

tion of their souls. He asked which one would want to go. One creature came forward and said, "I will go." Satan said, "If I send you, what will you tell the children of men?" He said, "I will tell the children of men that there is no heaven." Satan said, "They will not believe you, for there is a bit of heaven in every human heart. In the end everyone knows that right and good must have the victory. You may not go."

Then another came forward, darker and fouler than the first. Satan said, "If I send you, what will you tell the children of men?" He said, "I will tell them there is no hell." Satan looked at him and said, "Oh, no; they will not believe you, for in every human heart there's a thing called conscience, an inner voice which testifies to the truth that not only will good be triumphant, but that evil will be defeated. You may not go."

Then one last creature came forward, this one from the darkest place of all. Satan said to him, "And if I send you, what will you say to women and men to aid them in the destruction of their souls?" He said, "I will tell them there is no hurry." Satan said, "Go!"

Remembering a recent sermon series we noticed how Jesus set out "resolutely" towards Jerusalem. We are reminded again today that Jesus calls us to live purposefully and urgently for His Kingdom.

PRAY: Consider singing the verses of "Take My Life and Let it Be". It's in our hymnal #288 or at <http://www.hymnal.net/hymn.php/h/445> .

FRIDAY MAY 20

Read: Revelation 3:19-22

The final sermon of the seven is perhaps the strongest. Jesus calls his church to repentance lest he "vomit" them out of his mouth—that's a literal translation of the Greek. And yet, his reason for such strong language is fellowship.

He desires to feast with the ones he loves. The call to repentance is finally a call to table fellowship. The "Amen", the "ruler of God's creation", the "one who sits on the throne" of history, desires to enter into the community of believers and dine with them. Around the table no one is hungry. Around the table there is joy, laughter, sharing, and nourishment. Around the table people share life. And once again, as we see in so many stories in the Bible, we see that the heart of God is directed towards full fellowship with all the people he has made.

The only question that remains is this: will we open the door and let him in?

PRAY: Read Isaiah 55:1-2. Thank the Lord for spiritual food. Pray that Jesus will enable you to feast more fully on his Word and Spirit.

SATURDAY MAY 21

Consider coming to morning prayer today at 6:00AM

WEEKLY DEVOTIONS GUIDE

MAY 15-21, 2011

BY: PASTOR ANDREW BEUNK

NEW WEST CRC

GEMS SUNDAY: "FEED THE FIRE"

SERMON: "LETTING GO OF LUKEWARM FAITH"

REVELATION 3:14-22

PASTOR ANDREW BEUNK

SUNDAY MAY 15

KEY THEME OR TAKE-AWAY:

MONDAY MAY 16

Read: Philippians 2:3

Letting go of a lukewarm faith requires humility and a healthy awareness of our own tendency towards pride.

Numerous studies have shown that in general people think of themselves much more highly than they ought. Citing several sources Matt Woodley an editor at PreachingToday.com writes, "For instance, when researchers asked a million high school students how well they got along with their peers, none of the students rated themselves below average. As a matter of fact, 60 percent of students believed they were in the top 10 percent; 25 percent rated themselves in the top one percent. You'd think college professors might have more self-insight, but they were just as biased about their abilities. Two percent rated themselves below average; 10 percent were average and 63 were above average; while 25 percent rated themselves as truly exceptional. Of course this is statistically impossible. One researcher summarized the data this way: "It's the great contradiction: the average person believes he is a better person than the average person." Psychologist Mark McMinn contends, "One of the clearest conclusions of social science research is that we are proud. We think better of ourselves than we really are, we see our faults in faint black and white rather than in vivid color, and we assume the worst in others while assuming the best in ourselves.""

To let go of lukewarm faith, we must regularly confess our pride and conceit. Our attitude must be the same as that of Christ Jesus our Lord.

PRAY: Ask the Holy Spirit to reveal the areas in your own life where you are blind to pride, conceit, and a mistaken notion of how good you are. Pray for forgiveness and Christ-like humility.

TUESDAY MAY 17

Read: Revelation 3:14-15a

If you read through the seven sermons to the seven churches in Rev. 2-3, you will find similar language, features and a common structure or pattern in each sermon. In all the sermons except two, Jesus commends the church for something. But not Laodicea (or Sardis). No commendation here. And in five out of seven sermons Jesus makes the comforting—or discomfiting statement—"I know your deeds."

"I know your deeds." When I was a teenage boy still living with my parents, and I would go out with my friends for the evening, or away camping for a weekend, often my dad would pull me aside for a just a moment to wish me a good time, and then he'd say something like, "Remember, the Lord is always with you." Now you need to know, that in those moments I didn't receive a great deal of comfort from those words rather, they felt

like a wet blanket on the good "fun" I hoped to have with my friends. The words contained a subtle reminder and warning; the Lord sees and knows everything you'll be doing. He sits with you in the movie theatre, he's beside you around the campfire with your friends, he hears your words, he knows your deeds.

I confess that there were many times when I behaved as if the Lord didn't know my deeds. I know he did, but for reasons I sometimes still regret to this day, I behaved as though he didn't.

The Lord still says to us, "I know your deeds." And now as a parent myself when I say to my own children the same words, I have a much deeper sense of why Jesus says them to us. It's not to put a wet blanket on all our fun. It's not to guilt us into living the straight and narrow.

It's simple really. It's because he loves us and wants the very best for us.

PRAY: Lord, we welcome your constant presence when we are lonely, scared, or sick, help us to welcome your presence when we are angry, bitter, lustful, dishonest, or greedy. Thank you for knowing ALL our deeds.

WEDNESDAY MAY 18

Read: Ephesians 3:14-21

Pray this prayer slowly enough to allow that inner voice to speak specifics into these words, so that we may continue to let go of a lukewarm faith. The prayer was written by explorer and naval pioneer, Sir Francis Drake.

"Disturb us, Lord, when we are too well pleased with ourselves, when our dreams have come true because we have dreamed too little, when we arrive safely because we have sailed too close to the shore.

Disturb us, Lord, when with the abundance of things we possess, we have lost our thirst for the waters of life; having fallen in love with life, we have ceased to dream of eternity; and in our efforts to build a new Earth, we have allowed our vision of the new heaven to dim.

Disturb us, Lord, to dare more boldly, to venture on wider seas where storms will show your mastery; where losing sight of land, we shall find the stars. We ask you to push back the horizons of our hopes; and to push into the future in strength, courage, hope, and love."

THURSDAY MAY 19

Read: 2 Peter 3: 11-13

In a sermon by Bruce Thielemann called "Tide Riding" he shares this provocative story:

"It is said that Satan once called to him the emissaries of hell and said he wanted to send one of them to earth to aid women and men in the ruina-