

Sermon
15 September 2013
West Kirk of Calder & Polbeth Harwood

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Text: Revelation 3:14-22

André and I went to the cinema recently, and we saw the film *About Time*. Just an ordinary British romantic comedy, but with an underlying message that got stuck in my head!

On his 21st birthday the main character discovered that he could travel in time. I know that is a little bizarre, but bear with me. It is a film, and not real life, after all! If he went into a dark room, shut his eyes, clenched his fists, and thought very hard about a specific point in his past, he could go there again. And then change the outcome of what happened. Pretty cool, isn't it?! And you can probably imagine just how much fun this guy had with this ability – because he could relive a situation until it turned out the way he wanted.

Until certain things happened that made him realize that maybe things happened the way they did in the first place for a *reason*. And that in reality, you only get *one* shot at life – so you better make it worth it!

In stead of just going through the motions every day, you need to see the small detail, laugh out loud at things you find funny and do that extra wee bit for the people you love. Because, in the end, when the sun sets, and a day is over, you can never get it back again.

And the reason I cannot get this message out of my mind, is because it is true. No matter who you are, what your attitude towards life is and how you choose to spend your days – once a day is over, it's over. I don't know about you, but I don't want to go to bed thinking that I could have done more, been happier or just really *lived!!*

John said the exact same thing in Revelations 3. He said that a child of God shouldn't be *neither here nor there*, but that we should *be* what we are supposed to be!

And he says that by means of comparing the people he is writing his letter to, to the water of their city, which was neither hot nor cold, but somewhere in-between – lukewarm – which was just *neither here nor there* - really!

The first part of the Book of Revelations consists of 7 letters that John wrote to 7 congregations in Asia Minor. At this time in history the Christians were persecuted by the Romans, and in each of these letters God, through John, is encouraging the people to stand strong in their faith. To not relax their standards and beliefs. And the underlying message here is that they are not alone in doing this. God supports them and love them – and this we see in the fact that there

are 7 letters written. Because there were many more than 7 congregations, but the number 7 had symbolical value for them. 7 is made up of 3+4. 3 referring to the triune God, and 4 to the 4 seasons or the 4 “corners of the earth”, meaning *all the time* and the *whole* earth. The triune God was in charge of the whole world, everything that happened there, all of their lives, and *not* the Romans, who thought that they were the ones in charge.

The letter we read this morning was the one addressed to Laodicea. Laodicea was a very prosperous city, and most of the inhabitants there were well-to-do.

It was good sheep country, and the city was famous for its fine, soft, black wool. They made beautiful clothes with this wool, which was exported everywhere.

There was also a medical school in Laodicea, where a world renowned optometrist worked, and they produced an eye salve there that worked miracles for people who had trouble with their vision.

So all and all, an amazing place to live.

But they did have 1 problem - Laodicea lacked a natural water supply. Water was piped in from hot springs six miles to the south, but that water would be lukewarm by the time it reached Laodicea. And any cold water that could have been procured from the mountains was also lukewarm by the time it reached Laodicea.

In those days, just like today, cold water was preferred for drinking, and hot water for bathing. Although the water *could* be cooled or heated with some effort, the natural lukewarmness of the local water was a standard complaint of residents, most of whom had an otherwise comfortable lifestyle.

And it is against this background that we should understand Jesus' words: "Were you hot [i.e., for bathing] or cold [i.e., for drinking], you would be useful; but as it is, I feel toward you the way you feel toward your water supply—you make me sick."

On a spiritual level "cold" would refer to people who have never heard about Jesus, and can thus not live according to God's will. "Warm" would refer to people who believe in Jesus and live accordingly. But "lukewarm", well, that would refer to people who have heard of Jesus, and probably believe in him, but their lives doesn't reflect this. They might say that they are Christians, but you would never have guessed it by looking at them... Their way of life didn't satisfy God, in his own words: it made him feel sick!

Because these people were wealthy and had such easy lives, they thought that they had it all. But they didn't realize that on a spiritual level, they were *poor, blind, and naked* – to use the words of John.

Even though they were wealthy materially, regarding the things that have lasting value, they were actually poor; and even though they made this wonderful eye ointment, regarding the things that have

lasting value, they were actually blind; and although they made the most beautiful clothes with black wool, regarding the things that have lasting value, they were actually naked.

Because *who you are* are not determined by what you have (although many people might think this), but by who you are in the eyes of God.

Luckily there was a ready solution for this problem: John counseled them to buy from him:

- gold that was refined in the fire, so they could become rich, really rich;
- and white clothes to wear, so they could cover their shameful nakedness;
- and salve to put on their eyes, so they could see.

In other words, they had to turn to God, and start living like thankful, dependent children of God again, because then they would realise what life really is about, and be *warm* again in God's eyes.

Where do you find yourself this morning?

“Cold” none of us can be, because we are all in the church this morning.

Are you “warm” about your faith and life? Are you passionate about the fact that you belong to God and do you share this wonderful

feeling with everybody around you by means of doing and saying things that promote God's kingdom? Do you put other people above yourself; do you keep your temper in tact (even when you are home with just your family to see you)? Do you do your best at your job, even though it didn't turn out to be the fulfilment of your childhood dreams? Do you forgive people who hurt you, again and again? Do you walk the extra mile when someone needs you? Do you see the silver lining, or always just the dark cloud? Do you listen, care, love, give, laugh? Do you stop to smell the roses?

Or do you maybe find yourself in a nice and comfortable place in your life, where you are reasonably happy with the way things are and you wouldn't really want to change any of it? And although you prefer not thinking about it too much, you know that not everything is exactly the way God would want it to be? In other words, "lukewarm"?

Where do you find yourself this morning?

To be lukewarm *is* the easy option, lets be honest about it. It's the *no hassle*, just *going through the motions* option... But let's face it – it's just *not* good enough.

Every single person who believes in God *knows* that there is much more to life than you can see on the surface. God gives us potential, opportunities, abilities, even sometimes miracles, and he expects us to use it. To go through life with open eyes, to realize how much he loves us and to share this with the rest of the world.

Because somebody who lets his only son die, because he loves YOU, deserves to be loved back. Deserves to see that we make the most of this life he has given us.

And it's one thing to say that we love God, but if we don't *show* it, we are lukewarm. Because real love is not just a feeling, it is a feeling that goes over in actions.

So let's go DO, because we love God. Let's give and change and love and laugh and mend and work and sing and dance and enjoy... and let's do all of that NOW, because we only have one chance, one today.

You are never going to have this day, *today*, over again. When you get in your bed tonight, today is gone, forever. So make the most out of even the boring, every day things you have to do – because if you don't, you might be sorry about it later. But then there will be nothing you can do about it.

We can't travel in time, but we *can* make the most of every minute we have on this earth, because that's how God made us.

Let's be warm, and not make God sick, but proud. Because if we are warm, we will never be spiritually poor, blind or naked. And if we are not spiritually poor, blind, and naked, it wouldn't matter what happened to us in life – even *if* we actually ended up poor, blind or

naked, it wouldn't matter, because when God is in your life, nothing else matters.

Let's be warm, because when the winter comes, every single person who lives in *this* country knows that lukewarm is just not good enough.

Amen