

DNR

Today is one of those days when I do not follow the lectionary. I had started the message based on the lectionary and decided to table it. Thus, the message on “Complaining People” will wait until the next cycle rolls around. The cycle is a three-year cycle. Instead of following the suggested scriptures for today, I opted to change. I believe the Holy Spirit led me to a different path.

Tonight, we start our revival. The theory behind a revival is that during the revival, the church may be revived. Something might touch us in such a way that we become more spiritually alive. The Greek words that are used in the Bible do not translate into revive or revival. Rather, we find these words. ἀνάψυξις anapsyxis (an-aps’-ook-sis) which means refreshing, literally to recover breath (either literally or figuratively). This word is used only once in the Bible. Another word we find is ζῶω zaō (dzah’-o). This word is found 143 times in the Bible. The definition (based on usage) is to live, breathe, be among the living (not lifeless, not dead) or to enjoy real life. As you see, when we have a revival, it is the intent that we reanimate or come back to life-to regain our breath. As I reflected on these words and the concept of revival, the thoughts associated with another term with which we are all too familiar. We are all familiar with the three letters DNR. They stand alone with a sinister reminder that death is near. DNR stand for do not resuscitate. It is a legal order, written or oral depending on location. Most commonly, the order is placed by a physician based on a combination of medical judgement and patient wishes and values.

These measures are often a part of a document known as an advanced directive and this document commonly has wording along this line: “if there is no reasonable expectation of my recovery...I be allowed to die and not be kept alive by artificial or heroic measures”.

Typically, these measures are included in hospice care. Hospice care is when the end of life is near and the goal is comfort rather than treatment.

This lengthy introduction brings us to the core of our message. We begin a series of messages brought to us by a visiting minister. Since we have called it a revival, we are looking to a renewal of our life in this church. If we are not seeking this revival, then we have placed on file our DNR.

The apostle John was exiled to the island of Patmos when he saw several visions that are recorded in the book of Revelation. In chapters 2 and 3, there are messages for seven churches in Asia Minor. Now we could debate whether these are actual churches or various stages of church history or any other idea. The real meat here is each of these churches are viewed by Jesus and there is a critique for each of them. If we read through these messages with an open mind, we might see our church reflected in some of these messages. We need to remember that the church is made up of individuals so, individually, we might see ourselves represented in the various messages. In the interest of time, we will not read all of the messages.

Of the seven churches, two of the churches did not have any negative comments: Smyrna and Philadelphia. As Jesus viewed these two churches, He had nothing that was amiss so, we will drop them for our reading.

Let’s open up our Bibles to the second chapter of Revelation as we look at the churches.

“To the angel of the church in Ephesus write: The One who holds the seven stars in His right hand, the One who walks among the seven golden lampstands, says this:

‘I know your deeds and your toil and perseverance, and that you cannot tolerate evil men, and you put to the test those who call themselves apostles, and they are not, and you found

them to be false; and you have perseverance and have endured for My name's sake, and have not grown weary. But I have *this* against you, that you have left your first love. Therefore, remember from where you have fallen, and repent and do the deeds you did at first; or else I am coming to you and will remove your lampstand out of its place— unless you repent. Yet this you do have, that you hate the deeds of the Nicolaitans, which I also hate. He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To him who overcomes, I will grant to eat of the tree of life which is in the Paradise of God.’ (Revelation 2:1-7 NASB)

This church had a good history. Yet, somewhere along the way they had lost their first love. The majority of commentators take the first love to refer to the original Christian love the Ephesians had for one another. Paul's exhortation to the Ephesian elders to "help the weak" (Acts 20:35) and the warm commendation he gives them in their early years for their fervent love of one another (Ephesians 1:15) may lend support to this view. Other commentators, however, see the "first love" as a reference to their inner devotion to Christ that characterized their earlier commitment, like the love of a newly wedded bride for her husband. This interpretation is supported by the fact that the letters to the other churches reveal problems of inner betrayal to Christ as subjects of his complaint. Neither view necessarily eliminates the other. Loving devotion to Christ can be lost in the midst of active service, and certainly no amount of orthodoxy can be a substitute for a failure to love one another. "First" love suggests that they still loved, but with a quality and intensity unlike that of their initial love.

“And to the angel of the church in Pergamum write: The One who has the sharp two-edged sword says this:

‘I know where you dwell, where Satan’s throne is; and you hold fast My name, and did not deny My faith even in the days of Antipas, My witness, My faithful one, who was killed among you, where Satan dwells. But I have a few things against you, because you have there some who hold the teaching of Balaam, who kept teaching Balak to put a stumbling block before the sons of Israel, to eat things sacrificed to idols and to commit *acts of immorality*. So, you also have some who in the same way hold the teaching of the Nicolaitans. Therefore, repent; or else I am coming to you quickly, and I will make war against them with the sword of My mouth. He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To him who overcomes, to him I will give *some* of the hidden manna, and I will give him a white stone, and a new name written on the stone which no one knows but he who receives it.’ (Revelation 2:12-17 NASB)

The church remained faithful to Jesus. However, they were tolerating cults, heresies, idolatry, and immorality. The Nicolaitans were those who still celebrated the pagan holiday that involved sexual gratification along with eating meat that had been sacrificed to idols. The life-style of unbridled sexual gratification was difficult for some to abandon.

Today, we have allowed sexual behavior that is outside of the Bible defined norms (within the marriage-man and woman). We may not practice these behaviors but we tolerate them.

We will skip the message to Thyatira as it runs very similar to the church at Pergamum. They had love, faith, and endurance. Yet, they tolerated idolatry and immorality.

“To the angel of the church in Sardis write: He who has the seven Spirits of God and the seven stars, says this: ‘I know your deeds, that you have a name that you are alive, but you are dead. Wake up, and strengthen the things that remain, which were about to die; for I have not found your deeds completed in the sight of My God. So, remember what you have received and heard; and keep *it*, and repent. Therefore, if you do not wake up, I will

come like a thief, and you will not know at what hour I will come to you. But you have a few people in Sardis who have not soiled their garments; and they will walk with Me in white, for they are worthy. He who overcomes will thus be clothed in white garments; and I will not erase his name from the book of life, and I will confess his name before My Father and before His angels. He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.’ (Revelation 3:1-6 NASB)

As I read through these messages to the churches, I believe that many are in this category. They think they are alive but are not. Some are still unspoiled by the world but most have died and are only going through the motions. This may be every bit as dangerous as becoming like the Laodiceans.

“To the angel of the church in Laodicea write: The Amen, the faithful and true Witness, the Beginning of the creation of God, says this:

‘I know your deeds, that you are neither cold nor hot; I wish that you were cold or hot. So, because you are lukewarm, and neither hot nor cold, I will spit (Lit. vomit) you out of My mouth. Because you say, “I am rich, and have become wealthy, and have need of nothing,” and you do not know that you are wretched and miserable and poor and blind and naked, I advise you to buy from Me gold refined by fire so that you may become rich, and white garments so that you may clothe yourself, and *that* the shame of your nakedness will not be revealed; and eye salve to anoint your eyes so that you may see. Those whom I love, I reprove and discipline; therefore, be zealous and repent. Behold, I stand at the door and knock; if anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and will dine with him, and he with Me. He who overcomes, I will grant to him to sit down with Me on My throne, as I also overcame and sat down with My Father on His throne. He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.’” (Revelation 3:14-22 NASB)

In this church, we see materialism has replaced the zeal to serve Jesus as the Christ. Didn't we read "I am rich and need nothing?" Between the spiritual dead and the belief that we don't need Jesus, many of the churches and thus the members are in need of repentance.

In every case where there are things to correct, Jesus calls them to repentance. As long as the world remains, there is time to repent and return to Jesus. This is the goal of revival. This is our chance to examine ourselves and see what needs to be corrected and to turn from our bad habits and practices and turn back to God.

Our spiritual life is not terminal. We do not need a DNR hanging around our neck. Now is the time to let the Holy Spirit come and breathe new life into each of us.