

I grew up here in the Bay Area where grit is a virtue and self-sufficiency is almost a creed. In my family, the story was simple: work hard, don't complain, and figure it out. You pull yourself up by your bootstraps. You don't wait for help. You prove your worth by resilience.

That story goes back for generations, from my great-grandparents, whose parents rushed into the Oklahoma Land Run, to my grandfather working the oil fields on Oklahoma before moving to the Bay Area, to my parents working tirelessly so their kids could go to college and have a better life than they did.

Honestly, that grit shaped me in good ways. It taught me responsibility, perseverance, and how to do hard things. But over time I've realized something uncomfortable: the same grit that helped me survive quietly make it harder to depend on Jesus.

The Bay Area doesn't just shape how we work, it shapes how we believe. When you live in a place where success is measured by productivity, where long commutes and late nights are worn like badges of honor, you start to believe a deeper story: If I just work hard enough, I'll be okay.

And that story doesn't stay in our jobs or our calendars; it seeps into our faith. We manage our spiritual lives the way we manage our careers. We optimize. We stay busy. We show up, and slowly, almost without noticing it, we stop depending. Not because we don't love Jesus, but because we don't think we need him in the same desperate way anymore. That's why the words of Jesus to the church in Laodicea hit so close to home for me.

This was a church that had learned how to function without feeling its need for Christ. They weren't hostile. They weren't rebellious. They were comfortable, capable, and independent. And Jesus says, "You think you're rich. You think you need nothing. But you don't realize..." What if the greatest threat to our faith isn't struggle, but success? What if comfort doesn't push Jesus out, but slowly replaces him? In Revelation 3, Jesus challenges a church shaped by self-sufficiency, not to shame them, but to reclaim their hearts. And he's still doing that work in me.

"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. Revelation 3:14-17

Jesus Sees Through Comfortable Christianity

Jesus doesn't start by asking how we feel about our faith; He starts by telling us what he sees, and that is what Jesus did as he spoke to the church in Laodicea. Before we move on, it's important to understand some of the imagery Jesus used and the tie-in to Laodicea. This city was one of the wealthiest in the ancient world. It sat at the crossroads of major trade routes, making it a financial and commercial hub. The city was known for three things in particular.

Financial Power - "We Need Nothing"

Laodicea was a banking center. So wealthy, in fact, that when a massive earthquake destroyed the city in AD 60, they refused financial help from Rome and rebuilt the city entirely with their own resources. They literally said, "We have no need." That wasn't just civic pride; it was a cultural identity.

Medical Expertise - "We Can Fix Ourselves"

Laodicea was famous for a medical school that produced an eye salve exported throughout the empire. People came to Laodicea to restore their sight. So when Jesus says, "You are blind...buy from me eye salve so you can see," He was not being poetic, he was being surgical.

Textile Industry - "We Look Fine"

The city was known for its luxurious black wool, a symbol of wealth, comfort, and status. The Laodiceans dressed well and looked successful. That's why Jesus offers white garments, not because they lacked clothing, but because they lacked covering.

Laodicea didn't reject Jesus, they just felt like they didn't need him. They had money, medicine, clothes, and infrastructure. They were successful, self-reliant, and proud of it. In other words, they were comfortable, capable, and independent. And Jesus says, "I see through all of it."

As we have seen in the other letters to the churches, Jesus gives a description of himself. Each description reveals the part of Jesus that each church had ignored. If you want to have some fun this week, read Revelation 1 and see the correlation of each description of Jesus to each church letter.

In this letter to the Laodiceans, He introduces himself with three titles. First, Jesus called himself "the Amen." This language is drawn from Isaiah 65:16. Amen isn't just a word we use to end

prayers. It means “this is true,” “this is settled,” and “this will be so.” In Isaiah, God is called the God of Amen, and the God of Truth. So when Jesus takes this title, he is saying that I am God’s final word. Every promise God has made finds its yes in him. Our “amen” is a response, but Jesus is God’s Amen to us. What God intends to do, Jesus guarantees.

Second, Jesus calls himself “the faithful and true witness.” Laodicea thought they saw clearly, but Jesus is the only one who tells the truth without distortion. He sees reality as it really is, not as it appears. In a world where truth is often hidden, Jesus bears faithful witness to what is real, eternal, and unseen.

Third, Jesus calls himself “the ruler of God’s creation.” This isn’t about Jesus being part of creation; it’s about his absolute pre-eminence over it. He is before all things, above all things, and the source of all things. Everything they relied on—wealth, systems, success—exists under his authority. Put together, these titles make one thing clear, Jesus is the final word, the truest voice, and the rightful King.

Before he confronts Laodicea’s comfort, he reminds them who he is, because the problem in Laodicea wasn’t just a lukewarm faith, it was a diminished view of Jesus. A diminished view of Jesus usually doesn’t mean we reject him, it means we shrink him to a role we can manage. How do we diminish Jesus today? How about Jesus as helper not Lord? Meaning “Jesus, bless what I’m doing” instead of “Lead what I’m doing.” Or Jesus as personal but not central. We keep Jesus in our private spirituality, but not in our schedules, decisions, relationships, or work. Consider for a moment the ways you may diminish Jesus.

Once Jesus establishes who he is—the final word, the truest voice, the rightful King—he finally speaks to what he sees. And what he sees in Laodicea isn’t persecution or false teaching, it’s something far more subtle. *“I know your deeds, that you are neither cold nor hot”* (v. 15). Jesus begins with clarity, not condemnation. “I know.” Nothing in this church escapes his faithful and true witness.

When Jesus says they are neither cold nor hot, He’s not talking about emotional temperature or spiritual enthusiasm. He’s using an image every Laodicean would immediately understand. Laodicea had no natural water source. Cold, fresh water flowed from nearby Colossae’s mountain springs. Hot, mineral-rich water flowed in Hierapolis from thermal springs. Both were useful; cold water refreshed, hot water healed. But by the time water reached Laodicea through aqueducts, it was lukewarm—stale, mineral-heavy, and often nauseating.

So when Jesus says, “Because you are lukewarm—neither hot nor cold—I am about to spit you out of my mouth,” he’s not expressing disgust at their lack of passion. He’s saying something more piercing, “You are no longer useful for what I created you to be.” Lukewarm water didn’t refresh anyone. It didn’t heal

anyone. It made people sick. In the same way, Laodicea’s faith had become comfortable, self-contained, and ineffective. They weren’t openly opposed to Jesus; they just weren’t dependent on him anymore.

This is what happens when comfort replaces communion. Faith becomes something we manage instead of something we rely on. We still have deeds. We still show up. But our lives no longer bring refreshment or healing to the world around us. Jesus isn’t saying, “Try harder.” He’s saying, “You’ve settled.” Hot faith is useful. Cold faith is honest. But lukewarm faith is complacent. It is a faith that costs nothing and changes nothing. Jesus, the Amen, the faithful and true witness, refuses to affirm a faith that no longer reflects his life.

Before Jesus calls them to repentance, He exposes the danger of a faith that has grown comfortable and therefore ineffective. *“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”* (v. 17). This verse exposes the core problem in Laodicea: a gap between what they say about themselves and what Jesus sees.

Notice how Jesus frames it: “You say... but you do not realize...” Their problem wasn’t rebellion, it was self-deception. Laodicea was objectively wealthy. They had money, medicine, clothing, and infrastructure. They had rebuilt their city without help. Their confidence made sense, which what made it so dangerous. Jesus didn’t deny their success—he redefined what matters.

From the outside, they looked strong. From the inside, they were spiritually impoverished. Each word Jesus used cut directly into their sources of pride. Jesus said you are poor to a banking center, blind to a city famous for eye medicine, and naked to a city known for luxury clothes. In other words, Jesus named the very things they trusted and said that those are the things that are failing you most.

Comfort had numbed their awareness of need. Success had silenced desperation. They didn’t stop believing in Jesus; they just stopped depending on him. And that’s the great irony of self-sufficiency: the more capable we become, the less aware we are of what we lack. This isn’t harsh language—it’s loving clarity. Jesus is diagnosing before he heals. Because until we see our need, we’ll never receive his grace.

Here’s the good news; Jesus doesn’t expose their condition in order to walk away. He doesn’t diagnose them and then abandon them. The same Jesus who names their poverty, blindness, and nakedness is the Jesus who loves them enough to tell the truth. Jesus never reveals our need without also offering his grace. He confronts their self-deception not to shame them, but because he refuses to leave them stuck in a version of faith that no longer depends on him. This brings us to our second point.

Jesus Loves Us Too Much to Leave Us There

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. Revelation 3:18-19

So what does Jesus do with a church like this, one so compromised it makes him want to spit it out of his mouth? He doesn't walk away; he moves closer. Jesus responds not with rejection, but with love. He counsels them: "Buy from me gold refined in the fire... white clothes to wear... salve so you can see." He speaks their language. That is what Jesus does. He meets us where we are at but loves us too much to leave us there!

Laodicea is a wealthy, commercial city, so Jesus uses images they understand. But what he offers is something their success could never produce. They had gold, but Jesus offers true riches. They had clothing, but Jesus offers a covering that removes shame. They had medicine, but Jesus offers sight that sees what really matters.

Here's the grace in it, you can't actually buy anything from Jesus. He knows we don't have the currency, yet he still invites us to come. Grace has always been for those who know they need it. That's why Jesus says, "Those whom I love, I rebuke and discipline." This isn't anger; it's affection. This isn't punishment; it's restoration.

Have you ever had someone tell you the truth because they loved you? Or maybe you've been the one who had to tell the truth because you loved someone else. Whichever chair you've sat in during a conversation like that, you know it's not easy. I've been in both. I've sat across from someone, and feeling my stomach tighten, knowing I needed to say something hard, hoping they would hear my heart and not just my words. And I've also been the person hearing something I didn't want to hear, wanting to defend myself, explain myself, maybe even withdraw, only to realize later it was a gift.

Because loving truth rarely feels gentle in the moment. It feels exposing, vulnerable, and sometimes even uncomfortable. But afterward you recognize it wasn't rejection, it was care. The person wasn't trying to push you away; they were trying to keep you from drifting further than you realized.

That's what Jesus is doing in Revelation 3. When he says, "Those whom I love I rebuke and discipline," He's not speaking as a critic but as someone who refuses to let the relationship quietly fade. He loves them too much to flatter them, to stay silent, and to leave them where they are. The hard words are actually the evidence of his love. This is what it means when we say Jesus loves us too much to leave us there. He tells the truth, not to shame us, but to bring us back into communion with him.

Here is where all of that love comes to a head. After the counsel, after the correction, after the invitation to repent, Jesus does

something remarkable: He doesn't demand entry. He doesn't override their will. He doesn't force obedience. Instead, he places himself at the threshold. Having spoken the truth in love, Jesus now waits in love, because real restoration can't be coerced, it has to be received. Which leads us to one of the most tender images in all of Scripture: Jesus knocking, not forcing his way in.

Jesus Knocks, He Doesn't Force

"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 that person, and they with me" (v. 20). For many of us, this verse has been used as a picture of Jesus knocking on the door of an individual's heart. And there's truth there, Jesus always invites, never coerces. But in Revelation, Jesus isn't standing outside the door of a person, he's standing outside the door of his church.

This letter isn't written to someone seeking Jesus; it's written to a believing community that has slowly closed the door on him. Not intentionally or angrily, but quietly, through comfort, competence, and self-sufficiency. That's what makes this image so arresting. The church still gathered. They still had activity, leadership, and resources, but somewhere along the way, Jesus was no longer at the center of their shared life.

Notice what Jesus does and doesn't do. He knocks. He speaks. He waits. He doesn't kick the door in. He doesn't shame them into obedience. He doesn't revoke his love, because forced intimacy isn't intimacy at all. And yet the invitation is still personal: "If anyone hears my voice..." Even when the problem is corporate, the response is individual. Jesus invites someone—anyone—to open the door so communion can begin again.

The promise is beautiful, "I will come in and eat with that person." In the ancient world, sharing a meal was a sign of restored relationship, trust, and friendship. This isn't about Jesus stopping by for a visit, it's about Jesus reclaiming the center of the table. Verse 20 isn't primarily about conversion; it's about communion. It's about a church rediscovering life with Christ, not just life for Christ. I was reminded of that recently in a really ordinary, holy way.

A few weeks ago, some of our pastors and directors were at a conference together. We were staying in an Airbnb and decided to cook a meal together one night. When I say we, I really mean Josh cooked an incredible meal while the rest of us hammered out Easter service times, but at the end of the night, something shifted. After the plates were cleared, Kevin pulled out bread and wine and invited us to the table for communion. No stage. No worrying about the service flow, just a group of pastors and leaders sitting together.

He framed it around three simple verbs: the blessing, the breaking, and the taking. First, we were asked to bless the person on our left, by looking them in the eyes and speaking a blessing over them. Suddenly, the table wasn't about planning anymore;

it was about presence. Then we were asked to name one thing in our lives that needed to be broken by the cross.

One by one, around the table, we shared honestly, not as leaders, not as problem-solvers, but as people who needed grace. Then, quietly, we passed the bread and the wine, and in that moment, Jesus wasn't someone we were working for, he was someone we were sharing life with. That's Revelation 3:20. Jesus isn't knocking to get us saved again. He's knocking to get back to the table, because even a church that loves Jesus can slowly stop eating with him. Jesus, in his grace, stands at the door, not to force his way in, but to be welcomed back into the center of our shared life.

That's where communion always leads. When Jesus is welcomed back to the table, when he's no longer just someone we work for, but someone we live with, something begins to change. Hearts that are reclaimed don't stay private; they start to reshape how we live, how we love, and how we endure. Communion with Christ is never the finish line; it's the starting point. And that's exactly where Jesus takes the church in Laodicea next.

Hearts are Reclaimed; Lives are Transformed.

To the one who is victorious, I will give the right to sit with me on my throne, just as I was victorious and sat down with my Father on his throne. Whoever has ears, let them hear what the Spirit says to the churches." vv. 21-22.

Jesus ends this letter by lifting the people's eyes of the Laodicea church from their present comfort to their future calling. He speaks to "the one who is victorious." As Kevin mentioned last week, a better translation of the word victorious is, "the one who overcomes." Not the most gifted, the most successful, or the most impressive, but the one who remains faithful.

Notice how Jesus defines overcoming. It's not about conquering the world, it's about sharing in his life. The promise isn't merely survival, it's participation. Jesus invites those who respond to him to share in his reign. This is staggering. The church that thought it had everything is reminded that true authority doesn't come from self-sufficiency, it comes from communion with Christ. The throne follows the table. Those who walk with Jesus now will reign with Jesus later.

Jesus grounds this promise in his own story: "Just as I overcame and sat down with my Father on his throne." He doesn't ask the church to walk a path he hasn't already walked. The way of surrender, obedience, and faithfulness is the way that Jesus himself overcame.

The letter closes with a familiar call, not just to hear, but to listen deeply and respond. This isn't a word for Laodicea alone. It's a word for every church tempted to confuse comfort with faithfulness. So before we rush to do anything, Jesus invites us to be honest. This letter doesn't end with a checklist; it begins with clarity. "You say... but you do not realize..."

Jesus can't heal what we won't name, and he won't shame what we bring into the light. The first step toward renewed communion isn't trying harder; it's telling the truth about where comfort has quietly replaced dependence. So let's start right there. Name where comfort has replaced dependence—personally and corporately.

Jesus addresses the church in Laodicea, but the problem begins in individual hearts. A community drifts when people drift. That's why verse 20 says, "If anyone hears my voice..." Corporate repentance always starts with personal honesty. Naming is rarely something we do alone. We need trusted people who love us enough to help us see what we've normalized.

This week, ask: Where have I grown self-sufficient? Where has our community learned to function without dependence on Jesus? Who has permission to lovingly name that in my life? Naming it is how individuals help the church become honest again. Some of you hear this and think that this sounds good, but you don't even know where to start. Or maybe you don't have anyone you can say these things to. That's real.

Naming things is hard when you've learned that honesty gets met with advice, distance, or quiet judgment. So sometimes we don't confess, not because we don't want healing, but because we don't feel safe.

So where do you start? You start with Jesus. Even before you trust a person, you can tell Jesus the truth. Prayer isn't a performance; it's agreement with what he already sees. You can simply say, "Jesus, I think I've been living without depending on you." That alone is an opening of the door.

Then, take one small relational step, not ten people, but only one. Ask someone you trust, even imperfectly, "Can you just listen and not try to fix it?" Naming doesn't require a perfect community; it begins by risking honesty with a safe-enough person.

As a church, this matters for all of us. We have to become the kind of community where confession is normal. Where honesty isn't met with shock. Where struggle isn't met with distance. The church shouldn't mirror a culture that cancels people when they're weak, we're a people who remember we're all weak. Every one of us lives by grace. We don't gather because we have it together, we gather because we need Jesus together.

So part of naming it is personal courage, but part of it is communal responsibility. We create safe spaces by listening before correcting, by praying before advising, and by remembering that every person we meet is someone Christ is still restoring.

That's how a church opens the door together. We open the door personally, so the church can reopen it together. Jesus stands at the door of his church, but he waits for someone to open it. One act of obedience can create space for shared renewal.

Opening the door often happens in the community: Praying with others instead of alone. Practicing communion together, not just privately. Choosing presence over productivity in shared rhythms. We open the door personally, but we experience communion collectively. When one person slows down, others are invited to slow down too.

Jesus speaks to the church, but he transforms people. And transformed people always reshape the places where they are planted. This is where Revelation 3 moves from the heart to the world. When hearts are reclaimed by Jesus, lives don't stay private, they ripple outward. Overcoming faith doesn't retreat; it radiates.

This is why our vision, as a church, is transformed lives, transforming the Peninsula. Not programs transforming the Peninsula, not buildings, strategies, or more events. People live differently because they're living with Jesus, which is actually baked into our logo. Our logo is built around the image of tables, because tables are where lives are shaped. Around tables we listen, confess, bless, break bread, and practice presence. And from those tables, ripples go out into families, workplaces, schools, neighborhoods, and cities. That's Revelation 3 lived out.

When Jesus is welcomed back to the table: Our homes become places of grace. Our work becomes an expression of faithfulness. Our neighborhoods feel the ripple of love and peace. Living it means we don't just ask, "What is Jesus doing in me?" We also ask, "How is Jesus shaping what flows out of me?" Because communion with Christ always leads to mission with Christ. The throne follows the table, and the table sends ripples.

Jesus challenges our comfort to reclaim our hearts, not because he is distant, but because he is near. It is not to shame us, but to invite us back to the table. Like Laodicea, we can be capable, busy, and successful, yet slowly close the door on dependence. But Jesus sees us, loves us, and knocks.

When we name where comfort has replaced trust, it opens the door to renewed communion, and to live as people being transformed. The throne follows the table and the table sends ripples. This is how transformed lives transform the Peninsula—one heart, table, and ripple at a time.

This manuscript represents the bulk of what was preached at CPC. For further detail, please refer to the audio recording of this sermon.

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