**Happy Sabbath, everyone!**

Are you glad to be here this morning? It’s a beautiful day, although a little chilly, but God is good. The message I have for you today is definitely a more sober one, a heavy one. But I believe these types of messages are important. Isaiah 58 says, "Cry aloud, spare not; tell my people their sins, and the house of Jacob their transgressions." We have a message given to us in the book of Revelation, specifically for us. I think that as a church, we need to take this message seriously and earnestly.

Before we begin, I have three requests for you as we prepare for this sermon:

1. **Pay attention.** Please remove any distractions, silence your phones, and listen carefully. If you like to take notes, feel free to do so.
2. **Pray for us.** Pray that God would open our hearts to receive what He has for us today and that He would speak through me.
3. **Apply this message to yourself.** This is very important. As you listen, don’t think about anyone else but yourself. The greatest enemy we face is ourselves, and this message is for each one of us.

Let’s pray:
**Heavenly Father,** we thank You that You are a God who knows us intimately. You have searched us and tried us. We ask that You would speak the truth to us in love, that You would soften our hearts to receive it, and that it would work out Your good pleasure within us. Please hide me behind the cross, and let Your word not return void. We ask this in Jesus' name. Amen.

Now, I want you to imagine something with me: Picture a man striding confidently down the street. He’s wearing tattered clothes that barely cover him. People look at him in shock, wondering, “What is this man wearing?” But he smiles and waves, thinking they’re admiring his luxurious outfit. He walks by a store and sees what he thinks are designer clothes—nice clothes to add to his wardrobe. But, there’s a problem: he’s almost blind, and he can’t see well at all.

He walks into a store—Dollar General—and picks out clothes he thinks are beautiful. He brings them up to the cashier, slaps his maxed-out credit card on the counter, and says, “I’d like to buy these, please.” The cashier tries to run his card, but there’s nothing on it. She tells him, “There’s no money on this card.”

He laughs and says, “You must be mistaken. I’m one of the wealthiest men in town. Try it again.” They start to argue, and eventually, the cashier calls the police. When they arrive, he thinks they’re his bodyguards. He starts talking to them as if they’re his entourage. They try to escort him off the property, but he’s not cooperative. Something isn’t right. So, they say, “Sir, we think we should take you to a mental hospital. We don’t think you’re okay.”

He responds, “What do you mean? I’m perfectly healthy. I feel great.” Does that sound normal?

Welcome to the church of Laodicea.

In Revelation 3, we read about a church that resembles this man. For a little context, there are seven messages to seven churches in the book of Revelation, and in the Adventist church, we often interpret these as representing different periods in church history. The last church, Laodicea, is generally understood to represent the body of Christ before the second coming, and we believe that’s us.

Each of the messages follows a similar structure. It starts with: “To the angel of the church in [name],” followed by the title of Jesus. Depending on the situation, Jesus uses different titles for Himself. After this, He says, “I know your [blank].” Sometimes it’s “I know your works,” sometimes “I know your toil and tribulation,” but He always says, “I know.” Then there’s usually a commendation, where He acknowledges something the church is doing well. Then comes the rebuke, where He points out what needs improvement, followed by a solution. The message ends with, “He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches,” and a promise for those who overcome.

Let’s take a look at the message to Laodicea. We need to first understand what the church of Laodicea represents. Many of us don’t have a clear understanding of what “church” truly is. After the Dark Ages and other significant historical events, we often think of the church as the building. But the church is not the building; the church is the people—the individuals who have been called out of the world to join the body of Christ. The church, in this case, is the ekklesia, or the “called-out” people.

Laodicea means “a people judged.” God is speaking to those He has called out, and He is judging them. This makes me think of Revelation 14:7, which says, "Fear God and give glory to Him, for the hour of His judgment has come." The message to Laodicea is for those living in the judgment hour—the church in the last days.

So, who does Jesus say He is? I’ve titled this sermon “The Doctor’s Diagnosis.” Let’s look at the titles Jesus uses for Himself. He begins by saying, “These are the words of the Amen.” What does "Amen" mean? We say it all the time—when the preacher says something, we say, “Amen.” When we pray, we end with, “Amen.” But what does it actually mean? It means “certainly” or “let it be so.” It’s a statement of affirmation.

Jesus is calling Himself “the Amen,” meaning He is the one who confirms everything. He is the assurance of all of God's promises. When He speaks, we can trust that it is reliable. He is the truth. So, when Jesus speaks, we can know it’s trustworthy and true.

Next, He calls Himself “the faithful and true witness.” What does a witness do? A witness testifies. So, what is Jesus testifying to? I would say it’s twofold. First, He is testifying to us about the character of God. Everything that Jesus says, everything He represents, is a faithful witness of the character of the Father. Jesus is the perfect representation of God’s love and personality. Second, He is testifying about us. What He sees in us, He will faithfully speak.

Finally, Jesus calls Himself “the beginning of the creation of God.” Some people might take this to mean that Jesus was the first creature created. But, when we interpret this in light of other scriptures, we see that this is not the case. The word “beginning” (archē) can be understood as meaning “the initiator,” the “prime mover,” or the “first cause.” In other words, Jesus is declaring Himself to be the Creator, not a created being. So, what Jesus is really saying here is: “I am the one who has created all things. I am the Amen, the faithful witness, and the Creator.”

That’s our Doctor, the One who is diagnosing us. It sounds like a great doctor, right? But then we get the diagnosis.

If you look at the structure of the letters to the churches, there is usually a commendation before the rebuke. But here, there is no commendation for the Laodicean church. He goes straight into the rebuke: “I know your works, that you are neither cold nor hot.” There’s no affirmation for this church in the last days. He says, “I know your works. I know your motives. I know your actions, even those you hide from others. I know what you’re made of.”

That’s a sobering thought. It’s comforting to know that Jesus knows us fully, but it’s also humbling to realize that we cannot hide anything from Him. He knows the state of our hearts, and that is the diagnosis we need to hear today. The faithful witness says, "I know your works; I know what you're made of." He continues, "You are neither cold nor hot." I believe we all understand the meaning of this, but let’s break it down further. "Cold" refers to someone who has never received the good news, someone who is dead in trespasses and sins, someone who has not accepted God at all. "Hot," on the other hand, refers to someone who is energized by the Holy Spirit, someone who has accepted the gospel and is on fire for Jesus. This person walks in the Spirit, rejoicing in the liberty of the sons of God, fully dedicated to Christ.

But Jesus says, "You are neither cold nor hot." We are not completely separated from God. We are not Christless or living in open rebellion. We have the truth, we go to church, we sing the songs, we pray the prayers. We’re not cold—but we’re not hot either. We’re not fully vitalized by the gospel, we’re not zealous for His kingdom. We’re not all in. Jesus wishes we were either cold or hot, but we are lukewarm, which He cannot work with.

Think about it—God would rather us be cold than lukewarm. Being cold means you’re at least aware of your need for God, and that is something He can work with. But lukewarmness is a dangerous condition. Jesus says, "I can't work with this." If you were cold, I could convict you of your need for change, but because you think you’re fine, you’re in a worse state. Your lukewarm condition is so unpleasant that I will vomit you out of My mouth.

How many of us enjoy vomiting? I’m sure none of us do, yet God says He will spew us out because of our lukewarm state. The church is called the body of Christ, and for Christ to vomit us out means He will expel us from His body. We are in danger of being dis-fellowshipped from Him due to our hollow religion, our empty profession, our heads full of knowledge but our hearts empty. God finds this condition unbearable and unacceptable unless we change.

Why is this the case? He explains that it’s because we say, "I am rich, and have become wealthy, and have need of nothing." But the reality is that we are deceiving ourselves. When I read this, I think about the Bible’s warnings about riches. Let’s look at a couple of passages to understand this better.

In Mark 10:23-25, after the rich young ruler comes to Jesus asking how to inherit eternal life, Jesus tells him, "Go your way, sell everything you have, give it to the poor, and come follow me." The young man walks away sorrowful because of his great possessions. Jesus then tells His disciples how difficult it is for those who trust in riches to enter the kingdom of God. "It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God." But we say we’re rich, and in doing so, we condemn ourselves.

In Luke 6, Jesus gives the beatitudes, but in this account, there are also woes. He says, "Woe to you who are rich, for you have received your consolation; woe to you who are full, for you shall hunger." He’s warning us about the dangers of wealth, not just material wealth but spiritual complacency as well. James also warns the rich, saying in James 5:1-3, "Come now, you rich people, weep and howl for the miseries that are coming upon you... Your gold and silver are corroded, and their corrosion will be a witness against you." Our riches, whether material or spiritual, will be exposed for what they truly are.

We, as a church, are rich in many ways. We have the present truth. When I became an Adventist, I felt like a whole new world had opened up. We have the health message, counsel on running educational systems, missions, hospitals, and churches that grow. We have the three angels’ messages and a deep understanding of prophecy. We are rich in knowledge, in truth, in advantages—but there’s a danger. We’ve become delusional.

Jesus tells us, "You do not know that you are wretched, miserable, poor, blind, and naked." This is a wake-up call. Even though we have all this truth, if we don’t live by it and respond to it appropriately, it profits us nothing. This condition, thinking we’re rich while spiritually bankrupt, is dangerous.

It reminds me of 1 Corinthians 13, where Paul says, "Though I speak with the tongues of men and angels but have not love, I have become sounding brass or a clanging cymbal." We can have all the knowledge and truth, but if we don’t have love, it means nothing. Likewise, we can have all the truth but still be spiritually poor if we don’t let it transform us.

We are deceived into thinking that we’re rich in everything we need. But in truth, we’re spiritually bankrupt. We are like the man who walks around in tattered clothes, unaware that he’s impoverished. God has blessed us abundantly, but we’ve been ungrateful, rebellious, and indifferent to His grace. We’ve resisted His love and hardened our hearts.

Yet, even in our ingratitude, God continues to be patient and loving with us. He is offering us the chance to wake up from our spiritual slumber and respond to His grace. But we must take that opportunity now, before it’s too late. Our hollow religion, our pride, and our complacency need to be addressed if we are to truly live in the fullness of Christ’s love and grace.

Jesus makes a powerful statement in Revelation 3:20: "Behold, I stand at the door and knock." Imagine that—Jesus is standing outside, hoping to enter, but the door to our hearts is blocked by the clutter of our lives. He longs to help us, to fix our brokenness, but we are so distracted by everything else that we can't even hear His call.

We have the truth, yes, but we are lacking in humility, patience, faith, love, self-denial, sacrifice, and the spirit of mission. There is sin among God's people, and many are holding on to their favorite sins, deceiving themselves into thinking they are fine. They believe that these reproofs don’t apply to them, not realizing that they are in the greatest need of God's grace, which will open their eyes to their deficiencies. They lack nearly every qualification necessary to develop a Christlike character.

This gap between head knowledge and heart transformation is one of the most significant hurdles that can keep us out of heaven. It’s a distance that can determine whether we experience life or death, not only for ourselves but also for those we influence. We have the truth in our heads, but we haven’t allowed it to transform our hearts and lives. Like the foolish virgins in Jesus' parable, we slumber in our sins. Yet, there is hope.

God speaks to us not to condemn but to convict and convert. He speaks in love. As He says in verse 19, "As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten. Therefore be zealous and repent." Zealousness and repentance are the two responses we need to embrace. We’ll explore these in more depth next week, but for now, it’s important to sit with this reality.

We need a deeper repentance. We need to acknowledge our true condition before God. We can't continue with business as usual. The church is God's appointed agency for the salvation of humanity, and our mission is to proclaim the three angels' messages to the world. We must be right with God and help others get right with Him. Time is short.

There’s a misconception that we can somehow get by with just head knowledge. But Jesus warns that we are delusional if we think that we can enter heaven with only intellectual assent to truth, without the power of God’s transforming grace in our lives. Being lukewarm is not acceptable. If we cling to sin, we deceive ourselves.

To be zealous, as Jesus calls us to be, is essentially to become "hot" again. In the Greek, the word "zealous" shares the same root as "hot" from verse 15. Jesus is urging us to be on fire for Him, to wake up, to become earnest in our pursuit of Him. We need to constantly be stirred by the love of God, seeing our desperate need for His mercy. We must not let the fire of God’s love grow cold in our hearts. We need to reignite that fire each day, through prayer and devotion, because without it, we are nothing.

Repentance is more than just feeling sorry for our sins—it means a complete change of direction, a decisive choice to turn away from sin and pursue holiness. It’s not a temporary change but a permanent transformation. Jesus is calling us to make up our minds once and for all, to stop wavering between two opinions. If the Lord is God, we should serve Him wholeheartedly.

Every sin matters. One sin is enough to separate us from God, and it’s not a small thing. It’s a life-and-death matter. Jesus calls us to wake up, to recognize that we are not what we think we are. We must take His counsel seriously. He is the faithful and true witness, and He loves us. But we must repent. It’s time to stop playing games with God.

We are closer than ever to Jesus’ return. The signs are all around us—natural disasters, political turmoil, and a world increasingly indifferent to the gospel. But Jesus is coming soon, and our time to reach others is short. If we would stop worrying so much about ourselves and start focusing on how we can reach our neighbors, we could double the size of the church.

We need to get serious. We need to seek God more earnestly, knowing that we cannot do this in our own strength. We need Bible sanctification. Next week, we’ll talk more about how we can acquire the gold refined in the fire, how we can put on the robes of righteousness, and how to use the eye salve He offers to restore our spiritual sight.

But for now, I encourage you to think deeply about these truths. Let them sink into your heart. This is not just about hearing a sermon—this is about your eternal destiny. If God is convicting you today, don’t ignore His voice. Come to Jesus as you are—sinful, helpless, and dependent. It is His glory to embrace us in His love, to heal us, and to cleanse us from all impurity.

We are poor, blind, and naked in our sin, but we have a great and merciful God. So, if you are convicted of your sins today, confess them to God. If you need to make things right with others, do it now. Don’t let anything keep Jesus outside your heart. This is a time of preparation—not just for ourselves, but for the salvation of souls. First, we must be right with God, and then we can help others be right with Him.

I encourage you to humble your heart before God, and He will lift you up. Let’s seek Him more earnestly. If you desire to do that, raise your hand with me as we pray.

Father God, we thank You for Your counsel. It may be hard to hear, but we know that You speak truth in love. Please help us to heed Your words—not just emotionally, but with deep conviction. Convict us, convert us, and prepare us for Your soon coming. We ask this in Jesus’ name. Amen.