

WELCOME 5th May 2019 – 3 Easter '19 C

Revelation 2 & 3

Good morning! Welcome to worship today! Special welcome to our visitors & guests...It is wonderful that you are all here! It's our privilege & joy to serve you in worship today...

A mirror. Every home has at least 1. Do you ever take a long hard look at yourself? Forget your hair, wrinkles, pimples or makeup & look at yourself. Who is that? Do you have the courage to speak honestly about who/what you see? Or no?

Rev 2 & 3 - Jesus walks alongside his Church: the Church he loves, the church his blood has bought; the church he holds securely in his hands, & asks us to answer honestly: "What do you see?" What sort of Church are you/am I/are we?

A good honest look at ourselves can be confronting, challenging, even convicting; but Jesus knows what's at stake. So he calls us out, warns us of danger, & above all reminds us of the incredible promised blessings given to those who live in honesty & claim daily his resurrection victory.

In Christ's presence, by his power, we live the promised journey toward fullness of healing & life and discover a grace that is "*making all things new*" including us.

Living in Honesty; Jesus loves you too much to pretend everything's alright when it isn't. If you need comfort or strength or wisdom or encouragement... He will provide. But if you need to be challenged or confronted or pulled back from self-destruction...his mighty word & powerful love will deliver. Remember: there is nothing too great for God's power to handle or too insignificant for his love to embrace. From beginning to end, God is in control & his love transforms everything...our past...our future...and how we live right now.

We'll explore & experience that together today... we're glad you are here today!

Let's pray...

PRAYER OF THE DAY

Heavenly Father...open our ears & our hearts...guide our minds & our obedience free us from ourselves & lead us into your perfect will. Take all that we are and make us all that Christ is for your glory and the sake of our bold witness to your saving love in Jesus Christ...in his Name...Amen

3 EASTER '19 C – MAKING ALL THINGS NEW: LIVING IN HONESTY

FAITH CHAT:

1. Who was/is the disciplinarian in your house? Why is discipline critical in life?
2. What would Jesus commend/critique about your relationship with him?

If I were to ask, "What are the last words Jesus spoke to the church?" our 1st answer might be some form of Great Commission. For the most part...that's right Those would be the last words Jesus spoke to the church while he was here...after Easter ^b/₄ he ascended back to the Father. But what we read, Rev 2 & 3, are in fact the last words Scripture records of Jesus speaking directly to his church...actually walking among & standing with & speaking to his church one final time in this revelation John received. **BIBLES** Maybe THE most important of these 7 Sundays?

And what we are **NOT** going to do as we look at this conversation Jesus has with us (w/ his church) is get lost in the deep weeds of the specifics to each church...we'd be here all day & we'd miss the big stuff that Jesus wants our hearts to hold on to. So I won't try to explain who the *Nicolaitans* were or what a *synagogue of Satan* is or who *Jezebel* is in this context. 1st...nobody really knows (prophecy always has a specific context as well as future application) & 2nd we'd be here all day & we'd miss the big stuff that Jesus wants our hearts to hold on to.

But what we will do is start with 2 verses: 3:19 & 3:22 - "*I correct & discipline everyone I love...Anyone with ears to hear must listen to the Spirit & understand what he is saying to the churches.*" Everything in these 2 chapters holds together in those 2 truths. Hear it like this...GP this morning has this from Pr David Platt: "*Jesus does not pamper his people. He loves us too much for that.*" Jesus loves his church. He bought & paid for us. His love for us knows no end/no limit. But that love is not some dressed up version of 21st century "tolerance"...some limp-wristed milquetoast blind-eye turned to imminent crushing disaster...just want you to be "happy" crap.

So...if you're in the house today & you need comfort & encouragement because you're having a hard time hanging in there...(battlefield vs auction yard) you're going to get that. But if you're here & you've compromised your faith for your kids or your social standing & relationships or your business interests...you will be challenged & rebuked & maybe even convicted...but whatever your circumstance this morning... you will be loved & you will be called to the heart of Jesus & the hands of the Father for hope & help & healing & strength...those 2 things..."*I correct & discipline everyone I love...Anyone with ears to hear must listen to the Spirit & understand what he is saying to the churches.*" Given those central truths...what do we need to hear & understand & take to heart so those 2 truths can bear fruit in our lives...in us?

7 churches specifically addressed...4 big takeaways...ready? #1 Jesus knows us Jesus knows us...deeply...intimately...fully...completely. No secrets No pretense No hiding...Jesus knows us. Throughout the letters to these 7 churches "I know I see I'm aware." Over & over again. That ought to be somewhat startling or at least give you pause & cause for thought...Why? Jesus knows us better than we know ourselves. We are masters of self-deception. We have PhDs in denial & self-deceit. We are well-skilled at presenting a good public face & having something completely different going on deep inside. Don't believe me? Sardis...

I know all the things you do & that you have a reputation for being alive—but you are dead. If your heart didn't skip a beat there - you're not listening. If that didn't shock 3 more grey hair into your head you're asleep. Jesus looks at the church & says what he said to Pharisees: "*whitewashed tombs*" look good on the outside but I can tell you're dead. It is possible to have the outward trappings of faithfulness & a stone cold dead heart. It is possible to go through the motions of faith & have Jesus look at you & say "*I never knew you.*" It is possible for a church to do all sorts of churchy stuff & Jesus looks through time & eternity & says, "dead."

But what..."*I correct & discipline everyone I love...Anyone with ears to hear must listen to the Spirit & understand what he is saying to the churches.*" Ask the question...What would Jesus commend/critique about my faith? Is my faith life/relationship w/ Jesus the same as it was 5-10-20-2 years ago? No church should always be the same. No believer is exempt from repentance & the need for transformation. Jesus died for you as you are but he loves you too much to leave you as you are. Jesus knows us He knows we'll avoid transformation & come up with all sorts of excuses to accommodate to the culture or give in to what's easy or convenient...Mirror to your spiritual life...when was the last time you shared *the hope you have within you* with someone else? Generous sharing of your blessings? Say it w/ me..."*I correct & discipline everyone I love...Anyone with ears to hear must listen to the Spirit & understand what he is saying to the churches.*" *What's he saying?*

#2 – Jesus loves us – deeply – eternally – Jesus is not willing to give up on any of his churches or any of those for whom he has died. Look at Laodicea about whom he has nothing good to say/threatens to spew out of his mouth. "*I correct & discipline everyone I love. So be diligent & turn from your indifference. Look! I stand at the door & knock. If you hear my voice & open the door, I will come in, & we will share a meal together as friends. Those who are victorious will sit with me on my throne, just as I was victorious & sat with my Father on his throne.*" Jesus is warning this church about imminent disaster based on their current behavior but he holds out hope & the promise of his restoration & renewal & a meal in his

presence. Hear this! No one is beyond the reach of his loving call to repentance. He calls us to himself for healing & hope. He seeks to restore to them the joy of his salvation. More than anything the Son was sent not to condemn the world but to save it & he does not take pleasure in seeing his family diminished or crippled by complacency or compromise. Jesus loves his church. Can you feel the burden on his heart for each one of us? Getting us into his family is only part of his mission. Keeping us close & releasing us into his mission is the goal. So how does he do that?

#3 – Jesus protects & preserves us – The fact that Jesus speaks to us at all is evidence of that. This witness maintained for us for 2000 years as a word to us tells us that Jesus has not left us to fend for ourselves. He is not off at a distance shaking his head at our pain mistakes struggles confusion sin complacency compromise accommodation to the world. Jesus steps into our midst to caution & guard & send his spirit & give his word & encourage us...to rein us in & bring us back. Remember the night he was betrayed he said to Peter: *“Simon, Simon, Satan has asked to sift each of you like wheat. But I have pleaded in prayer for you, Simon that your faith should not fail. So when you have repented & turned to me again, strengthen your brothers.”*

NT writers knew his pleading/praying/grappling w/ Satan on our behalf & restoring us from failure did not stop there *Christ is able, once & forever, to save those who come to God through him. He lives forever to intercede with God on their behalf. Heb 7:25* *Who then will condemn us? No one—for Christ Jesus died for us & was raised to life for us, & he is sitting in the place of honour at God's right hand, pleading for us. – Rom 8:34*

When Jesus through John speaks to these churches (& us) he does so so that in whatever circumstance or situation or season of life we are in we are strengthened in faith & emboldened in witness. 4X in these letters Jesus commends their *“patient endurance”* & promises that those who endure remain faithful even in the worst of trial & testing will be blessed beyond the grief & turmoil they have experienced....will be blessed eternally in measure far surpassing the temporal pain...Paul wrote to the church in Corinth: *So we do not lose heart. Even though our outer nature is wasting away, our inner nature is being renewed day by day. For this slight momentary affliction is preparing us for an eternal weight of glory beyond all measure, because we look not at what can be seen but at what cannot be seen; for what can be seen is temporary, but what cannot be seen is eternal. - 2 Cor 4:16-18*

Getting us into his family is only part of Christ's work. Keeping us close & releasing us into his mission is the ultimate goal. #4 – Jesus frees us for his purposes – so that others might experience his saving love his renewing strength his comfort in grief – not just to keep us for his own but to use us as his agents of love & grace... not just to make us his but to release us for his work in this world. And when we fail to do that...look at Ephesus...*“But I have this complaint against you. You don't love me or each other as you did at first!”* What does that mean?

What do we know about Ephesus? Best picture we get is Acts 19. Paul is there for 2 years & some...Here's what happens. Paul is preaching daily in one of the public lecture halls *so that people throughout the province of Asia—both Jews & Greeks—heard the word of the Lord.* The Ephesians are coming to faith left right & centre & listening to Paul & then as they go they take the gospel with them & share it all over the province of Asia. Then what happens? The Spirit manifest miraculous healings & exorcisms & the passion of these new believers is so striking that they burn a million \$\$ worth of sorcery books in the public square & begin to bankrupt the idol-making silversmith industry & that causes a riot that gets Paul run out of town.

But for some reason after Paul leaves they get lazy & that fire starts going out. They lose that burning desire to see their friends & business associates & children & in-laws drawn into the family of Christ. They forget that there's power in the name of Jesus that triumphs over sin & evil – that drives back darkness – that heals – that releases from bondage...& Jesus says if you're going to live ineffective small faith lives, I'll shut you down. A church lives or dies by faithfulness to Christ & passing the gospel on to those who do not yet know they've been died for. Ephesus was dying

The word to every follower of Christ & for those who don't yet...Jesus knows us. Jesus loves us. Jesus protects & preserves us. Jesus frees us for his purposes. Jesus is at this very minute refining & purifying & making us holy & like him. He is shaping & molding & protecting & preserving & calling us deeper into our relationship with him. He began this good work in us & he is going to see it through to its completion.

“Jesus does not pamper his people. He loves us too much for that.” Jesus loves you too much to pretend everything's alright when it isn't. If you need comfort or strength or wisdom or encouragement...He will provide. But if you need to be challenged or confronted or pulled back from self-destruction in areas where you are compromising your relationship with him or his witness to the world...his mighty word & powerful love will deliver...Having paid the ultimate price to make you his & give you life, he will not bear to lose you again.

Let's pray with that in mind...***Heavenly Father; in your Son you have defeated death for us, and in Him alone is there wisdom and victory in life here now. Grant that we may know his risen presence, be led by your abundant grace, be protected by your Spirit and pursue your purpose each day. Cause our lives to reflect your glory and love so the world around us would be drawn to you forever. In Jesus' Name...Amen***