

The Deceitfulness of Success

Scripture Reading — Revelation 3:14-19

“Those whom I love I rebuke and discipline. So be earnest and repent.” — Revelation 3:19

Jesus’ letter to his church in Laodicea is stirring and gripping in its imagery. This church community is identified as being like lukewarm water, not fit for drinking. The plot thickens when Jesus says, “I am about to spit you out of my mouth.”

What created this culture of being neither cold nor hot?

There was a smug sense of self-security based on accumulated wealth and possessions. This church had become rich in material goods. Prosperity and success convinced the Laodicean Christians that they had everything they needed.

In this letter Jesus gives smug self-security a bone-chilling reality check. He says, “But you do not realize that you are wretched, pitiful, poor, blind and naked.” I wonder which hurt more: being told that they did not know the truth of their own condition, or the string of negative descriptions that we read here.

These are painful words for a church to hear. But at the same time, these words reveal the degree to which Jesus loves even a lukewarm community of believers.

Today let us listen to Jesus’ reality check for what it is: a love letter calling for repentance and change.

Prayer

Thank you, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, for loving us to the point of being honest and real. Shepherd us away from our smug senses of self-security and independence. Amen.

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