

Buy God's Gold!

It is God's Word taught in its truth and purity -- It is repentance and faith in God's Word alone.

Revelation 3:14-22

Grace be to you from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ Amen.

TEXT: *To the angel of the church in Laodicea write: These are the words of the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the ruler of God's creation. 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. You say, 'I am rich; I have acquired wealth and do not need a thing.' But you do not realize that you are wretched, pitiful, poor, blind and naked. I counsel you to buy from me gold refined in the fire, so you can become rich; and white clothes to wear, so you can cover your shameful nakedness; and salve to put on your eyes, so you can see. Those whom I love I rebuke and discipline. So be earnest, and repent. 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. He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches."*

In Jesus' name, fellow redeemed:

Buy gold! I remember when I was first married, the price of gold was going up. It had reached the price of about \$300 per ounce. My wife and I didn't have \$300 to invest in the bank, let alone on an ounce of gold. But as the value of gold and silver began to climb, we decided one day to sell our high school class rings and use the money to drive to Flagstaff AZ with our two children to buy a Christmas tree, and to see snow for the first time in their lives. Think of what we would have today if we would have been able to invest in more gold back then instead of buying a Christmas trees? "Ah, but pastor," you are probably thinking, "that little bit of gold you spent back then bought you memories that are worth much more."

However, gold has always been highly valued. God created it for man's use and enjoyment. So, it does not surprise us that our Lord uses the imagery of this most precious metal to urge us to invest in something that Jesus calls, "God's Gold:" ***I counsel you to buy from me gold refined in the fire, so you can become rich...*** BUY GOD'S GOLD! It is God's Word taught in its truth and purity; It is repentance and faith in God's Word alone.

Through the inspired Apostle John who was commanded to write The Revelation, Jesus dictated a letter: ***To the angel (pastor) of the church in Laodicea write: These are the words of the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the ruler of God's creation. 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.*** The congregation at Laodicea was a group of people who made the Lord sick. They claimed to be Christians, but they lived like the unbelievers among whom they were living. Jesus called them "lukewarm, neither hot nor cold." So, he warns them: ***because you are lukewarm- neither hot nor cold- I am about to spit you out of my mouth.*** The Greek word translated here as "spit you out of my mouth" is the same word from which we get the word "emesis," as in "emesis basin." In other words, this congregation made Jesus want to vomit.

What made these people so sickening to Jesus? They were ***lukewarm- neither hot nor cold...*** What made them this way? Jesus tells us: ***You say, 'I am rich; I have acquired wealth and do not need a thing.' But you do not realize that you are wretched, pitiful, poor, blind and naked.*** The Laodiceans had it made, so to speak, as far as life on earth goes. The economy was booming, and they had all that they could want. And on top of it all, they had a Christian church to which they belonged! It made them feel so good about themselves: ***You say, 'I am rich; I have acquired wealth and do not need a thing.'***

Sounds like modern-day Christianity in the U.S. doesn't it? We are a people who believe that we have it made, and we do! We are the richest nation in the world, a fact demonstrated by the crisis at our nation's borders. We have many churches from which to choose if we want some religion. But are these churches who claim to be Christian like the Laodiceans who made Jesus want to puke? If they do not teach sin and grace, law and Gospel, they are making God sick. If they are teaching what God's Word calls sinful to be OK, they are blind leaders, leading people away from heaven and to hell instead. If they teach that what we teach is wrong, then they are like the Laodiceans who claimed to be Christians but in reality they made God want to puke.

Does this shock you that I would say this? What we teach is what God's Word says. If we do not, then we are sinful liars. If we do teach what God's Word says, then we are dealing with God's Gold. That pure Word of God is put on public display in the Lutheran Confessions which are correct expositions of what God's Word clearly teaches and therefore what we teach and live by as Evangelical Lutheran Christians. The shortest and most concise of the Lutheran Confessions is Luther's Small Catechism which most of you have memorized as children and is still being taught to our children to this day. There is nothing in Luther's Small Catechism that isn't strictly from God's Word. Therefore we all would benefit if each of us would continue to read and study the Small Catechism every day!

Take that golden nugget Scripture calls "Baptism," for example. Little Naomi was baptized this morning. This was not just a pretty ceremony invented by Lutherans. Baptism is the miraculous working of the Holy Spirit on the heart of a spiritually dead baby. The Laodiceans would say, "are you calling this baby spiritually dead?" I would say, "No, I'm not calling her spiritually dead, God's Word is!" That's why Jesus told Nicodemus: ***"You must be born again! Flesh gives birth to flesh, but the Spirit gives birth to spirit!"*** Jn 3. The Laodiceans would scoff and say: How can water do such great things? Martin Luther writes in the Small Catechism: It is not the water that does such great things, but it is God's Word used with the water and the Holy Spirit who is poured out with the water as Paul writes: ***(Jesus) saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit, whom he poured out on us generously through Jesus Christ our Savior, so that, having been justified by his grace, we might become heirs having the hope of eternal life. This is a trustworthy saying. And I want you to stress these things ...*** Titus 3 We have this "golden nugget" of salvation in our hands! Little Naomi is now declared by God's own Word a child of God, a disciple, and according to Scripture, even a baby priest! What a miracle!

God's Gold -- it is a treasure you and I now possess!

Jesus was about to vomit, but He didn't. Instead He writes them a letter, warning them of their spiritual apathy and foolish love for wealth, and urging them to to repent and to buy God's gold: ***... you do not realize that you are wretched, pitiful, poor, blind and naked. I counsel you to buy from me gold refined in the fire, so you can become rich; and white clothes to wear, so you can cover your shameful nakedness; and salve to put on your eyes, so you can see. Those whom I love I rebuke and discipline. So be earnest, and repent.*** This can only be the forgiveness of sins that is ours only through faith in Jesus' death and the white clothes revealed by His glorious resurrection. When Jesus also adds these words this letter: ***He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches...*** we would surely perk up our ears this morning and listen closely, since none of us would want to belong to a church that makes the Lord want to vomit!

Jesus warned the Laodiceans to repent or He would vomit them from His body. His body is the Church, as Paul writes: ***Christ is the head of the church, his body, of which he is the Savior.*** Eph 5 But Jesus wants us all to repent and hold to the Gospel. To keep the members of His body, the Church, in humble repentance and faith he says: ***Those whom I love I rebuke and discipline. So be earnest, and repent. 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.*** We possess this treasure, God's Gold! Is this not why we are disciplined? Are we not being disciplined! As a church body and a congregation, are we not small and insignificant in this world? Yet we possess God's Gold!

And as individuals. When things happen to us, when we lose our jobs, our futures and our health so that there is nowhere to go but to the Lord for mercy and grace, what a blessing that is! For when there is nowhere to go but to the Lord in prayer for mercy, then we have reached into the treasure chest of God's Gold! For that is what Jesus wanted the Laodiceans to do. That is what we have here today!

In the end, and there will be an end, Jesus promised that ancient congregation that they would still be saved for the eternal inheritance that is promised them in Jesus' name: ***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.*** As they say even today: buy gold — It's value is never ZERO!

We say: Buy God's Gold — It's value is eternal! Amen.