

## You've Got Mail - Laodocia

Scripture: Revelation 3: 14-21  
Date: November 1, 2020

### CITY

The letters to the churches in the book of Revelation culminate with a visit to the city of Laodocia. Laodocia was an impressive city – an important city that sat at the crossroads between the eastern empire and Rome. An intersection of the cities in Asia Minor before going east. Laodocia was the home to a significant medical community where it was renowned for a particular salve / cream that helped heal many illnesses of the eyes.

In addition, it was an important centre for commerce as many large banking institutions were housed here. The wealth of the city was so great that following a earthquake they were able to re-build on their own rather than receiving financial support from Rome. Some of the wealth is attributed to the unique garment industry which made fashions from the black wool of sheep raised locally. The black wool from these sheep were fashioned into special garments and were highly valued – and priced

But for all the advantages that Laodocia had - for all that Loadocia could do on its own – it had one geographical issue. The valley in which it was situated had a terrible water supply. There wasn't enough and it was of a poor quality. However, a few miles away to the north were the hot springs of Hieropolis and a few miles away to the south were mountain runoffs of Colosse. A high price to pay to bring in water - but you could afford to and so you did it

### CRITIQUE

Yesterday was Halloween wear people put on masks and costumes pretending to be someone else. Jesus calls out Laodocia for its own version of Halloween. The city looks prosperous and successful and the Christian church in Laodocia looks prosperous and successful also. But Jesus calls out Laodocia for its pretending because He sees the masks that they are wearing.

Jesus sees their efforts for self sufficiency and their efforts for cultural approval and assimilation and He calls them out on this using the images of the city itself – vs. 17. The fashionable black wool that made Laodocia famous is an image that Jesus throws back at the church as He calls them naked. The power of the banks and the power of the wealthy is an image that Jesus throws back at the church calling them poor. The medical wonders of the hospitals etc. is an image that Jesus throws back at the church calling them blind.

The areas that Laodocia takes pride it - Jesus punctures as He sees their deeds in how they live and He knows the description of who they are.

## CONDEMNATION

Jesus then uses another image of their city - the water supply – to complete His critique / condemnation. He references the hot – healing - water from Hieropolis and the cold – refreshing – water from Colosse as His illustration. Because by the time this imported water arrived in Laodocia – they are lukewarm. No longer hot and no longer cold – they are tepid.

It's NOT that the faith of the Laodocian church is hot / cold that Jesus is referring to – it is the living out of the faith. The original intention of the waters has been compromised. Instead of being warm OR cold both are lukewarm – not having any benefit at all. The water is so putrid in taste that one wants to spit, vomit, puke it out.

It's this judgement that Jesus puts on the church at Laodocia. That their deeds – the description of who they are no longer resemble Jesus. They are so identified with the city – the culture – that they are unrecognizable to Jesus.

## CALLING

Today is Reformation Sunday. The Sunday which marks the remembrance of Martin Luther challenging the Roman Catholic to its calling as the church of Christ by nailing questions to the door of the church. Martin Luther saw errors in how the church thought and lived and was trying to call it into a period of reformation back to God's people and his intent on re-acquiring a focus on Jesus

The greeting of the letter to Laodocia reminds the church of Jesus as well. The letter begins with Jesus as the Amen. Amen not as the ending of a prayer but Amen as a commitment to the beginning of action. The greeting continues to describe Jesus as truth where He sees truth, He is truth & He invites all into truth. The greeting ascribes the authority of Jesus as the ruler. An authority given to believers – not over others in the world but an authority over the temporary ruler of the world.

The letter continues with Jesus inviting the church – not unbelievers – to open the door that has been closed and allow Him back into their hearts and minds. The image in verse 20 is a door but the image – with the water focus could easily have been a shut off valve. Where the living water of Jesus – the hot invigorating water and the cold refreshing water – is stymied by clogged pipes.

The challenge is not a judgement. The text is clear in its warning but not in its imminence. The text speaks in verse 15 that Jesus is about to spit them out so the invitation to repent and respond with zeal remains. Jesus invites, calls, challenges the church to follow Him and to imitate Him. Finding a wealth from His refined gold, wearing clothes not from the worldly fashion but from the purity of Jesus and finding a healing salve not from the world but from the One who heals all things in His name and power.

Jesus is calling the church at Laodocia to be a reflection not of the city but of the Christ. To find their sufficiency in this world in Jesus that will be their sufficiency in the world yet to come.