



ST. MATTHEWS
Experience God's Family

Sermon Title: **The Christ Evaluation**

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We evaluate things and people all the time.

It is part of everyday life.

Every day we are assessing the value of people and things against criteria that we have built up over the course of our lives largely made up of the values we hold dear.

Some of those values will be good some not and one of the ways in which we grow as a Christian is to make sure that our values which form the criteria by which we assess people and things are biblical.

We are making judgement calls every day... which is fine as long as it is biblical and not judgemental.

- We evaluate which route to use when making a journey.
- We evaluate where we shop.
- We evaluate whether to buy certain things or not.
- We evaluate whether or not to go somewhere based on its security risk.
- We evaluate recreation and holiday options.
- We evaluate job options.
- We evaluate restaurants.
- We evaluate schools.
- We evaluate a marriage partner.
- We evaluate whether or not to become parents.
- We teach our children to evaluate the people they allow to have influence on their lives.
- We evaluate who we will allow to have influence on our lives.
- We evaluate so many things
- We evaluate churches...

And Jesus also evaluates churches in Revelation 2 – 3...

The seven churches to whom Revelation is written.

And the Jesus evaluation of these churches is really important. Because remember from Revelation 1 that this is “Awesome Jesus” who is God! And being God, His values which form the criteria by which He judges is perfect.

And everyone who hears it must make every effort to listen and adjust to the Jesus evaluation. And this is why more often than not, in 2 and 3, the phrase is used: *“He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches”*

Not only is Jesus the God who has correct judgement, He is also the God who is among His churches intimately aware of everything that is going on, why it is going on and how to specifically apply this evaluation to each church... In 1 we saw Jesus walking among the lamp stands (churches). Jesus knows his church.

Note that each of the letters written to each church is introduced with an element from the opening vision in 1 (**look**) – and probably the aspect of the vision most relevant to their trouble or problem.

But I am not going to look at each individual church, rather I am going to take a big picture look at all and ask the question...

What does Jesus value in a Church?

Firstly, He values holding to the truth about Him

Ephesus is praised for being theologically sound about Jesus 2: 2b.

Thyatira is criticised for accepting false teaching that contradicts the teaching of Jesus 2: 20b.

Pergamum is criticised for accepted false teaching that Jesus hated 2: 14 – 15 (see also 2: 6).

The influence of false teaching is serious. You will have Jesus to contend with 2: 16.

Secondly, Jesus values being godly

False teaching leads to ungodly behaviour.

What you believe shows itself in how you live 2: 14 + 20.

Jesus praises those who live a godly life 3: 4.

Thirdly, Jesus values pressing on and bearing witness to Him.

Ephesus 2: 2 – 3.

Smyrna 2: 9 – 10.

Pergamum 2: 13.

Philadelphia 3: 8.

The reason many of the churches were suffering was that they were committed to the Gospel. We will suffer for the same reason today.

And then each letter ends off with an amazing promise...

To those who hold on to the truth, are godly, who press on and bear witness

To those who are faithful to Jesus to the end even if things get hard, even if it costs them their lives

To those John calls overcomers... these amazing promises:

2: 7b paradise regained

2: 10b + 11b Crown of life = tree of life but also note not only what saved to but from... second death = hell

2:17b Never before experienced intimacy with Jesus to those who overcome (High Priest – experiencing what others didn't... community in heaven but does not illuminate individual joy and intimacy with Jesus).

2: 26 – 28 Psalm and further on in Revelation. Jesus makes us rulers with Him over the nations – now and then? Then = judgement day? Can't see it being beyond. Morning star re-emphasizing Jesus' intimate relationship with us.

3: 5 Also 7: 14 washed in blood of the lamb

3: 12 Forever belonging to God, Christ and His people.

3: 21 Massive privilege to share a throne with the all powerful God!

But would these churches overcome?

Three of the churches who were evaluated by Jesus and found wanting thought they were doing well. And interestingly Jesus reserves His harshest criticisms and warnings for them:

Ephesus 2: 4 – 5

Sardis 3: 1 – 3

Laodicea 3: 15 – 18

NB: it is not our evaluation of our church that ultimately counts it is the Jesus evaluation.

So here I am – the messenger of the church.

What would the Jesus evaluation of our church be? How would Jesus see our church:

- Committed to his word?
- Committed to godliness?
- Committed to pressing on and bearing witness?

Or in the words of Jesus are we...

- Forsaking your first love?
- Holding to false teaching because it suits your ungodly lifestyle?
- Lukewarm – half-hearted, complacent, casually interested and thinking that is ok?

Repent! Change! Turn around! (Enact) Even if you feel weak – He is strong to help you and holds out these awesome promises which He will help you be faithful in living towards.