



Going Deeper - Weekly Sermon Discussion Guide

Revelation: The Seven Churches- 4/11/2021

To the church in Sardis: "I know your deeds; you have a reputation of being alive, but you are dead. Wake-up. ... walk with me, dressed in white..."

Revelation 3:1-6

The seven churches addressed in Revelation were postal centers located about 50 miles apart in a circular pattern in ancient Asia. John lists them in order going clockwise around the mail route and the entire book of Revelation was sent to each church with the intention of it being distributed and read throughout each respective region. To each of the churches John provides a commendation, confronts them with a complaint, and provides corrections to compel them to get back on track. This means that every church read not just the letter to them, but also read the letters to the other six churches as well.

Believing that human nature was the same then as it is now, I imagine the people of any given church would have been interested in comparing the commendations and complaints they received to those given to the other churches. Consider then the letter to Sardis - it is missing a commendation! Furthermore, John strips away the facade of a good reputation and reveals the true state of this church. Can you imagine the whispers? *"Oh, man, I'm glad I don't live in Sardis!"*

There is no value, however, in pointing the finger at that church or any other as there is a message to us today embedded in each of the letters to each of the seven churches. The message to Sardis was both good and bad. The bad can be our warning today as well and the good can be the flicker of hope with the power to encourage, empower and excite us to embrace a healthy life.

John wrote that Sardis had a reputation of being alive but they were dead - and yet he says they can strengthen that which is about to die - so the spark is still alive. Those who wake up will walk with God, and what is better than that? The message is for each of us as individuals as well as the corporate body of the church. Each of us may do a good job of appearing alive but we need to take time for self-reflection and be honest about what God sees beneath the facade. Our church can only be alive as we each bring life to it. Sardis was compelled to wake up and get back on track. I encourage you to take time this week and think about the state of your 'aliveness.'

So consider... elements needed in a living organism and see if this is the time for you to embrace life more fully.

1. Living organisms have cells: at the Collective we call these Community Groups - do you have a place where you can study together, pray together, eat, drink, laugh and cry together?
2. Living organisms need food: Jesus is the bread of life and the living water, are you nurturing your spiritual being with the word of God, anchoring your life in truth?
3. Living organisms grow: The Collective continues to work to make space for growth, both yours and the church body's. Having two services again creates space to keep people safe.
4. Living organisms reproduce: we need to be willing to allow multiplication and life, strengthen what is within you and allow God to work in others from the overflow of his life and love within you.

Take Action: This week let the message to Sardis inform and ignite life within you. What does God see when the reputation is set aside? What remains that he wants to strengthen? To what should you hold fast, and to what should you repent? Wake up! Victory is yours and the reward is to walk with God. What is better than that?

May the grace and peace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you. ~Tess