

STRANGER TIMES: A BEGINNER'S GUIDE TO THE APOCALYPSE (Bill Cahusac)

- Where have you seen God at work in your life this week? (Share any brief examples and encouragements).
- Was there anything from Sunday's message which you found particularly inspiring or challenging?
- Was there anything else you particularly noticed?

Rev 3v14-20.

We live in strange times: Brexit, Covid, Ukraine, Cost of living, Fuel, 3 prime ministers, economic crisis. Psychologists talk of "surge capacity" - we become collectively disoriented. What are our coping strategies? Maybe keep busy to be distracted, isolation, binging on box-sets, cold water immersion! How do we fix it to be in control? Actually, control is a myth! What's your strategy? Is it working?

In Matt 24v12 Jesus promises that we will have trouble. Looking back our lives have, generally, been good but comfort leads to complacency which leads to cool hearts.

Laodicea:

- A wealthy city on trading routes, a banking centre. Eg. Jews funded gold to Jerusalem. Eg. After an earthquake, Sardis and Philadelphia were funded by Rome but Laodicea was self-sufficient.
- An education centre specialising in eye treatments (hence reference to salve).
- A fashion centre with specially developed black wool.
- But with no good water supply: Hierapolis to the north had hot springs and Colossae to the south east had alpine cool water but both came via aqueducts which tainted the water with minerals, causing sickness, and both arrived lukewarm.

The Laodiceans would have understood the metaphors of v17 and the verdict you are "*wretched, pitiful, poor, blind and naked.*" Note that wealth, health and fashion get in the way of a good relationship with Jesus.

Jesus offers a commercial term, v18, *buy gold, white clothes and salve* but they can only be received by grace. Jesus is not angry but heartbroken. He knows where they're at but has compassion for change.

Jesus challenges those he loves (just as a parent doesn't always give what a child wants). The "love" here is *Philio* (Greek) = affection/feeling. He is effectively saying, I love you too much to leave you where you are.

Then the key words, v20, "*Here I am! I stand at the door and knock.*" Compare Song of Songs 5v2 "*Listen! My beloved is knocking.*" Jesus is being affectionate, not demanding but showing vulnerability as the knock can be ignored. We decide to open the door and let Jesus in or to shut him out. But the promise is, if we open the door, Jesus "*will come in and eat with that person, and they with me.*" This is intimacy and friendship.

So, how is your soul? What's in the way of our giving all to Jesus? How are we distracted by the immediate? What impacts our soul? Uni, ageing parents, relationships, job, etc. And when things go well - do we Thank God? Remember, God is on your case, he won't leave you. So invite him into your situation - all of the above, plus, sexuality, regrets, fears, anxiety, mental health challenges, hopes, dreams. We need to open the door to Jesus so we can be authentic in God.

The letter to Laodicea was an extraordinary letter written in extraordinary times and is relevant today. It's not enough just to get by, being lukewarm, we're the light of the world in Jesus - there is a better way.

- Bill began with a list of "strange times" - which one has affected you the most? Why?
- How is your soul? Are we able to share honestly with each other about "where we are at"? (If not, maybe ask why not?) A suggestion: break into smaller groups of 2/3/4 to share deeper for a few minutes.
- How can we develop a sense of Jesus loving us with feeling and affection? (*Philio* love).
- Is Jesus "knocking" on the door of your lives now? How can we respond?

Not included in the talk, but 2 websites for some background reading about Laodicea

<https://www.biblestudy.org/meaning-names/laodicea.html>

<https://www.biblicalarchaeology.org/daily/biblical-sites-places/biblical-archaeology-sites/church-of-laodicea-in-the-bible-and-archaeology/>

30 October, 2022. Emmaus Rd., Yvonne Arnaud, Guildford