

Good morning! Many years ago I had a conversation with a friend who was pastoring a denominational church in another state. He was a fairly young man---early 30's at the time---and his congregation was in turmoil. For one thing, he knew they were trying to decide whether or not they wanted to keep him as their pastor! There was a lot of political infighting in the church. Did you know that happens in churches? If you've been in church very long, you know it happens all too frequently. In fact, much of the New Testament has to do with congregational conflict. My friend asked me what I thought about his situation. I asked him how long he had been their pastor and he said about four years. I asked him if he had ever preached on repentance and he said he hadn't. I suggested that this might be a good time to start. Jesus preached often on repentance, and we should as well. As Sam Storms has said, "Repentance is absolutely necessary if we hope to live in the daily delight that comes with being reconciled with God." This morning, let's listen to what Jesus said about repentance---after the resurrection:

"And to the angel of the church in Smyrna write, 'These things says the First and the Last, who was dead, and came to life: "I know your works." **Rev. 2:8-9a**

"And to the angel of the church in Pergamos write, 'These things says He who has the sharp two-edged sword: "I know your works." **Rev. 2:12-13a**

"And to the angel of the church in Thyatira write, 'These things says the Son of God, who has eyes like a flame of fire, and His feet like fine brass: "I know your works." **Rev. 2:18-19a**

Here's something interesting you may not ever have ever considered; each of these churches has a particular angel assigned to it! That's something to think about. I wonder who the angel is for Reformation Lutheran Church in Culpeper, Virginia. In today's passages, Jesus calls the churches to repent, beginning with this chilling comment: "*I know your works.*" Jesus knows our works; He knows what we are doing, what we have done, what we are going to do. He knows what we'd *like* to do if we weren't afraid of going to jail, too. (Oh, don't deny it—there are a few things you would do if you thought you could get away with it.) OK, so how does Jesus use the word "repent"? On several occasions Jesus calls upon the churches to repent. Jesus tells the church in Pergamum, "Therefore repent" He tells the church in Sardis, "Remember, then, what you received and heard. Keep it, and repent". And to the church in Laodicea, Jesus says "Those whom I love, I reprove and discipline, so be zealous and repent". Notice here that Jesus calls the churches to repent, to stop behaving one way and start behaving a different way. Stop abandoning your first love and "*do the works you did at first.*" I want to remind someone this morning that Jesus knows your works and is telling you to change them. Stop doing wrong and start doing right...that's real repentance!