

LETTERS FROM JESUS

THE CHURCH IN LAODICEA

REVELATION 3: 14-22

I. Jesus – the Amen and Arche (ruler or beginning)

“To the angel of the church in Laodicea write: These are the words of “the Amen”, the faithful and true witness, the ruler [arche] of God’s creation.”

– Revelation 3:14

For Jesus to identify himself as “the Amen” is to say, “I am the One who is true – what I say is binding, is the last word on the subject.”

To say Jesus is the “Amen” is to say that in him we see “the one in whom perfect conformity to reality is exemplified.”

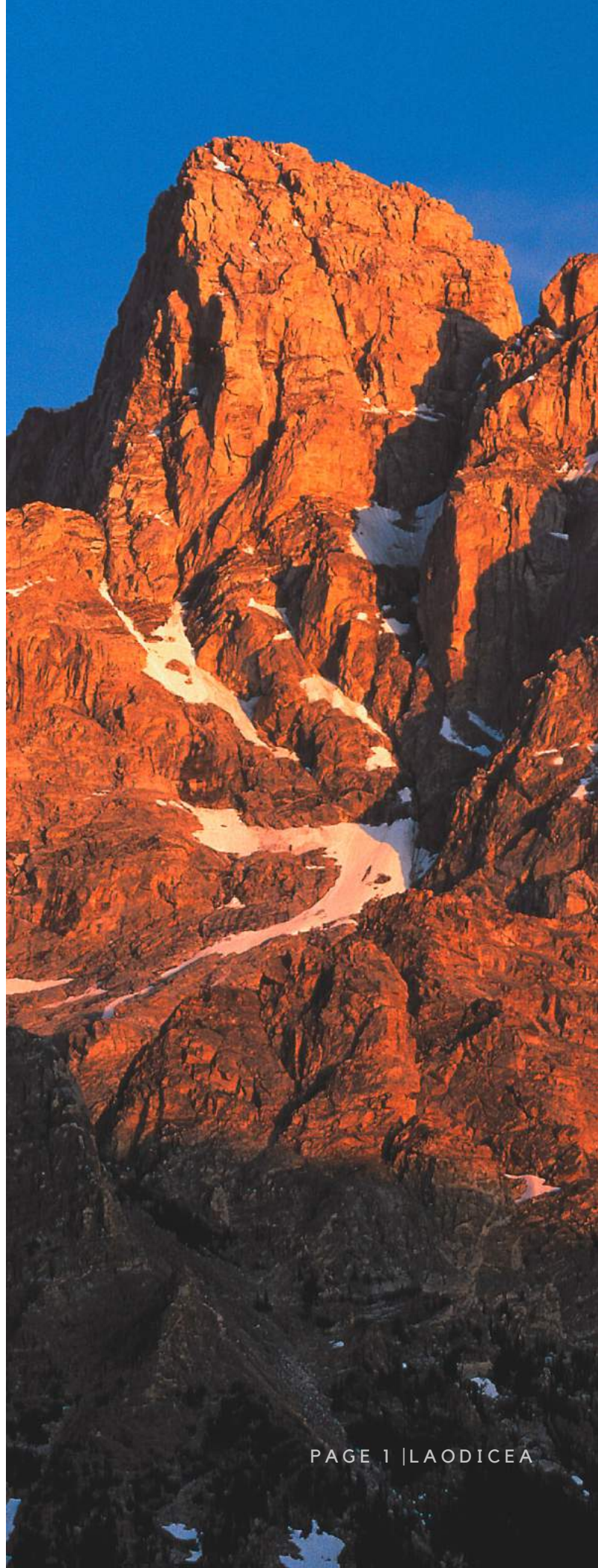
– Robert Mounce

Arche = ‘the ruler’ or ‘the beginning’
When we hear the Voice of Jesus, we are hearing the Voice of the Creator God

II. What Does Jesus Mean by Cold, Hot, and Lukewarm?

“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 [or vomit] you out of my mouth.”

– Rev 3:15-16





“Cold” means “refreshing”, like the cold mountain spring water from Colosse

“Hot” means “healing”, like the hot spring pools at Hieropolis

“Lukewarm” means this community was neither refreshing nor healing

“The church in Laodicea was providing neither spiritual refreshment for the spiritually weary, nor healing for the spiritually sick. It was totally ineffective, and thus distasteful to its Lord” (Rudick and Green).

III. The Cause of “Lukewarm” Living

Laodicea:

1. Refused any funding from Rome, the central government, after an earthquake in AD 61.
2. Was the banking capital of their region of Phrygia and was a very wealthy city
3. Was well known for producing garments of fine wool – a black wool that set the fashion trend of the time.
4. Boasted a famous medical school, especially known for producing an eye salve made of “Phrygian powder” mixed with oil

This city is full of those who are wealthy, well-dressed, and well-looked after in terms of health care. It is also fairly “full of” itself, it seems.

“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.”

– Rev 3:17

IV. The Central Issue: Self-Sufficient Complacency

Recognizing the Need and the Solution

“The saying “I have everything’ is a terrible saying when ‘everything’ does not include the living God.”

- St. Augustine (5th C)

And so in a highly ironic twist of words Jesus offers the solution:

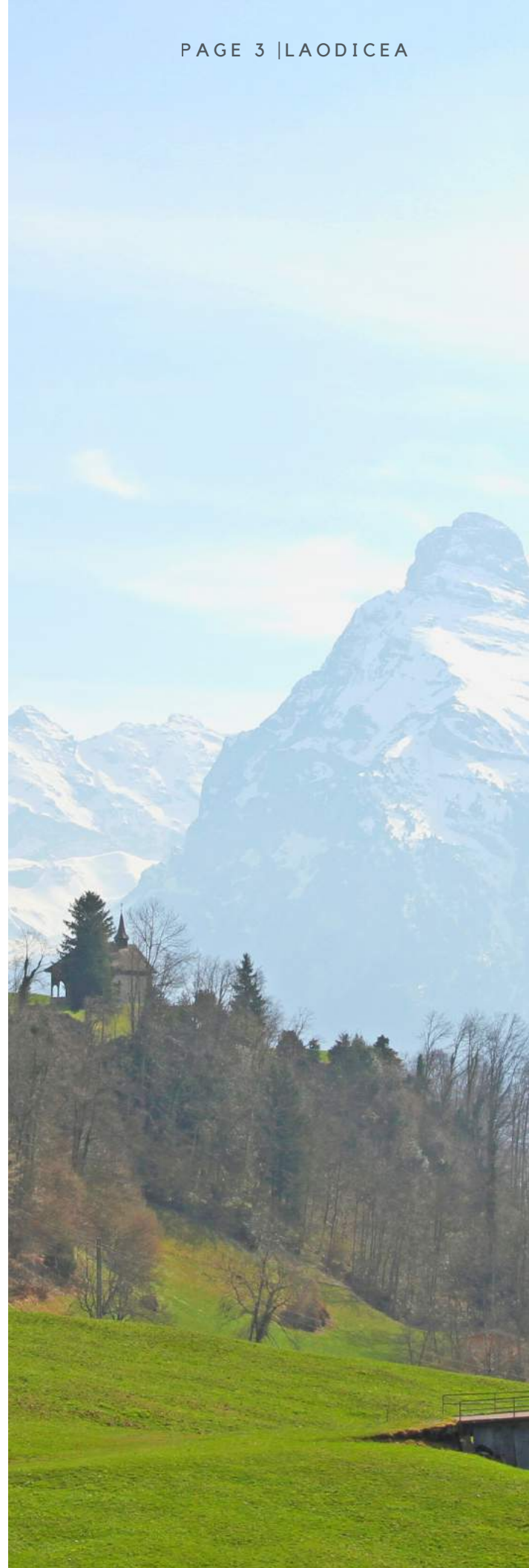
“I counsel you to buy from me gold refined in the fire, so you can become rich; and white clothes to wear, so you can cover your shameful nakedness; and salve to put on your eyes, so you can see.”

- Rev 3:18

Jesus is instructing them – and us – to buy what we could never get anywhere but from him. In sum, Jesus is saying: “If you will just recognize your spiritual need, your poverty of spirit – your desperate need for me, then you can become truly rich, rich in living how I made you to. Then you’ll have something to actually serve those around you; be a source of spiritual refreshment and healing.

Yes, you think you ‘see’ so well, but you can’t see how blind you are. In coming to me, I can open your eyes to truly perceive both your need, and the wonderful calling I have for you – to be an agent of healing and life in your city. I will help you see with *my eyes*.

And you think you are so well clothed, and you look fine on the outside, but you need a wholly different *kind* of garment – like Adam and Eve, after eating from that tree, that tree where they thought they could live independent of me, could be ‘self-sufficient’ – let me cover over your nakedness. I will clothe you with *my garments* – a whole new way of living out what I made you for; a beautiful garment of my salvation and right-living.”





“Those whom *I*
love I rebuke
and discipline.”

REVELATION 3:19



V. The Course Correction

1. The Tone:

“Those whom I love I rebuke and discipline.”

“You make me sick” is a true and honest assessment. But it flows from his: “I love you. I love you too much to let you continue on this path. As a good parent disciplines their child in order that they might be trained for living well – I discipline you for your good, to make you who you were always meant to be.”

2. The Change:

“So be earnest and repent.”

To be “earnest”, or “zealous” as it can be translated, is not to be “fanatical”.

Fanaticism means ‘unreasoned’. That’s not what Jesus says. To be ‘zealous’ – be ‘earnest’ means to be sincere, wholehearted, and...captivated by a person. Remember who Jesus is, after all.

3. The Invitation:

“Here I am! I stand at the door and knock...”

Jesus says, “Here I am!” Where is he? Right here. Like, he comes near. He knocks. How far do you have to go? Nowhere. And he asks that we simply “open the door.” How do we not be lukewarm? By letting Jesus come into the centre of our lives. Open the door!

“You are with me, always with me. How can that be? You desire me, even like me. It’s hard to believe.”

– “Overwhelmed” by Bob Gretzinger

4. The Promise:

“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.”

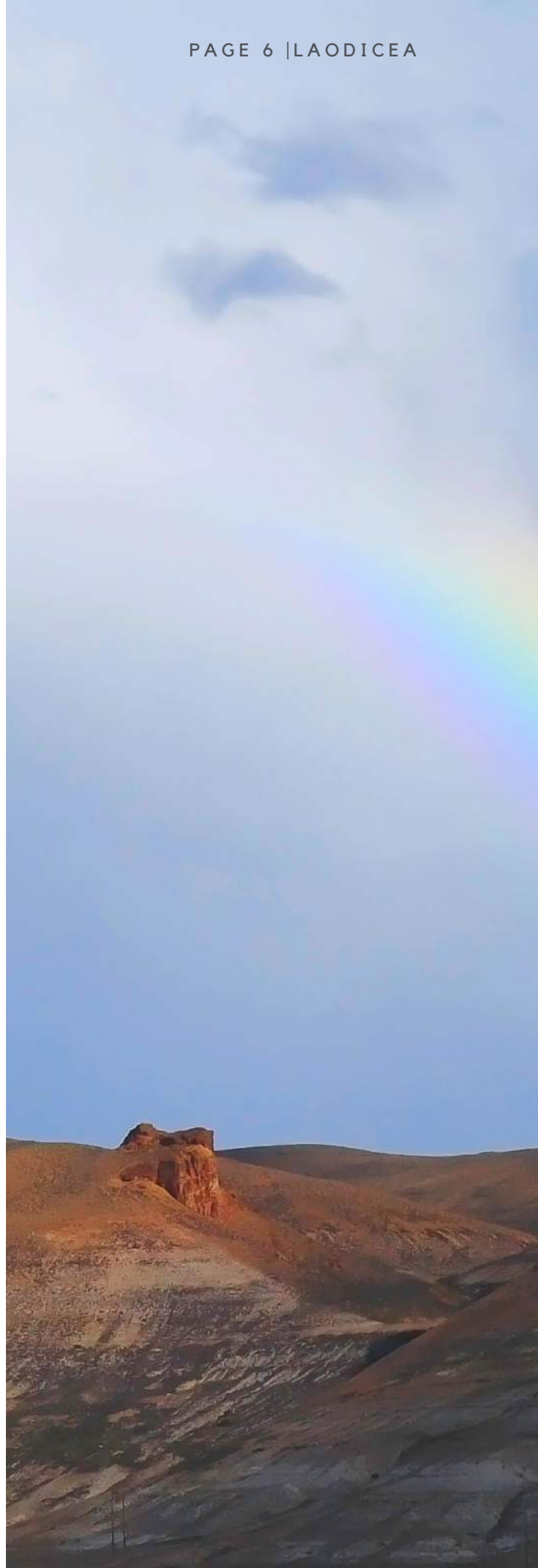
– Rev 3:21-22

In Genesis 1, the task God gives to humanity was, in essence, “Come, and reign with Me. That’s what it means to be you – to be human. It’s to take up your status as My image bearing creatures, My vice regents – reigning with Me.” The promise is to restore our humanity, and our task.

Prayer:

Take some time to pray for each other. Pray for those areas that you would like Jesus to alter, and remember, it is Jesus who actually transforms us as we welcome him in. Pray that we, as a community, would be ‘cold’ and ‘hot’, refreshing and healing to our community, and that we might look for creative ways to provide those things in our city.

(See Reflection and Discussion Question on next page)



REFLECTION & DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Read Revelation 3:14-22 together

In the message, Pastor Dave showed how connected Jesus' message to the church in Laodicea was with the local setting – both geographically and historically. With this in mind, we saw that “cold” means “refreshing” – like a glass of cold water when we are parched. And we saw that “hot” has the sense of having a “healing” function. The church in Laodicea was neither of these things. Lukewarm, then, has to do with being, well, “good for nothing” – not a refreshing or healing presence in their city.

With that in mind, might it be that, if you're honest, you are not “cold” and refreshing to others, or not “hot” and an agent of healing in the places God has called you to be – your work, home, neighborhood, school?

2. Consider what it might look like for that to change. Name what it might look like to make those adjustments.

3. Pay attention to vv.17. Why can it sometimes be easy to be ‘blind’ to our own shortcomings?

REFLECTION & DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

4. Look at vv.17-18. How is it an act of love for Jesus to reveal to the church in Laodicea their true condition? How has Jesus done the same in your life, or might he be doing even in and through this text?

5. What does Jesus tell the church to do in v.18? What does that tell us about true wealth?

6. It takes true humility to receive a word of rebuke and to change directions. How does vv.19-20 demonstrate the heart of Jesus even in his correction? Why might you need to focus on Jesus motivation when he requires a course-correction for you?

7. What do you think of Jesus' invitation in v.20? What would it look like to share in 'communing' with Jesus more closely?
