



FREE
METHODIST
CHURCH
IN CANADA

“Returning to our First Love”

FMCIC WEEK OF PRAYER & FASTING 2025

Church of Laodicea: The Deceitfulness of Lukewarmness

REVELATION 3:14-22

JAN 26 – FEB 2, 2025

“And to the angel of the church in Laodicea write: ‘The words of the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the beginning of God’s creation.

“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. I counsel you to buy from me gold refined by fire, so that you may be rich, and white garments so that you may clothe yourself and the shame of your nakedness may not be seen, and salve to anoint your eyes, so that you may see. Those whom I love, I reprove and discipline, so be zealous and repent. Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and eat with him, and he with me. 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. He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.”

The English Bible uses the phrase "deceitfulness of..." three times. It is used twice to refer to the "deceitfulness of riches" and once to "the deceitfulness of sin." The deceitfulness of riches is referenced in the parable of the sower in Matthew 13:22 and Mark 4:19. Here, riches, along with the cares of this world, are said to choke the word of God, thus making us unfruitful. The final occurrence is in Hebrews 3:13, referring to the deceitfulness of sin, where we are to encourage one another daily to turn from the sin of an unbelieving heart that turns away from the living God so that none of us may be hardened by sin.

Sin and riches, therefore, are two of the most potent deceptions of our enemy, Satan, because they have the power to erode our faith and trust in the Word of God and His Son, Jesus. Whether it's the deceitfulness of sin that makes us think, be, act or see ourselves as *less* than God wants us in Christ or the deceitfulness of riches that makes us think of ourselves *more* highly than we ought, both result in the same thing– it hardens our hearts towards God. To avoid this deception, Jesus invites us to come to Him and buy from Him pure gold, tried in the fire, righteous garments to cover our nakedness and ointment to cure our blindness.

Blinded by their affluence, the Laodicean Church had pushed Jesus not just to the margins but completely outside the doors of their church. So, He stood outside His own church, knocking to come in and dine with them. Why? Because the goods He offered were exclusive and could never be found in their marketplaces (which, by the way, were full of goods of the finest calibre in their world). Yet the riches that Jesus offered far surpassed them all. He was offering them Himself. With that, new eyes to see their nakedness, unlike Adam and Eve's eyes, which were opened after the old serpent's deception. This kind of enlightenment is not to blind them to God's provision and bounty (as it did in the garden), nor to seek after wisdom and self-reliance, but to open their eyes to the exact opposite. It was to open their eyes to see all the things God had made available to them in Himself. No other market could sell or provide this. His gifts were free, but their source and healing powers were exclusive to His personal claims and personhood. His gold was pure but had been tried by the fires of suffering and death. He wanted to give them what wealth and affluence could never offer: *patience in tribulation*. He wanted to heal their blindness to enable them to see their wealth and spiritual condition from God's pure perspective.

As the banking hub of their region and one that could pull itself up by the bootstraps and rebuild its city after the devastating Lydian earthquake of AD 17 (without applying for an imperial subsidy), the Laodicean church had come to a place where "need" was somewhat no longer in its vernacular as a people.



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However, riches and comfort are deceptive because they unconsciously lead a person to mistake their outward condition of well-being as an indication of their inner spiritual well-being. Yet, external wealth or success can never compensate for inner spiritual poverty.

A Lukewarm Church tells Jesus, “I don’t need You!” It says, “ I am rich, and I have need of nothing.” And this lukewarmness is evident when Jesus and the gifts He offers are mere add-ons, and afterthoughts. He is shifted to the circumference and not at the centre of our lives. This is true for believers when we allot ten or fifteen minutes for morning prayer but spend the rest of the day and week consumed by personal aspirations—with no room for God or His mission. Alarming, even Christian ministry can distract us from a genuine relationship with Jesus. We risk working in His name while leaving Him outside the door of our lives, tending the garden of others while leaving ours unattended (Song of Songs 1:6-7). Faithful ministry flows from an intimate relationship with Christ, compelled by love for Him and His Church. Genuine renewal comes from the fiery presence of God, where our passion is reignited, our eyes and ears opened, and our hearts continually softened. To overcome lukewarm self-deception, then, we need Jesus Himself and the discernment, community, humility, and repentance He provides.

Reflecting on how each of you contributes to different local churches and other avenues of grace in your daily lives, I want to thank you all for your meaningful engagement with the denomination's prayer and fasting week this year. As we approach the end of the week, it's my heart's desire that we will continue to make communal prayer, fasting, Scripture, and Christ-centeredness an integral part of our everyday lives and ministries. And as we proceed with our plans this year, let's prioritize our spiritual health as individuals and congregations, inviting Jesus into spaces where accountability, coaching, and friendship exist as we nurture our faith in the community – not as isolated local churches but as an interconnected body. As we spend time with Jesus, unrushed and unguarded, we allow His Spirit to fan the flames of our devotion to God. Just as marital love requires daily nurturing, so does our passion for Jesus. A good friend once said, "Love is a perishable commodity; it must be renewed daily."