

Lent, Day 7

Wednesday, March 13, 2019

Revelation 3:1–6

I mentioned yesterday that I love movies. On Monday I watched *Creed II*, so perhaps that's why I have Rocky on my mind. I love the whole *Rocky* franchise, but it's *Rocky III* that comes to mind when I read about the church in Sardis. Sardis was a city that was strong and had never been taken. That is, until they were. They had become over confident in their security and did not see the enemy slip in. *Rocky III* has a similar story.

After he becomes the Heavy Weight Boxing Champion of the World, Rocky's manager sets him up with easier fights and keeps him away from a very dangerous Clubber Lang. Until Clubber Lang humiliates Rocky into a fight. We then go to the 80's training montage and we see the difference between the two fighters preparing. Rocky is taking it easy allowing his training to be public, so it's often interrupted. Clubber, on the other hand, is training old school, hard, and hungry.

When the two fighters meet it's a predictable outcome. Rocky loses his title and Clubber Lang wins. Of course a *Rocky* movie isn't going to end there. Rocky goes with Apollo Creed to begin training all over again. This time going back to his roots, but even this isn't enough to regain the eye of the tiger (that's what Rocky lost). Something had to stir in him, he had to wake up, and recover what he once had.

The drama of Sardis and of *Rocky* plays out still today. We, the church in the West, have become lax in our attention. We can move through the religious motions thinking that we are safe, "I said my prayer inviting Jesus into my heart thirty years ago." But, we're just fooling ourselves. Jesus says to us, "Wake Up!" Take this seriously, get on guard, because there will come a day when he comes to judge. This could look like a variety of things. It could be persecution or it could be his final return. Either way he urges us to become serious again.

That is what the lent season is for. It can be handled as a religious time where we religiously give something up. But, what it is meant to be is a time when we enter into a serious striving to respond to the Spirit of God.

Prayer

Giver of life, help us to wake up and pay attention to what the Spirit is saying to the church. Wash our clothes and they will be clean. Amen.