

Growth Group Questions

14th Sunday after Pentecost, September 3, 2023

Introduction

In this week's sermon I compare the American Christian church to the church in Laodicea of Revelation 3. Jesus calls them a "lukewarm" church, neither cold nor hot, and expresses his desire to spit them out. Read Revelation 3:14-22 and describe how they are similar to the churches we see today.

Into the Word – Jeremiah 15:15-21

1. Jeremiah is known as "the weeping prophet", known for his difficult ministry at the time of Jerusalem's downfall. He certainly knew what it was to carry a cross for God's truth. Describe sacrifices Jeremiah made for God's Word. (v. 16-18)
2. What is God's response to Jeremiah's questioning?
3. In what ways do faithful Christians sometimes have to be a "wall of bronze" against others?
4. Think of a person or group of people today facing challenges or cruelty for holding to the truth. Say a short prayer for them.

Into the Word – Romans 8:18-25

5. Another great section of Scripture's greatest chapter. According to v. 18, why can Christians endure suffering?
6. When Adam and Eve sinned, they didn't just ruin a perfect mankind, but a whole perfect creation. Give examples of creation's "groaning" while it waits for liberation from decay. When will that liberation come to pass?

7. Verse 23 is interesting, describing us as having the "firstfruits" of the Spirit already but waiting and hoping for "our adoption to sonship, the redemption of our bodies." Describe how we are already blessed by the Spirit, and just what it is that we are waiting for in the future.

Into the Word – Matthew 16:21-26

8. Once again Jesus tells his disciples what was going to happen to him. He told them the details of who, what, where, and how long his suffering would be. Why didn't they understand?
9. Why does Peter object to Jesus' words? And why does Jesus react so strongly to it, calling Peter "Satan"?
10. In the sermon I said that Peter knew Jesus' identity ("the Messiah, Son of the Living God") but didn't understand his mission (to suffer the cross to give sinners the crown of forgiveness). Which is the more misunderstood today, who Jesus is or what his mission was?
11. Some televangelists (and others) preach a so-called prosperity gospel, assuring listeners that God wants them to be healthy, wealthy, and blessed. Use these verses to come up with a defense against that false doctrine.
12. Salem has a challenge with member participation and service. Many members see the church as a place to be served and not a center to find ways to serve others. Discuss how we can change that part of our church culture?

Closing Prayer

Savior Jesus, bless me to know the value of your cross and the crosses you now place on me. Let me serve in humility and hope. Amen.