

Revelation 3:14-22

Behold, Jesus is Coming...  
To Give True Wealth

Dec.19, 2010  
Series: 7  
Letters to 7  
Churches  
Lord of Life

Isaiah 7:10-14  
Sign – virgin / Immanuel

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Matthew 2:1-11  
Joseph – Jesus and Emmanuel

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Romans 1:1-7  
Death and Resurrectio

In the name of Immanuel, God with us, now and forever:

The optometrist had me put my glasses on for the first time and then directed me to look out the window to the sign across the street – and for the first time in a long time I could read the speed limit sign clearly. For the first time in a long time I could see the faces of people and see the details of their clothes. Before that everything had been blurry.

That's how it is for all of us every now and then.

- We can see the mountains every day but do we always see their grandeur.
- We can see the colors of this season but do we always see the peacefulness they bring.
- A man can sit across the table from his wife for nearly twenty years but that doesn't mean he always sees her beauty.

Life, for us, is often a blur.

That's Christmas isn't it? A blur of activities, of stress, of crowds, of places to be and things to do – did you go shopping yesterday? Ugggh! – that we stop seeing what this week means to our lives.

- Our worship becomes one more thing to do,
- Our prayer life goes stale,
- Our faith lags,
- Another problem dominates our thoughts and focus, and we forget Immanuel, God with us.

We focus on the gifts and the dollars on the credit card and all the wealth that goes into this one holiday – did you go shopping yesterday? Ugggh! And they say the economy isn't recovering???. But we lose focus on the One who comes to give us Himself and the true wealth we need. You can't find it under a tree, or in a shopping mall, or on line. You can only find it in a stable but he is the one who makes you truly wealthy.

That's the message to the Christians in the church of Laodicea, our final letter of the seven written here by our Lord and Savior.

Laodicea was a wealthy city. It was situated near a hot springs and had many people come to visit its healing springs. It also was surrounded by hills that provided perfect grazing grounds for sheep – black sheep – that helped the city produce rich and costly black wool. Another thing Laodicea was known for was its medical school which produced a salve to put on eyes to help with healing and eyesight. Laodicea was wealthy, so wealthy that when it was destroyed by an earthquake not too long before this letter was written, they were able to rebuild without any assistance from the Roman empire.

But that was their problem, they were too wealthy. “You say, ‘I am rich; I have acquired wealth and do not need a thing.’” They didn't need help, not financially, and unfortunately that carried into their spiritual life – they didn't need a Savior and that led to an attitude that the Lord detests. Using the picture of the hot springs in the area Jesus warns them, “I know your deeds, that you are neither cold nor hot. I wish you were either one or the other! So because you are lukewarm – neither hot nor cold – I am about to spit you out of my mouth.”

Like a glass of milk that is no longer cold or hasn't been warmed up with a little chocolate in it, but has been sitting out at room temperature all day... like a cup of coffee that isn't piping hot or even a cool cold iced latte, but is lukewarm... Jesus is ready to spit them out. It's not that he wants them to be cold – unbelievers. But even an unbeliever is passionate about spiritual things and there is hope to reach them and change their hearts. Jesus wants them to be hot, on fire for the Lord. But they weren't – instead they were wretched, pitiful, poor, blind and naked (not the allusions to the trades that were mentioned before).

What is it that is going to heat us up again, to help us see clearly, to make Christmas worth celebrating again and life worth living? Well, what is it that got Joseph heated up in our Gospel lesson today. Here he finds out his fiancé is pregnant and he knows he is not the father. He has in mind to divorce her quietly but that all changes when an angel announces what is happening – how this baby is to be called “Jesus.” You heard what Jesus means – he saves people from their sins – Savior. Joseph realized that this child in Mary's womb was his Savior, the one who would take away his sins and make him right before God.

That's why Jesus speaks these words this morning, words of rebuke and discipline, words of love. “Those whom I love I rebuke and discipline. So be earnest, and repent.” Like Joseph, like the Laodiceans, in love God leads us to realize that our greatest need is a Savior – not a job, not new toys, or more money, or a different life, but Jesus.

Listen to the pictures he uses to show that:

- I counsel you to buy from me gold refined in the fire (not gold from their mint), wealth that is from the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the rule of creation, who was born to die for us, so you can become rich.
- And white clothes, not the wealthy, black ones they wore, ones that could cover their skin but not their guilt and shame, but white ones, the righteous life of the one born in Bethlehem, which would cover their shameful nakedness.
- And salve to put on your eyes, so you can see – see clearly past the distractions of this season and life, past the problems and the hectic lives we face, past the monotony of life, to see the peace and joy and meaning and life our Savior brings.

Hear his voice this week. Hear it here in church, through the music and the message. Jesus is standing at the door and calling to you, for he is coming to you, to eat with you, to be with you, to rule with you, for he is Immanuel – God with us. Share in the wealth he gives.

This past week, a little girl asked her dad, “what do you want for Christmas?” What a neat question, not just because she was focused on someone else, not because she her dad enjoys her still being little and enjoying Christmas, but special, because that questions says she gets Christmas.

It's a question you and I should ask as well – what do you want Jesus? He says here, he wants your heart so he can share with you real, true wealth that only He can bring. May that be your Christmas gift. Amen.

SDG  
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