

Westwood Baptist Church *Grounded. Growing. Going.*

Worship Guide for February 28, 2021

Sermon Notes

The Coffin Church - Reputation vs. Reality

Revelation 3: 1-6 (pew Bible pg. 1029)

In New Testament times, the city of Sardis seemed to be impregnable. Surrounded on three sides by 800 ft natural cliffs, the city was considered unassailable. Seemingly sheltered from harm, Sardis became known for its overconfident people and their busy lifestyle. Sardis was considered to be a city of prosperity and peace – but according to Heroditus (“the father of ancient history” - 425BC), it “was not the peace through battle, but the peace of the man whose dreams are dead and whose mind is asleep, the peace of lethargy and evasion.” Their lack of seriousness eventually led to the city’s demise, when because of the Sardians’ lack of vigilance enemies made their way up the cliffs, breached the walls, overtook the city’s sleeping guards and the city was conquered.

The words we read today from Jesus to the church in Sardis are the starkest and scariest we’ve heard yet in the letters to the seven churches. There is no commendation, just a strong condemnation and warning. The church in Sardis largely mirrored the community – overconfident, affluent, busy, and off guard. Jesus knew of the church’s activities and programs, but instead of being impressed by the liveliness visible to those on the outside, He proclaimed the church as dead. Their reputation did not match their reality. Jesus always sees the difference.

Memories of yesterday’s accomplishments and confidence in today’s reputation are meaningless, even dangerous, when not matched by the reality of spiritual vitality and ongoing gospel growth. We will do well to listen to Jesus’ words to the church in Sardis, they are as much for us as they were for them.

The Revelation: Jesus is the one with Holy Spirit insight and full sovereign authority. (v1a)

The Rebuke: Jesus knows the difference between reputation and reality. (v1b)

The Requirement: Wake up, re-focus, remember and repent! (vv2-3)

The Reassurance: Stay faithful to Jesus and he will dress you in his righteousness, hold you secure for eternity and claim you as his own. (vv 4-6)

Weekly Discipleship Guide

Sunday

In your journal, reflect on today's sermon by answering the following:

I never knew:

I was challenged:

I was reminded:

I was convicted:

A question I still have:

A truth I could share:

Know

Monday

Spend some time today doing the following:

Read the sermon passage again.

Select a portion of this week's sermon passage to memorize this week.

Write your selected portion and read it to yourself at least 10 times throughout the day.

Know > Be

Tuesday

In your journal, spend some time writing about the following:

Read the sermon passage again.

Write a prayer of response, guided by the passage.

(May include adoration, confession/repentance, thanksgiving, petition, etc...)

Write your selected portion of the Scripture several times to aid in memorization.

Be

Wednesday

Think about this week's questions for group discussion:

What does it mean for a church to be mired in spiritual lethargy? In what ways could spiritual lethargy be hidden behind reputation and the appearance of vibrancy?

What does this passage reveal about how a church should truly evaluate and assess itself? What are the questions that might hide spiritual lethargy and lead to self-justification? What are better questions to ask?

Why is the understanding of confession and repentance as a continuous pattern in the lives of Christians so crucial to the health of a church?

Be > Do

Thursday

In your journal, spend some time considering the following:

What insights have you had while internalizing this week's passage?

How specifically will you seek to apply its truths in your home/workplace/life in general?

Do

**Use this guide to help you internalize this week's passage & message.*

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