

EASTER 6 SOLEMN EVENSONG

Tonight we heard another letter to a church
in what is now Turkey. They come from a vision to St John
and appear to be the words of Jesus to his church.

Last weeks we heard about two churches
whose appearances were deceiving.
One looked lively but was spiritually dead,
the other looked dead but was spiritually alive.

The church in Laodicea looked in great shape
but was on the brink of disaster. It was a wealthy church,
which felt successful and secure, but was on the brink of
collapse.

Wealth is often seen as a sign of God's blessing.
But the Bible says wealth can be a snare and a distraction.
The love of money is the root of all kinds of evil, it says.

They're described as lukewarm, neither cold nor hot, because.
Laodicea's water supply came fed via an aqueduct in full sun.
The water arrived warm and disgusting.

Over there, on the North wall, is a copy of Holman Hunt's
famous painting, based on that letter to the church in Laodicea:
"Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man
hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him,
and will sup with him, and he with me."

Jesus was standing outside that church. He hadn't been let in.
Their church activities went on without his involvement.

But what does the word lukewarm say about the church?
It might mean something English, something Anglican;
a church that avoids the emotion of the Pentecostals
and the endless singing and dancing of African churches.

Does that mean we're lukewarm, like the Laodiceans?
How should we measure our discipleship?

Jesus's letter to Laodicea hints at the responses he was looking
for. They were told to be zealous, and the penultimate sentence
says:

"To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me
in my throne, even as I also overcame,
and am set down with my Father in his throne."

Christians are to overcome something; but what?
I think we have to overcome conformity,
letting the world press us into its mould.

The letter said, "thou sayest, I am rich,
and increased with goods, and have need of nothing."
The Laodiceans had fallen into the trap of worldliness.

Jesus stands and knocks with workman's tools in his hand.
He comes to make changes. The Laodiceans refused that;
they thought they needed nothing.

What about us?
As a church we know we're needy; what about us as individuals?
Do we admit our need?
Do we accept Jesus's answers?

"He that hath an ear, let him hear
what the Spirit saith unto the churches."