Mid Week Lent Sermon

March 25, 2020

Revelation 2: 18 “And to the angel of the church in Thyatira write: ‘The words of the Son of God, who has eyes like a flame of fire, and whose feet are like burnished bronze.

19 “‘I know your works, your love and faith and service and patient endurance, and that your latter works exceed the first. 20 But I have this against you, that you tolerate that woman Jezebel, who calls herself a prophetess and is teaching and seducing my servants to practice sexual immorality and to eat food sacrificed to idols. 21 I gave her time to repent, but she refuses to repent of her sexual immorality. 22 Behold, I will throw her onto a sickbed, and those who commit adultery with her I will throw into great tribulation, unless they repent of her works, 23 and I will strike her children dead. And all the churches will know that I am he who searches mind and heart, and I will give to each of you according to your works. 24 But to the rest of you in Thyatira, who do not hold this teaching, who have not learned what some call the deep things of Satan, to you I say, I do not lay on you any other burden. 25 Only hold fast what you have until I come. 26 The one who conquers and who keeps my works until the end, to him I will give authority over the nations, 27 and he will rule them with a rod of iron, as when earthen pots are broken in pieces, even as I myself have received authority from my Father. 28 And I will give him the morning star. 29 He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.’

**The Son of God judges by works and comforts the repentant**

Thyatira was a city in Asia Minor (modern Turkey) situated on the Lycus River between Pergamum and Sardis. Founded by the Macedonians, it was taken over by the Romans in 190BC. It was known for its guilds (associations of various trade workers to promote commerce) especially for its guild of purple dyers. Acts 16: 14f notes that Lydia, a seller of purple cloth, who was converted to Christianity by Paul at Philippi, had originally come from Thyatira. It was **not** known for its religion of emperor worship but did have temples dedicated to Artemis (goddess of hunting and fertility) and her twin brother Apollo (god of archery, music, truth and prophecy, healing and diseases, the Sun and light, poetry and more).

So when Jesus sends a letter to the church in Thyatira, He knows the congregation intimately and rebukes her not for fearing persecution from without but for temptation that came from **within.** A false prophetess named Jezebel was enticing Christians to commit sexual immorality and to eat food sacrificed to idols.

When the guilds in Thyatira celebrated, they ate food sacrificed to idols and then engaged in orgies. Whether there was a member of the Thyatiran church named Jezebel, we do not know, but what was encouraged is very clear … the Christians were enticed to follow along what unbelievers were doing and so mix the Christian religion with paganism. That is called syncretism. That angers Christ!

The all-knowing Christ patiently gave opportunity for those fallen into syncretism to repent. He taught that we cannot serve two masters and that we love the Lord God with all our heart, mind, body and strength. But for those who stubbornly resisted and ignored His call to repent, He punished.

He threatened to “throw Jezebel onto a sickbed” instead of a bed of adulterous sexual pleasure, to send “great tribulation” and to strike all her children dead. Clearly His patience came to an end as He matches the punishment with the sin by switching the bed of illicit pleasure for a death bed.

Is He still angry over sex outside of marriage or has He chilled out over the centuries? He is and always will be dead serious about marriage. He can do no other because all marriage is based on His marriage to His bride, the church. He instituted marriage and died to create His church and remains faithful to her forever.

Therefore whenever a Christian engages in sex outside of marriage, it switches Christ Jesus for a god of adulterous pleasure. To choose pleasure over following Christ commits spiritual adultery and leads to sickness and death, which when taken spiritually, means eternal separation from God.

Does Christ judge us according to our works? He did say in verse 23 of our text in Revelation 2: *I will give to each of you according to your works.* Again he says that He will reward each according to what he has done in Matthew 16:27, Romans 2:6 and Revelation 22:12. Will we be judged by our works or by faith?

For the unbeliever, without faith there is no hope of eternal life and no other verdict but guilty. For the believer, with faith, there is forgiveness for even our good works, which all point to a living faith within us. For we need God’s mercy even for our good deeds which are still mired in unholy motives no matter how good the act may be.

And so there cannot be any comfort when Christ judges according to our works.

But faith in Christ trusts in what Christ has done. It holds to Christ’s perfect life and death as its own. Faith simply and miraculously trusts that Christ’s holiness and righteousness is gifted and becomes its own.

Christ is always patient with us and never delights in the death of a sinner but that we should all repent and live with him forever. When He calls each one of us out of this life at the moment of death, His patience for repentance comes to an end because there is no longer time for His words of forgiveness to create faith, but it is then a time of sight of the all-knowing Son of God, who has eyes like a flame of fire and feet as burnished bronze.

But for those who hold on to what Christ has given them, namely forgiveness, life with God and salvation, He promises to give them authority over the nations, which is realized when His church, sitting beside Him, judges all things. All that Christ has, his task of judgment included, He now shares with the church.

And finally, He promises to give the Morning star to the one who conquers and continues in His work until the end (verse 28). The Morning star can refer to the planet Venus that can be visible in the morning when the stars of the night give way to the sun. Peter wrote about the Morning Star (2 Peter 1:19): *And we have the prophetic word more fully confirmed, to which you will do well to pay attention as to a lamp shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts.* Here Peter refers to Jesus as the Morning Star that will rise in our hearts when we will see him in our risen and glorified bodies where in heaven there is no light other than Christ.

In these uncertain times, Christ urges us to hold on to Him and steer away from unbelief and doubt and remain in His word even when it comes to us through the internet. He comforts the repentant and shares all He has with us in eternity.