

Sermon Notes: July 5, 2026

Smyrna: Unshakable Allegiance

Scripture Reading: Revelation 2:8–11

Big Idea

True freedom is not independence—it is complete belonging to Christ.

1. Christ Defines Reality

Revelation 2:8-9a

Jesus introduces Himself as: "The First and the Last, who died and came to life again."

Smyrna was a city that had been destroyed and rebuilt. Its citizens took pride in a city that had "died and come back to life."

Jesus points them to a greater reality:

- Smyrna's resurrection was political.
- Christ's resurrection was physical and eternal.
- Smyrna's glory was temporary.
- Christ's kingdom is forever.

Revelation 2:9a "I know your afflictions and your poverty—yet you are rich!"

- Colossians 3:1–4
- Matthew 10:28

Key Truth: Christ alone defines reality.

Our identity, security, and future are hidden in Him.

2. Faithfulness in Babylon

Revelation 2:9–10

The book of Revelation is fundamentally a call to loyalty under pressure.

Babylon represents every system that opposes God's Kingdom by blending:

- Power
- Wealth
- Influence
- False Worship

Revelation 18:4 "Come out of her, my people..."

Jesus is not calling believers to leave the world.

He is calling believers to allegiance separation.

The Church in Smyrna experienced pressure through:

- Slander
 - Christians were falsely labeled "atheists."
 - Their beliefs were twisted and misrepresented.
- Social Seduction
 - Believers were pressured to compromise in order to fit in and succeed.
- Physical Persecution
 - Imprisonment
 - Loss of property
 - Death

Key Truth: Compromise creates divided allegiance.

Reflection Question: Will we remain faithful when faithfulness costs us something?

3. Kingdom Allegiance Redefines Freedom

True freedom is not independence—it is complete belonging to Christ.

The American Story

- Independence
- Self-rule
- Freedom to choose

The Gospel Story

- Surrender
- Christ's rule
- Freedom to obey

Colossians 1:16

Philippians 3:20

Our highest allegiance belongs to Christ.

Reflection Questions

- When Christ's commands conflict with culture's expectations, who wins?
- When obedience costs you popularity, who wins?
- When faithfulness costs you money, who wins?
- When truth costs you relationships, who wins?

Key Truth: The question is not whether we have a king. The question is which king we will serve.

4. Polycarp: A Living Example of Unshakable Allegiance

Who Was Polycarp?

- Bishop of Smyrna
- Disciple of the Apostle John
- Likely heard this letter read as a young believer

"Eighty-six years I have served Him, and He has done me no wrong. How then can I blaspheme my King and my Savior?"

Revelation 2:10 "Be faithful, even to the point of death, and I will give you life as your victor's crown."

Revelation 2:11 "The one who is victorious will not be hurt at all by the second death."

When pressure comes, we can:

- Quit
- Lie
- Fight
- Demand Change
- Compromise
- Remain Faithful

If we follow Jesus, there is really only one option: **Faithfulness.**

Discussion / Reflection Questions

- Where am I most tempted to compromise my allegiance to Christ?
- What pressures from culture most challenge my faithfulness?
- How does Christ's resurrection redefine how I view success and suffering?
- What can I learn from the example of Polycarp?
- What is one way I can demonstrate greater faithfulness to Jesus this week?