

Revelation 3:14-22 Yuk! Alwalton

What gets left at the end of a box of chocolates in your house? What do you eat first, and what can't you bear the thought of even though it's covered in chocolate? We all have our favourite chocolates and we all have those that we would prefer not to take, some we love – some we hate.

Now pay attention because this talk involves chocolate.

But first, if you are parents, I wonder what your hopes are for your children? As parents we can end up throwing ourselves headlong into a quest to make sure that our children have everything, we can actually work so hard at it that we fill our children with anxieties.

Take for example the little boy who was chatting to his friend. He said, "I'm really worried."

"Why?" asked his friend, "Well, replied the boy, "my Dad slaves away at his job so that I'll never want for anything – I'll even be able to go to university one day then at weekends he helps me with my homework and takes me to clubs. And Mum goes out to work too and then comes home and spends every day washing and ironing and cleaning up after me as well as looking after me when I get poorly. They both spend every minute of every day of their lives working just for me – I'm really worried." His friend looked puzzled, "What have you go to be worried about?"

To which his friend replied, "I'm worried they might try to escape!"

Parents – whilst we might want the best for our children, sometimes it's not hard to suspect that we might be overdoing it. But I guess the things that most parents want for their children are things like health, wealth and happiness.

Now the Christian Church is made up of God's children and he wants what's best for us too and the final book of the Bible (Revelation) begins with seven letters to seven churches, seven groups of God's children and the final letter of those seven is written to a church in a place called Laodicea.

Now the great thing about Laodicea was that it was healthy, wealthy and happy, what a great place for your kids to be!

Laodicea was healthy, It was, famous for the eye ointment manufactured there, it was the Nottingham of its day with the head office of Boots the Chemist situated there.

Laodicea was famous as a rich town, it was a centre of banking – and we all know how rich bankers can be! Great place for a great job.

And the wool from Laodicea was the best which meant that the local fashion industry was second to none. And what makes people happy? Well our culture certainly thinks that it is shopping so Laodicea must have been a great place to live with all the top fashion outlets of the day; healthy, wealthy and happy.

Funny then that Jesus describes his children, the church members there as “wretched, pitiful, poor, blind and naked”! Everything in their culture said that they had made it, that their life was good, that they were doing better than OK, but Jesus said that they were fooling themselves; They thought they healthy but they were blind. They thought they were wealthy but they were wretched, pitiful and poor and they thought they were happy but they were naked not trendy. Fundamentally they were focusing on the wrong things.

OK, I promised you chocolate, so who likes chocolate?
Taste test: Unlucky dip?

Choc's without wrappers nice or nasty?

We all have things we don't like, things that we spit out of our mouths because they are just yucky. Some chocolate companies play on that like Revels – but even they got rid of the peanut and coconut options – just too awful! Even if its not chocolate coated coconut, the reality is that all of have something that we are likely to spit out if we find that we are eating it or drinking it because we really don't like it.

But it doesn't need to be just the taste – it needs to be the temperature too. Do you remember the palaver you went through with baby's bottles? How you would sit there for hours in a café with a bottle of formula milk sat in a jug of hot water? After about two hours you thought it was hot enough but once you gave it a shake it felt stone cold!

Eventually you would try a little drop on the back of your arm – and you never realised how sensitive that part of your body was until you had children, did you? Suddenly you discover that you have squirted molten lava onto your skin – how could you even consider putting that into your child's mouth! No, baby milk needs to be lukewarm.

But babies are the only people who like things lukewarm, try giving lukewarm tea or coffee to an adult – it's horrible, nobody wants it. When we were in Keswick we either had a hot steaming coffee (with a nice bit of cake), or on the days when it was really hot we bought an iced coffee and took it into the main sessions. To be honest I wouldn't have been very impressed if Costa had offered me a lukewarm Americano.

But Laodicea was the capital of “lukewarmness” and it appears the Christians were no different. You see, Laodicea was midway between two other towns;

Herapolis was close to some lovely hot springs, they literally had hot water on tap and people loved to go there for the spa's. In the other direction was Colossae with its lovely fresh cold spring water supplies.

But as I say Laodicea was in between; it didn't have its own springs, it just got the by now lukewarm, mineral water from Herapolis pumped down to it – it was a bit like drinking lukewarm salty water.

I was so nasty, in fact, that you might even want to eat a Bounty bar after having tasted some. And Jesus says that the Christians in the church are just like that; they are neither hot nor cold. They aren't dead against Jesus, they aren't antagonistic, they aren't persecuting the Christians, but then again, neither are they hot, in other words they are not on fire with love for God, they don't desire to serve God.

They look spiritual, they appear to do the right thing by going to church, but there is no depth, no passion, no commitment there. They prefer to seriously worship money, their health, or their lifestyle rather than God.

So Jesus says, "You're just like the water in Laodicea" in fact Jesus' very words are, "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."

Jesus says Luke warm Christians are no good. "Now, hang on a minute Malcolm," you cry, "Don't start getting all radical on us!" But I'm not, it is just common sense; would you be any good in your job if that was your attitude? Who would want a lukewarm accountant – not that committed to getting the figures right? Or a lukewarm police officer – only nominally committed to keeping law and order.

Or a lukewarm surveyor – “yeah, your house is kind of OK, I guess.” Or how about as a parent? Would you be any good if you were lukewarm in your commitment to your children?

Well God is certainly not Lukewarm about his children, in verse 19 Jesus says, “Those whom I love I rebuke and discipline so be earnest and repent”. That’s a great message isn’t? Jesus doesn’t want us to be separated from God, Jesus loves us and like any good parent that means that when he can see the children of God putting themselves in danger he will rebuke us and discipline us. So God will tell us off, he will say some things which are hard for us to hear, but it is because he loves us and because he knows that the best thing for us is to turn back to him

So what about us? It doesn’t matter if you’re a visitor here today, or you’ve been attending church for 80 years; are you rich in your faith, have you built up treasure in heaven where it will last for ever rather than material riches which will remain here when you die?

Do you see Jesus clearly for who he is; the only one who can save you from the sins you like everyone else has committed, the sins which separate you from God’s eternal love? Or are you still spiritually blind?

And are you dressed in white – the Bible’s symbolic language for knowing your sins are forgiven through Jesus or are you simply wearing this season’s must-have attitude or that comfy old jumper of scepticism that you can’t bear to part with?

Jesus said the answer is up to you. It’s like you’re at home, comfy, warm, settled in for the night, TV on, children in bed and then there is a knock at the door. You have everything you need, you don’t want to be disturbed. You have a choice.

You can ignore the knocking because eventually they will go away and leave you alone, or you can get up and open the door. It's up to you, the door handle is on your side.

Thing is, what if the person at the door were God? Are you doing alright without him, for now? The clock's ticking. Or do you think he's fooled when we occasionally, even weekly, perhaps even daily, allow him our spare time; that's just being lukewarm about the sovereign saviour God of eternity.

What if we opened the door? What if we let him into our lives? What if we gave our children more than a good education, more than all the technology we could afford, more even than a loving home? What if we gave our children a real, meaningful, eternal relationship with God who loves them and has saved them from death if they will turn to him trusting in Jesus' death and resurrection? What if we could know that for ourselves too?

Jesus said to the church at Laodicea, "Here I am! I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in and eat with him, and he with me. To him who overcomes, I will give the right to sit with me on my throne, just as I overcame and sat down with my Father on his throne."

It was their choice. What's he saying to you?