

6th in Epiphany



Message Transcript

How can we ensure our church perseveres like the one in Philadelphia

Greetings my brothers and sisters in Christ, what a joy that we can come together to worship and give thanks and celebrate the 6th Sunday after the Epiphany, as we continue our journey through the Book of Revelation, and Jesus's message to each of the seven churches Asia Minor, today we reflect on Jesus's message to the Church in Philadelphia.

I know many of you will be watching via live stream, are unable to be here today, and we continue to pray, that we will be able to once again come together each Sunday for worship and fellowship.

I pray, that today's message, will lift all our spirits, and encourage us, as we live out our lives as Christians, committed to lives of service, in God's Kingdom!

Let us pray.

Heavenly Father, as we gather together as living stones, part of your Church, we ask the Holy Spirit to fill our hearts, kindling in them the fire of your love.

*Almighty God, speak to us through your Holy Spirit, and as we walk in the light of your Spirit may we grow in wisdom, always rejoicing in the comfort He brings, through Jesus Christ our Lord.
Amen.*

Well, again, another 'edifying challenge' for yours truly in preparing today's message, and as usual, the learning outcomes gave me good food for thought and action!

Last Sunday, Reverend Juleen, spoke about the church in Sardis and how our relationship with Jesus needs to be constantly nurtured and fed. We need to be protecting our faith from allowing the weeds of sin, apathy and lethargy from growing.

So onto the church of Philadelphia.

Philadelphia has long been nicknamed "The City of Brotherly Love" from the literal meaning of the city's name in Greek.

As my Greek knowledge is limited to the Greek alphabet from my Engineering education, I won't even try to pronounce the Greek words, needless to say the name Philadelphia means brotherly love.

Reverend Juleen also mentioned last week, that both Sardis and Philadelphia were devastated by earthquakes in A.D. 17. In Philadelphia most things were decimated, especially the temples, but a lone pillar withstood the impact, standing as a tribute to the power of fortitude in the crisis. Jesus promises the Philadelphians that he would make them a pillar in the temple of God. Isn't that of great assurance to us!

Philadelphia was known to have been a missionary city though the term is probably not the same as what we would think, as a missionary endeavour today.

Jesus commends the church of Philadelphia for its steadfast faithfulness. It's especially interesting that he tells them that they have remained faithful despite the fact that they have only a little strength. Isn't that wonderful assurance to our church community here in Southlakes. I think it's fair to say our physical strength *'ain't what it used to be,'* however our faith strength has not lost its power!

Jesus goes on to say, they have kept His word and not denied His name and Jesus promises not only to place before them an open door which no person can shut but also to demonstrate to those who have opposed them His love for His church. Hasn't that been the case for our lives, an open door of opportunity of witness and service, all done in love over the long years of our life. Think about our families, our rearing children, baby sitting grandchildren, involvement in the myriad of church missions, still serving today here at our local church.

Our community involvement in the emergency relief, Mission Sunday's goodies from Margaret, our Boutique and Bazar volunteers, our Tuesday Dinner Church, and our Sunday church services, Mothers' Union, Men's group, Cursillo and Kairos, just to name a few!

We, this faithful little church, are part of *Christ's hands and feet*, as missionaries where God has placed us, here in Southlakes.

We notice from today's reading, that Jesus offers no words of reproof to the church of Philadelphia. That is significant, but it also signifies two things.

1. The first is that it is possible for God's people to walk before Him so uprightly that they please Him in all things. This is not only heartening and reassuring but also a direct challenge for those of us who profess to be Christians. Our actions speak louder than our words!!
2. Secondly, it is an indication of the deep and abiding relationship that existed between Jesus and His church. Such an experience is not limited to the Philadelphian church alone. It is something we today, can all attain.

God opened the door to mission throughout the world, and that door is still wide open!

We will always have work to do, no matter of our age, or abilities!

The climactic focal point of the book of Revelation is the second coming. Every verse and chapter points towards it as the final conclusion to the great controversy between the lamb and the beast that is seen playing out in the book.

It is fitting then that the second coming is the focal point of the promises that Jesus gives to the church of Philadelphia. Those who have withstood the shaking blasts of the great conflict between good and evil and have managed to hold on to their faith in Jesus will stand as sentries testifying to the fortitude and resilience of the overcomer.

Jesus counsels the Philadelphians to hold fast to what they have, their spiritual experience, that is deep and abiding. He promises them that if they hold fast to it no-one will be able to take their crown. Doesn't that fill our hearts and minds with joy, and that peace that passes all understanding is upon us and remains in us!! **Amen.**



Going deeper into what Jesus expects of his church ...

Look out for Week 7 of the "Journey through Christ's Letters to His Church" devotional:

This week we look closely at Jesus letter to the church at Philadelphia.

1. Is there any discrepancy between who you are on the inside and how you appear to others externally (Revelation 3:1)?
2. Does the fact that you will one day appear before the judgment seat of Christ motivate you in your spiritual life?
3. Just as Christ knows all that goes on in the churches, so He knows all that goes on in each of our lives. Does that reality please you or scare you? Why?