the point of view of God's justice.

What is that garment? I mean, the people in Laodicea, if we went to their wardrobe, we would say, wow, because all the wonderful garments they produced there in their woolen industry.

But eventually, all these garments would fade. And they would have to throw them out. But here's a garment that never fades, that will last always, last forever.

And I'm sure we all know what it is. It's the righteousness of Christ. God's You know, there was a time when the Son of God did not have this righteousness, as it were, to hand out.

[18:03] He knew he would yet have it, but he didn't really, as it were, exist until he came into this world and lived a perfect life.

and he lived a perfect life as a child. And he lived a perfect life as a teenager. And he lived a perfect life as an adult.

And he lived a perfect life in all kinds of situations, in his home, in his community, in the carpenter's shop, when he went up to Jerusalem for the annual feast, anywhere the New Testament describes him as being, wherever he was, he was perfect.

And we need to ask ourselves, why is he living this perfect life? And there's two answers to that question. One of them is he has to offer up a perfect life on the cross.

We know from the Old Testament pictures that if a little lamb had any defect in it, even a very small defect, it couldn't be offered as a sacrifice.

[19:13] A picture of the fact that only a perfect substitute could be, could take the place of sinners, and Jesus offered up his perfect life on the cross on our behalf.

But that wasn't the only reason why he lived a perfect life. He also lived a perfect life to be able to give it to us. In a sense, Jesus is saying to the people in Laodicea, I can give you a better garment than all the garments in your wardrobe.

I can give you my righteousness and it will cover everything. It will cover everything about you from the eye of God's justice. In the Laodiceans, well, even if we take the sin of keeping Jesus outside, who's going to cover that sin?

astonishingly, Jesus. Jesus is saying to these people, I'll give you my perfect life as the covering over all your sins.

And once you get it, you have it forever. it doesn't change your character, although everyone that gets this garment will get a changed character, but the garment itself is not designed for that.

[20 : 46] The garment is designed to make us perfect in the sight of God, as far as his justice is concerned. I'm sure you looked in the mirror today before you came out.

As you looked in the mirror, did you thank God that you were clothed in a garment that you couldn't see in the mirror? The garment of Christ's righteousness.

It's a wonderful garment to wear. No one can tell us what its value is. I'm quite sure these garments that were produced in Laodicea, well, they were.

It cost a lot more than other garments that were around, but this one that Jesus offers is priceless. And he offers the best.

for nothing. Isn't that wonderful? He offers the best garment for nothing. They can have it.

[22 : 10] And surely it's important to become well-dressed in the sight of heaven. These Laodiceans could have turned up in church with the latest fashion.

But what did that mean if they were not wearing the righteousness of Christ? that's the second feature of this package.

A garment that will never fade. Of course, it's part of the overall salvation, but it is an outstanding feature of that salvation.

God is a doctrine that turned the world upside down at the Reformation. It's a doctrine that shook the ancient world.

no doubt is a doctrine that can overcome the modern world. And then there's the third blessing that he offers in this package, I Salve.

[23 : 34] Why did they need their vision corrected or helped? Probably not everybody in Laodicea literally needed to go out to the clinic for their eyes.

But spiritually, they do have to go to the clinic for their eyesight. Why do they need their vision good?

Why do they need good vision? I would suggest Jesus is saying to them, you need it to look ahead.

It's not so much to look back, because where is the past?

It's gone. It's not enough to see the present, because the present is only here for a second. but we do need to see the future.

We need good eyesight for it, because there's dangers on the path. It's inevitable that temptation of one kind or another is going to come.

[24 : 59] Come every day and come in numerous different ways, but temptation to sin is going to come. these Laodiceans, they needed that kind of vision, that having, if they had received the two previous features of his offer, his wonderful salvation, and especially the garment of justification, they would need eyesight to watch out for things that would spoil their enjoyment of these two blessings.

But we also need vision to see good things. There's one that the psalmist says, the psalmist says somewhere that he was confident that he would see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living.

We need special vision for that, especially in today's world, because we're liable to think everything that's ahead of us is going to be bad. But we need to see that ahead of us, there's going to be times when we shall see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living.

We need vision to see beyond this life. And we need helps to our vision, we might say. And in the Bible, in addition to this I Salve that Jesus offers here, the Bible is like a telescope.

You know, it is possible to take the Bible out and read it and suddenly find yourself away in the future. You could turn up to Revelation chapter 20 using the Bible as a telescope and just see yourself at the great white throne.

[26 : 57] or you can take the Bible as a telescope and see yourself in heaven.

Even as the last verse of Psalm 23 tells us where David says, goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life and I shall dwell in the house of the Lord forever.

See the eternal state. And it's great to have that vision, isn't it? I mean, I mean, sadly, when we watch the news, the one thing that it doesn't have is vision for the future.

It's got prognosis and it's got possibilities. but it can't tell us what the future is.

Now, here's Jesus and he's offering us these things and this third one here, the eye salve, but the Holy Spirit gives us real eyesight in his word.

[28 : 19] so, they were offered to the church in Laodicea. Did they take them?

Well, some of them did because the church in Laodicea survived. even in a couple of centuries there was a big church council in Laodicea.

So, some in this church heard what was said to them and this offer that was given to them, they gladly took it. This three-fold package and Jesus, and we'll stop with this, but Jesus says to them, he offers it to them, but it's not entirely accurate to say he offers it to them for nothing.

There is a price, but the price is not estimated in financial terms. The price is, as far as the Laodiceans were concerned, is their heart.

Not a bit of their heart, not half their heart, but all their heart. I mean, the Bible tells us that God is jealous.

[30 : 02] He's jealous when our hearts are given to something else. God says, and these blessings that Jesus offers, they're not offered to people that offer him a bit of their hearts, or even most of their hearts, but all their hearts.

As God says in the book of Proverbs, through the wise man, my son, give me your heart. What is your heart?

Your heart is not just your affections. Well, that's part of it. Your heart, and my heart, is the real you, and the real me.

I have to give myself to him, and you have to give yourself to him. We dedicate ourselves, and we do it gratefully because of this wonderful package.

Somebody came along to me in natural terms and said to me, I'm going to make you the wealthiest man in the world, and you're going to have the best clothes to wear for the rest of your life, and your vision is going to be perfect.

[31 : 45] And the only condition that there is for you getting it is that you trust in me. Would I be wise to take it?

Or would I be foolish to refuse it? That's only an earthly offer. Here's the offer of the King of Heaven. We get full salvation, including the precious righteousness of Jesus. And we are given vision to see the problems and the blessings of this life, and also the glories of the heavenly world and the horribleness of a lost eternity.

And we're given the opportunity of seeing these things clearly. And Jesus offers them to us now. well, surely we should take it and just give ourselves to him and say to him, as they said to David, we are yours.

As I said at the start of this service, Jesus wants us to speak, wants the people in Laodicea to speak to him individually. And he wants us to do the same.

[33 : 27] Shall we pray? Lord, we thank you for the gospel offers. There are so many of them in your word, and they come using different descriptions, but all pointing to the same thing.

We thank you for the freeness of this offer made by Jesus to people who previously had spurned him, and who left him outside their meetings.

It's hard for us to imagine that, but your word tells us that's what it was like. God, we thank you for the kind offer of the gracious Savior.

We thank you that offer comes to us. It's in your word. And help us, Lord, to respond to it appropriately, and to ask of you to have gold tried in the fire, a complete salvation, to have that garment that will never fade away, the garment of the righteousness of Christ, and to have vision, a vision that's not limited to this world, but can see into eternity.

Grant it, Lord, that we would do it for your own name's sake. Amen. Amen. Amen. We'll conclude by singing from Psalm 65, and sing Psalms, Psalm 65, and sing Psalms on page 82, and we'll sing verses 1 to 4.

[35 : 22] And Zion prays, I wait you, Lord, to you our vows will pay, to you all people will come near, you'll hear us when we pray. we'll sing verses 1 to 4.

In song of Frieza with you, Lord, to you our vows will pay, to you all people will come near, you'll hear us when we pray.

When we were overwhelmed by sins,!

And guilt upon our slain, you pardoned all our trespasses and wash our guilt away.

we're blessed to you to us and bring within your course of grace, we're filled with blessings saints in your hearts, in your most holy place.

[37 : 25] With awesome deeds of righteousness, you answered us, O God, our Savior, hope, O far the seas and all the earth abroad.

May the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God the Father, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with us all.

Amen.