

Injustice – Ecclesiastes 3:16-4:6

As the Preacher looks at the fallen world, he is sickened by the way he sees human being treating one another. The injustice he sees is so disheartening that he decides the most fortunately person is the one who never existed to see it.

3:16 Moreover, I saw under the sun that in the place of justice, even there was wickedness, and in the place of righteousness, even there was wickedness. ¹⁷ I said in my heart, God will judge the righteous and the wicked, for there is a time for every matter and for every work. ¹⁸ I said in my heart with regard to the children of man that God is testing them that they may see that they themselves are but beasts. ¹⁹ For what happens to the children of man and what happens to the beasts is the same; as one dies, so dies the other. They all have the same breath, and man has no advantage over the beasts, for all is vanity. ²⁰ All go to one place. All are from the dust, and to dust all return. ²¹ Who knows whether the spirit of man goes upward and the spirit of the beast goes down into the earth? ²² So I saw that there is nothing better than that a man should rejoice in his work, for that is his lot. Who can bring him to see what will be after him?

4:1 Again I saw all the oppressions that are done under the sun. And behold, the tears of the oppressed, and they had no one to comfort them! On the side of their oppressors there was power, and there was no one to comfort them. ² And I thought the dead who are already dead more fortunate than the living who are still alive. ³ But better than both is he who has not yet been and has not seen the evil deeds that are done under the sun. ⁴ Then I saw that all toil and all skill in work come from a man's envy of his neighbor. This also is vanity and a striving after wind. ⁵ The fool folds his hands and eats his own flesh. ⁶ Better is a handful of quietness than two hands full of toil and a striving after wind.

We can think of injustice most broadly as violations of God's command for us to love our neighbor as ourselves. In the now-fallen world, God's design is not the norm. We suffer from the injustice of others, all the while hurting them with our selfish lack of love.

- 1) **What are some of the ways we see injustice in the world? What are some ways you've suffered personally at the hand of others?**
- 2) **What makes suffering at the hands of others so painful?**
- 3) **Sin naturally focuses us on ourselves. That means the ways we are sinned against often stand out most. But we all fail to love the way God has called us to – how do you see that in yourself.**

The problem of injustice is double-edged. We are hurt by it AND guilty of it. In the face of this, the preacher looks for hope.

- 4) **He looks first to God's judgment but does not find much comfort there. Why is God's perfect justice unhelpful to us by itself?**

The preacher's view is restricted to what is "under the sun", and he sees no light in the darkness. But scripture gives us a larger view by revealing Jesus to us?

- 5) **What does the work of Jesus show us about how God is at work in injustice?**
- 6) **When we see the world and its injustice, how does it change our perspective on its persistence in the world, those who hurt us, etc.? How does it affect things?**
- 7) **What means of grace has God provided for us while we sojourn through an unjust world?**

Let's pray for each other sharing the ways we are feeling the pain of injustice in the world, as well as confessing the ways we ourselves play a part in it.