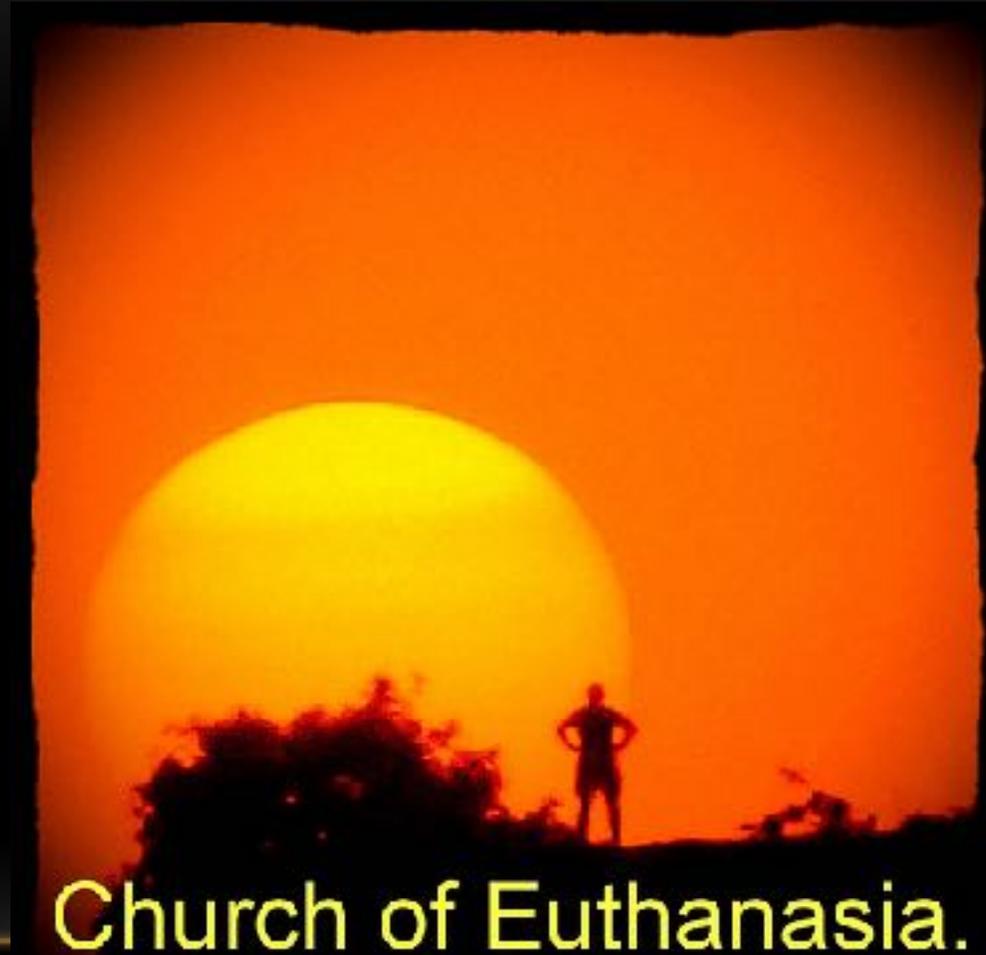


CHURCH OF THE LIVING DEAD

REV. 3:1-6

Mid Week Instruction
Reid Temple AME Church
Pastor Washington

CHURCH OF THE LIVING DEAD



Church of Euthanasia.

THE CONDITION OF THE CHURCH OF SARDIS

- Apparently the Church in Sardis had adopted the atmosphere of the city. The Church had become the thermometer that registered the temperature of the city instead of a thermostat that changed the temperature of the city.
 - It is this Church that had become lazy, apathetic, and complacent that the Lord speaks a word of commendation and condemnation.
 - We can view Jesus words to the Church as being prophetic, practical and personal because the words have something to say to every believer.
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SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS

EVERY DAY
I FEEL THE
SAME, STUCK
AND I CAN
NEVER
CHANGE.



THE SIGNS OF A DYING CHURCH

- The Church becomes so small in its thinking that it literally goes out of existence. The Church of Sardis had completely lost its vision to reach people for the Lord. It had a **reputation** but no **revelation** of God.
 - When a Church has been torn by controversy for years it literally stops being effective in the kingdom of God.
 - When a Church becomes so comfortable in its current situation that there is no place for new people it stops becoming effective for God.
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JESUS – SEVEN STARS



JESUS PROCLAIMS HIS DEITY - V1

- Jesus come to this Church as One who has the 7 spirits of God as one holding the 7 stars. The 7 spirits refer to the Holy Spirit in His complete ministry. The 7 stars are the Pastors of the churches.
- The 7 fold ministry of the Spirit is defined in Isaiah 11:2. This is a reminder the Church must not operate under the power of human skill, leadership and organization but under the awesome power of the Holy ghost.
- When the Holy ghost in control of the members of the Church great things can be accomplished. When He is not paralysis is the result nothing happens.

JESUS DIAGNOSIS & DISORDER –YOU HAVE A REPUTATION OF BEING ALIVE BUT YOU ARE DEAD V1

- The Church outwardly seems alive and well. It had a good reputation in the community. This Church was not on the brink of closing its doors.
 - This Church does not appear to be suffering persecution. It does not seem to be seriously infected with false doctrine.
 - This Church is not warned about losing its first love. When Jesus speaks to the other churches he spells out the problem but we don't know what was actually wrong here.
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A GOOD REPUTATION THAT IS UNDESERVED

- Apparently their works gave them the appearance of life. Jesus tells them that they have that reputation. They were busy working with a great reputation among men.
 - Jesus tells them even though everyone thinks they are alive, they are in fact dead, there was activity but it was not spiritual in nature.
 - There was busyness but they were bringing nothing eternal to pass. They were preaching but lives were not being changed and sinners were not being saved, they were operating in the energy of the flesh.
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SPIRITUAL GRAVEYARD



SPIRITUAL GRAVEYARD

- The Church had works but they were like beautiful grave clothes which were but a thin disguise for being an ecclesiastical corpse.
- Jesus makes the diagnosis because he can read the hearts and minds of those who worship there. This is why Jesus is called the one who holds the seven spirits of God, nothing is hidden from Jesus.
- The Church looked very good from the outside and the question for us as a Church is how does that become a reality for today?

SYMPTOMS OF A DEAD CHURCH

- When the past becomes more important than the present.
 - When keeping a good reputation matters more than a bold witness for Christ. When religious ritual becomes an end in itself.
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SYMPTOMS OF A DEAD CHURCH

- When talking about Christ matters more than knowing Christ. When convenience trumps sacrifice. When appearance matters more than reality.
- When tradition stifles every attempt at innovation. When personal comfort outweighs risky faith. When Church activity substitutes for a growing walk with God.

CHURCH ANNOUNCEMENT

- Come worship with us. We ask nothing, we demand nothing, we dare nothing, we dream nothing.
 - The Church had come to the place where it lived before men rather than before God, more anxious in all probability about their reputation in Sardis than their reputation in heaven.
 - A Church that is dead will often seem quite alive. When growth stops it means we are dead. So how do we measure up? Do we exhibit signs of life?
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FEAR OF THE LORD

RESPECT

REVERENT ATTITUDE

REVERENT ACTIONS

REVERENCE AND OBEDIENCE

- When a church becomes the living dead, it loses the fear of the Lord. An the inextricable relationship between a healthy fear or reverence for God and a right understanding of His Word.
- The preacher in Ecclesiastes 12:13 expresses the relationship well when he writes, the end of the matter; all has been heard. “Fear God and keep his commandments, for this is the whole duty of man.”
- All God requires of His people might be summarized in terms of having a right heart toward God and having the right response to His word

ABILITY TO DISCERN THE WILL OF THE LORD

- The Psalmist declares, “Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path.” Psalm 119:105 The Psalmist understands without the Word of God his footing will be unsure and his path obscured.
- Deut. 29:29 draws an even tighter connection between the Word of God and the will of God when it contends, “The secret things belongs to the Lord our God, but the things that are revealed belong to us and to our children forever.
- The Lord hides some things in order to reserve them for Himself; but He openly shares other things so that we may possess them

LOST OF THE GOSPEL OF JESUS

- Repeatedly the Psalmist beseeches the Lord to “give me life according to your word.” Psalm 119:25, 107. The early church understood that spiritual life came by the Word of God.
 - Acts 13:46 “it was necessary that the word of God be spoken first to you. Since you thrust it aside and judge yourselves unworthy of eternal life, behold we are turning to the Gentiles.
 - The Gentiles by contrast rejoiced to receive this Word which gives life. The word was no longer central to the lives of the believers in Sardis.
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LOST OF SPIRITUAL LIFE

- Nothing can sustain a spiritual people other than spiritual food. The devil tempted the very Son of God to live on some source of life other than the Word of God.
 - Jesus replied, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God. Matthew 4:4. If the Savior's life depended on the Word of God, how much more does our life?
 - Can we be surprised that a Church that looks to live by something other than the Word of God can eventually die?
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Reminder!

A HOPEFUL REMINDER –V4

- Yet you have a few people in Sardis who have not soiled their clothes. God has his people in the most unlikely places. Even in a Church like Sardis, there were those who loved and served the Lord from a pure heart.
 - You and I are not in a position to estimate your own effectiveness. When you think you have won don't be so sure. When you think you have failed don't be so sure. Let God render the final verdict.
 - God knows better than we do the lives that have been changed by our service for Jesus Christ.
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WAKE UP

- Wake up has a special meaning to the Church in Sardis but also because the Church had become spiritually lazy.
 - If all is going well, why bother to post a guard. Woe to the Church that ceases to keep watch for the enemy who prowls about like a roaring lion seeking someone to devour. 1 Peter 5:8
 - If the devil can't make a frontal attack, he will send wolves in sheep clothing. Or he will cause the sheep to begin biting each other, or he will lull the flock to sleep and pounce on them with deadly force.
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SARDIS SPIRIT

- *Remember what you have received and heard; obey it, and repent. But if you do not wake up. I will come like a thief, and you will not know at what time I will come to you.*
 - The Sardis spirit overtakes us whenever we begin to take God's gifts for granted. I dare say nothing is more difficult than for a comfortable church to repent.
 - Most of us don't change unless real pain is involved. We don't pray until we are desperate, we don't seek God's face until we are in real trouble and we don't repent unless we think there is no hope.
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JESUS IS COMING! ARE WE READY? EVALUATION

- Is everything done according to the Bible's clear teaching? Do people discuss the Word in smaller groups and one one one?
 - Is the Word read privately? Do you gossip the gospel, or doe it languish untold? Do you need the revival that comes from a Church powered by the Word of God?
 - The life of the local Church depends on the Bible being the central and authoritative key in everything we do.
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WORSHIP WARS

- Worship is suppose to deliver us but in many Churches worship wars devastate the Church. Conflicts over instruments, contemporary or traditional hymns.
 - Denominations battle over hymnals but if the Black church does one thing well it is singing. Just about every bona fide black superstar boasts a beginning in Church
 - If God's word is central to the life of the Church then it must be central to singing and the emphasis must be on biblical understanding of what and why we as a people are singing.
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COLOSSIANS 3:16

- Let the word of Christ dwell in your richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom, and as you sing praises, hymns and spiritual songs with gratitude in your hearts to God.
 - The basic command of the verse is, “let the word of God dwell in your richly.” The words of the song must resonate and live richly in our hearts or souls.
 - The word dwells in the church as we teach and admonish with all wisdom. That is the primary way the word of Christ enters and lives in the human heart. It happens when the Church teaches and explains the world
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WORD OF GOD IN SINGING

- The Word of God must be the substance and extend of our singing. The lyrics we lift up to God must be an exploration and exposition of what God has done for us in His Son Jesus Christ.
 - I wonder how often we think of singing as a method for creating a rich dwelling for the gospel in the congregation's heart. I suspect we think of this far less often than we ought.
 - In many churches the danger rises from the pressure to entertain congregation in order to attract and keep larger crowds of attendees.
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EPHESIANS 5:20 ALWAYS AND FOR EVERYTHING

- Always and for everything defines the times and scope of our praise to God. Our celebrations of God's goodness ought to pervade our lives.
 - No time exists when the gathered people of God should fail to express gratitude to God. Such thanksgiving is God centered not man centered.
 - It looks to Christ's rule in our hearts to His Word dwelling in us and to His service in the world. Such praises defies our circumstances by daring to see God's goodness at all times.
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Jeremiah 29:11

For I know the plans I have for you,
declares the LORD,
plans to prosper you
and not to harm you,
plans to give you hope and a future.

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A BRACING PROMISE

- They will walk with me dressed in white, for they are worthy. He who overcomes will, like them, be dressed in white. I will never blot out his named from the book of life.
 - This is a promise of absolute assurance of salvation. I will never ever under any circumstances blot their names from the book of life.
 - When we stand before God no one will be able to say why is he or she here? There is no greater reward for the believer than to be personally know and recognized by our Lord.
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PERSONAL CHALLENGE

- We should ask once again where did the Church of Sardis go wrong? It was a Church of living dead.
 - The Church was a bastion of dead orthodoxy and a beehive of religious mediocrity, its spiritual condition made worse by the fact that it seems on the surface to be spiritually alive.
 - This can happen to any of us at any time. We are the church all of us together, and each of us individually. Perhaps the Lord is speaking to you and me saying, wake up, shape up, repent.
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FINAL WORD

- It has been said that ministries often begin with a man or woman who has a vision. That vision is captured by others and becomes a movement.
- As the movement gains followers and momentum, it becomes a machine. After a while people forget all about the vision and what was once a movement becomes nothing more than a monument to a woman or man and a glorious past.
- Many Churches have sanctuaries that are morgues with a steeple. The congregations has corpses. The undertakers are ushers, embalmers the elders, and mortician the ministers, the pastor graduated from the cemetery, the choir master is the local coroner, they sing “we are embalmed in Gilead”