

Laodicea and the Marriage Supper

SPEAKER	Matt Ryniker
DATE	Sunday, October 15, 2023
PASSAGES	Revelation 3:14-22; Hosea 12:8; Song of Solomon 5:2-6; Leviticus 18:24-25; Leviticus 20:22; Isaiah 55:1-3; Isaiah 25:6-9; Zechariah 9:16-17; 2 Kings 6:8-23; Revelation 19:6-9; Revelation 21:1-6
MESSAGE	Begins at 1:21:03 in the service

THE BIG IDEA

Laodicea is the one church Jesus finds nothing good to say about. And that same letter hands them free gold, clean clothes, working eyes, a place at his table and a seat on his throne. Judgment against sin, free goods and a great meal is a pattern God has run before — and wherever it appears, grace is what it is for.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- ◆ Every church heard every letter. Laodicea's came last, and it was the hardest to sit through — no commendation, no faithful remnant singled out, nothing.
- ◆ "I am rich, I have prospered, I need nothing" is a quotation, not a coincidence. Ephraim said it first in Hosea, and God was not fooled then either.
- ◆ Cold and hot are both good. The problem with lukewarm is not half-heartedness measured against zeal — it is that it is unpleasant to drink.
- ◆ "I will spit you out of my mouth" is what the land does to its inhabitants in Leviticus. Jesus takes the promised land's own line and applies it to his body.
- ◆ "Behold, I stand at the door and knock" carries an urgency we miss: in Song of Solomon the bride takes too long to get up, and when she opens the door he has gone.
- ◆ The three moves in this letter — judgment, free provision, a feast — recur in Isaiah, in 2 Kings, and at the end of Revelation. They belong together.

- ◆ The worst church in the seven receives the strongest promise in the seven: not a seat in the back, but a seat on the throne.

► 1:21:03

Hope has been reading through Revelation, a book Matt described as belonging to us as an inheritance even when it perplexes us — and this week brought the last of the seven letters, which he called “really paradoxical and difficult to read.”

The letter with no commendation

► 1:23:30

The letters follow a shape: an address to the angel of the church, a description of Jesus fitted to what follows, an encouragement, a rebuke, a promise to the one who conquers, and the closing line about ears. These went to real cities and real congregations, and because all seven were bundled together, every church read every other church’s mail. Laodicea’s came last. It is one of only two with no encouragement in it at all.

“I know your works: you are neither cold nor hot. Would that you were either cold or hot! So, because you are lukewarm, and neither hot nor cold, I will spit you out of my mouth. For you say, I am rich, I have prospered, and I need nothing, not realizing that you are wretched, pitiable, poor, blind, and naked.”

REVELATION 3:15–17 ↗

Matt paused on the opening description — “the beginning of God’s creation” — to close a door before anyone walked through it. It is no hint that Jesus began. It is that the new creation starts in his body: he is ground zero for God’s remaking of everything. Which matters here, because in this darkest of the seven there is “a secret grace that is an unbelievable joy to those who have the ear to hear it” — in the Son’s own body, pain and blood and death make something new.

Three themes that have travelled together before

► 1:27:39

The letter can feel scattered. Matt organised it into three: God’s judgment against sin, an offer of free goods, and a dinner invitation. Nothing obvious connects those three — except that they have appeared

as a group at least twice in the Old Testament and once more at the end of Revelation. Finding where else God has done this is what turns the lens.

“Ah, but I am rich”

► 1:28:15

Someone confronted over sin, answering that they are wealthy and doing fine — we have seen this before.

“Ephraim has said, ‘Ah, but I am rich; I have found wealth for myself; in all my labors they cannot find in me iniquity or sin.’”

HOSEA 12:8 ↗

The chapter around it is bloodshed, iniquity and idolatry — obvious from God’s side of the table, invisible from Ephraim’s. “There’s no record of wrong here, nothing to see here folks, move along, I’m doing just fine,” Matt said, and then admitted the arrogance was one he could relate to. So when Jesus says to Laodicea *you say I am rich*, he is quoting the most spiritually blind sentence in the prophets back to them.

The contrast with the letter they had just heard read is sharp. To Smyrna, Jesus says he sees their poverty, yet they are rich (Revelation 2:8–11). To Laodicea: I see that you see your riches, and you are poor. Smyrna refused the idolatry woven into the trade guilds and was shunned and impoverished for it. Laodicea was neither shunned nor cut off from the market — which, Matt suggested, is a fair guess at how they had decided the same question.

The groom outside the door

► 1:31:35

“Behold, I stand at the door and knock” gets read as gentle patience. Its source is not patient. In Song of Solomon the bride is in bed, half awake, and hears her beloved knocking. She has already bathed her feet; she does not want to get up and dress. When she finally opens the door, he is gone (Song of Solomon 5:2–6). The allusion carries a clock in it: I am what you need and I am right here — do not take forever repenting.

Cold, hot, and the thing you spit out

► 1:33:33

We tend to hear “cold” as the committed atheist — better a hard no than a soft yes. Matt pushed back. Why would Jesus rather you be an atheist? Cold and hot are both good: iced coffee and espresso, sweet tea and hot tea, a cold pool and a hot tub. Lukewarm is the one you spit out. “What he’s really saying is: yuck.”

► 1:35:32

And that verb has a history. It is what the promised land does.

“Do not make yourselves unclean by any of these things, for by all these the nations I am driving out before you have become unclean, and the land became unclean, so that I punished its iniquity, and the land vomited out its inhabitants.”

LEVITICUS 18:24–25 ↗

Leviticus 18 is the chapter on sexual purity. [Leviticus 20:22](#) says the same thing at the end of a chapter on idolatry — keep my statutes, that the land may not vomit you out. Those two sins are exactly what Jesus names in the other letters, in the Jezebel group, the Nicolaitan group, the Balaam group. Here he does not spell them out. He does something more pointed: he takes on the identity of the land itself. I will spit you out of my mouth — out of my body. Like salt that has lost its taste ([Matthew 5:13](#)), good for nothing, thrown out.

Then he offers them things for free

► 1:39:19

Gold refined by fire is not metal — in [Job 23:10](#) and [Malachi 3:2–3](#) it is what comes out the other side of God’s refining. But the sharper question is the one Matt asked next: how do you buy anything with no money? Where have we seen that?

► 1:39:59

“Come, everyone who thirsts, come to the waters; and he who has no money, come, buy and eat! Come, buy wine and milk without money and without price. Why do you spend your money for that which is not bread, and your labor for that which does not satisfy? Listen diligently to me, and eat what is good, and delight yourselves in rich food.”

ISAIAH 55:1-3 ↗

“This is not a trick,” Matt said — not cheese on a cartoon rat trap. And look at who is being offered it. Isaiah’s audience is not the sensitive and spiritual; it is faithless shepherds, a treacherous lot. They get invited to a free meal, and the substance of the meal turns out to be God himself.

Judgment, and then a feast for everybody

► 1:42:55

The same three moves sit together earlier in Isaiah. Chapter 24 opens with the Lord emptying the earth and making it desolate (Isaiah 24:1); kings are gathered like prisoners in a pit, sun and moon confounded. And then:

“On this mountain the Lord of hosts will make for all peoples a feast of rich food, a feast of well-aged wine, of rich food full of marrow, of aged wine well refined... He will swallow up death forever; and the Lord God will wipe away tears from all faces.”

ISAIAH 25:6-9 ↗

The peoples gathered up in the judgment are the same peoples gathered for the party. And the feast reflects the host, not the guests — [Zechariah 9:16-17](#) says they shine like the jewels of a crown, and then asks how great is his goodness, how great his beauty.

The Syrian soldier who got dinner

► 1:46:13

Matt’s favourite version of the pattern is in [2 Kings 6](#). Syrian raiders keep missing their ambushes because Elisha keeps announcing them, so the king sends an army to take out one prophet in a hut. The story usually stops at the horses and chariots of fire around Elisha. Matt kept going. Elisha blinds them, leads them like children into Samaria, and the king of Israel — with an eagerness Matt compared to a wolf over trapped prey — asks, shall I strike them down? No. Feed them and send them home.

He told it from inside the Syrian ranks: marching somewhere random, spacing out, snapping to in a fort that is not yours, surrounded by drawn bows, sword still down, watching them move furniture and realising it is tables. “We are completely and utterly subdued by dinner.” The soldier goes home uninjured, and his wife asks how the raid went. *They threw a party for us. It looked like a wedding, and they sent us home in peace.* The text adds that the Syrians stopped raiding — and Matt’s imagined soldier adds the reason: Israel’s God is strong, but good.

Where the pattern is going

► 1:52:37

“Hallelujah! For the Lord our God the Almighty reigns. Let us rejoice and exult and give him the glory, for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and his Bride has made herself ready... Blessed are those who are invited to the marriage supper of the Lamb.”

REVELATION 19:6–9 ↗

The angel has to tell John twice that these are the true words of God, which Matt found entirely reasonable: “Seriously, man, this is really going to happen?” The judgment that follows is real — the rider subdues his enemies. But even while Babylon falls, the message going out is “Come out of her, my people”. The destruction is not aimed at the people caught up in it; he is not willing that any should perish. There is a way out, and it leads to a table.

► 1:55:57

“Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man. He will dwell with them, and they will be his people... He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more... Behold, I am making all things new... To the thirsty I will give from the spring of the water of life without payment.”

REVELATION 21:1–6 ↗

Judgment leading to new creation, a people redeemed out of wickedness, and a great meal with no cost to the invited. Laodicea’s letter, 2 Kings 6, Isaiah 25, the last two chapters of the Bible — the same three things, every time.

The largest promise in any of the seven

► 1:57:50

Matt asked the room to feel what it would have been like to sit in that service. You have heard the other six letters read out. Yours is last, and it is the one where he does not even threaten to remove your lampstand — it almost reads as though he already has. “He barely talks about us like we’re a church.” And then the groom is at the door asking to be let back in, and the sad and sorry lot is handed a dinner invitation.

► 2:00:49

It would be one thing to be told you could tag along in the nosebleeds and be grateful you got in at all. That is not the ending. “To the one who conquers, I will grant him to sit with me on my throne, as I also conquered and sat down with my Father on his throne.” The worst church on the list gets the biggest promotion on the list — and the overcoming is by his work, not their status or their wealth. Matt closed by praying for grace to repent, for eyes opened to the glory of God’s generosity, and for the marriage supper of the Lamb: come, Lord Jesus.

FOR FURTHER STUDY**SCRIPTURE IN THIS MESSAGE**

- Revelation 3:14–22
- Hosea 12:8
- Revelation 2:8–11
- Song of Solomon 5:2–6
- Leviticus 18:24–25
- Leviticus 20:22
- Matthew 5:13
- Job 23:10
- Malachi 3:2–3
- Isaiah 55:1–3
- Isaiah 24:1
- Isaiah 25:6–9
- Zechariah 9:16–17
- 2 Kings 6:8–23
- Revelation 19:6–9
- Revelation 18:4
- 2 Peter 3:9
- Revelation 21:1–6

FOR YOUR HOPE GROUP

1. Laodicea said “I need nothing” and believed it. Where in your life are you most confident that there is nothing to see here?
2. Matt argued that cold and hot are both good and lukewarm is simply unpleasant. What does that change about how you have read this verse?
3. In Song of Solomon the bride opens the door too late. What is the thing you keep intending to get up and deal with?
4. Read 2 Kings 6:8–23 together. What does it do to your picture of God that his answer to captured enemies is dinner?
5. The letter’s three moves are judgment, free provision and an invitation. Which of the three do you most need to receive this week, and what would receiving it actually look like by Sunday?

ABOUT THE SPEAKER

Matt Ryniker is Hope Chapel's senior pastor — his own description of the job — and reports to the church's governing board, who he cheerfully calls his boss. He and his wife Mandy have been held up from Hope's own pulpit as an example to the congregation. He spent a stretch of his working life as a public school teacher, and he still teaches the parent dedication classes where families commit to raising their children to follow Jesus — a theme that runs straight into this message.

Watch the full message:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Oy65J2Q9TIM&t=4863s>

These notes summarise a message preached at Hope Chapel in Austin, Texas. They are a reader's aid, not a transcript — scripture references link to the full passage so you can read it in context.