

**Life is not Fair**

Ecclesiastes 4

Pastor Jeremy Cagle, October 3, 2021

I don't know about you, but I teared up a little bit when we were singing because I haven't heard that many people sing in one room before in years. Amen? The tent was great, but we never got the acoustics right in there. We did manage to get the cows to sing with us at time to time, but this was really neat. Thank you for participating in our worship today.

Before we begin our time in the word, I just to mention a few things. One is some of you saw there were some government restrictions that came down this week. They don't relate to what we're doing, so we're able to continue meeting here. The tent is still up on the farm. So it's an option if we should ever need to do that. But for now, we're going to continue meeting and here; we will keep you posted if anything changes on that. But some of you asked questions, so I just wanted to mention that. Another thing to let you know about is we're getting ready to have a men's retreat here in a few weeks. As we saw in the bulletin, we're planning to get away for a few days at the camp here in Chilliwack with Prairie Chapel and Grace Church on 99, from Squamish. This is something we used to do a lot in previous years; we had a lot of fellowship between the churches, but obviously that had to stop with a lot of the COVID things. But the way this is going to work is that the retreat will begin on Friday night, October 15 at supper time, so that's when it'll be, October 15. Dinner will be at 530. The first session will be at seven. And there will be two more on Saturday morning. So there's an option to stay over if you'd like to stay over at the camp; you can also come back and forth as well, since it's here in town; you don't have to actually stay over. So if you can't come on Friday night, you can come the next day. But you'll want to be a part of that because the speaker is a man named Mark Jones. He's a pastor of Faith Reformed Church in Vancouver. And I don't know if you're familiar with that name, but he's written a book called *Knowing Christ*. Some of you remember the book *Knowing God* by J. I Packer. And Dr. Packer was in Vancouver, Mark Jones had a relationship with him. And he decided to write a follow up to that book called *Knowing Christ* where he walks through the attributes of Christ and talks about that one by one. So we've asked him to come talk to us about that subject. And he's agreed to do that. And we're really excited about that. But all this to say, please join us for that if you can; it should be a real blessing for you. It's really important for you in your Christian life to remember that you're not alone. Amen? And our church is not alone. I mean, we're not the only ones out there preaching the gospel, teaching the Word and fighting the fight of faith. There's other ones too, and we want to encourage them any way we can. And that's what this weekend is all about. So if you can, please join us for that.

And with that said, I want to invite you to open your Bibles to the book of Ecclesiastes. That's the book we're in this morning. So if you would please open your Bibles to the book of Ecclesiastes. As you're turning there, I'm really excited about our message today because we're studying a pretty unknown part of the Bible. Last week, we studied a very well-known text, but this week it's different. And I just want

to read it to you before we begin. So if you had read in Ecclesiastes, the first few verses in chapter one, it says, "The words of the preacher, the son of David king in Jerusalem, Vanity of vanities, all is vanity." And then if you look in chapter four, just to give you an example of this vanity that he's talking about, Solomon says this says,

Then I looked again at all the acts of oppression which were being done under the sun. And behold I saw the tears of the oppressed and that they had no one to comfort them; and on the side of their oppressors was power, but they had no one to comfort them. So I congratulated the dead who were already dead more than the living who are still living. But better often than both of them is the one who has never existed, who has never seen the evil activity that is done under the sun.

I have seen that every labor and every skill which is done is the result of rivalry between a man and his neighbor. This too is vanity and striving after wind. The fool folds his hands and consumes his own flesh. One hand full of rest is better than two fists full of labor and striving after wind.

Then I looked again at vanity under the sun. There was a certain man without a dependent, having neither son nor brother, yet there was no end to his labor. Indeed, his eyes were not satisfied with riches and he never asked, "And for whom am I laboring and depriving myself of pleasure?" This too is vanity and it is a grievous task.

Two are better than one because they have a good return for their labor. For if either of them falls, the one will lift up his companion. But woe to the one who falls when there is not another to lift him up. Furthermore, if two lie down together they keep warm, but how can one be warm alone? And if one can overpower him who is alone, two can resist him. A cord of three strands is not quickly torn apart.

A poor yet wise lad is better than an old and foolish king who no longer knows how to receive instruction. For he has come out of prison to become king, even though he was born poor in his kingdom, I have seen all the living under the sun thrown to the side of the second lad who replaces him. There is no end to all the people, to all who were before them, and even the ones who will come later will not be happy with him, for this too his vanity and striving after wind.

We will end the reading there. Just to explain what you just read there; I don't have to tell you that this is a very unfamiliar part of the Bible. Some of you probably never read Ecclesiastes 4 before because it falls into a part of the Bible that's really not studied much today, and that's called the Old Testament. When the Bible was first being compiled, the early church divided it into two sections: the Old Testament, which included everything that happened before Christ; and the New Testament, which included everything that happened afterwards. But a lot of people skip over the old for the new because

it's easier to read. It seems a lot more relevant to our lives. In fact, I bet if I asked some of you, how often do you read the Old Testament, some of you would probably say, never, you just don't do that. But you should, because the Jews were God's people, too. They were the ones God spoke to before us. And you should read it because they're the ones who wrote the New Testament. But as you study the old, you come to this book of Ecclesiastes, which is really an enigma, when you first read it. I'm not gonna ask you to raise your hands if you've ever studied Ecclesiastes before, but you read the book and it really is kind of a mystery. But there's one phrase that jumps out at you, if you look in chapter one, again, which we just read. There's a phrase "vanity" that jumps out at you, we've talked about that. But there's another one where he says, "under the sun." If you look in verse three, it says, "What advantage does man have in all his work which he does under the sun." That phrase is mentioned 30 times in the book to say, this is what life is like under the sun. This is what it looks like if you take God out of the picture, it's all vain, doesn't amount to anything. If you look at it under heaven, it's not like that; if you put God in the picture, it's very different, because there's hope. There's a lot to look forward to. But if you take God out, there's nothing because all you have is despair. That's the message of the book of Ecclesiastes, which is a mistake that Solomon made.

And I'm not going to repeat what we talked about in previous weeks, but like a lot of people Solomon wanted to be happy. He wanted to live a nice, fulfilled life. So he did what we would do, he lost weight, went to college, found a job, made a lot of money, found a good wife, good kids, good home in the best neighborhood with a porch, and a dog in the yard, and a house with two cars in the driveway. That's what Ecclesiastes is about, right? He's looking for the Hallmark picture of happiness, the one we all want to have. And his conclusion at the end of the book is that it doesn't work. You'll never find it that way. Happiness can only be found in the Lord. It's an internal thing, not an external thing. Happiness comes from the heart. It doesn't come from your circumstances, so you'll never get it that way. Even if you're king of the world, it won't do you any good.

And after giving us several examples of this, if you look in chapter four, he gives you another example this way when he says, "Therefore I looked again at all the acts of oppression, which were being done under the sun." When you first read that, it seems to come out of nowhere, but it doesn't because what Solomon is saying is that this is another thing I turned to for happiness. This is another thing I turned to for joy- I looked at the justice system. I looked at the courts, and it let me down too. In this book, when Solomon is trying to find happiness, he looks to wisdom, he looks to pleasure. He looks to money, he looks to time or fatalism and that type of philosophical stuff, and now he looks to justice. In verse one, he says he saw oppression because the rich oppress the poor. They take advantage of their predicament, and they don't even bat an eye. Because it says that "I saw the tears of the oppressed and they had no one to comfort them." In other words, they were begging for mercy, pleading for justice, and they still didn't give it to them. To make it worse, it says on the side of the oppressors was power because it was a systematic thing. It's not an isolated incident. This thing happened over and over again Solomon says because no matter how you look at it, life is not fair. You see injustice everywhere; so Solomon says you can't turn there for meaning either because it's like staring into the abyss.

As he does so many times in this book, Solomon takes a major issue, justice, and he uses it to point us to the one place where justice can truly be found, and that is in the Lord. You can't find it anywhere else. Nothing else will do. And I mention this because I don't think a lot of people believe that today. I don't think a lot of people understand the true justice is found in the Lord because they seek it elsewhere. What I mean is there's a movement out there right now that's generated a lot of momentum in recent years called the social justice movement, which says that we need to make society just again; we need to make it right and fair and equal for everybody, which is not a bad idea at the end of the day. But the problem is how they go about it. If you remember, it all started with the murder of George Floyd in Minneapolis last year that was all over the news and made a big splash. But it began with the killing of a black man by a white police officer, which was wrong; it was an unjust thing. But it led a lot of people to say that the system is broken now, and I know how to fix it; I'm going to get violent. And they went on to kill 19 more people, which was not very just, by the way. It wasn't fair. Those people didn't do anything wrong. But they did that, because they believe this is how you make it better; you need to go to war. You need to fight. You see that in other countries; I could list off countries where that's happening right now. But the problem is that it doesn't work because the issue just keeps coming up again. But that's the mindset of many people. We just celebrated the National Day for Truth and Reconciliation here in Canada, it was a day set aside to honor the memory of children who were removed from homes against their will. That's a good thing to remember. We don't want that to happen again. But the problem is that it will happen again somewhere on the planet. Just because you make a national holiday out of it, it doesn't fix the entire problem. Because one way or the other injustice will raise its ugly head. That's what Solomon's talking about you. As long as there is evil on the planet or evil in our hearts, there will be evil on the planet; you can't make it go away.

Martin Lloyd Jones was a pastor in England during World War Two, so he saw his share of atrocities there. He even wrote about times where buildings nearby their church were being bombed on Sunday mornings, and the church would shake and that type of thing and but he said this about it. He said, "The Bible says this world is an evil world, but nothing else says that. The universities don't say that. The professors don't say it and neither do the newspapers. In fact, the newspapers mention the evil of this world as if it's an exceptional thing, but it's not because this is the present evil system that's talked about long ago in the Bible. Just to show you how, why it's so common," Lloyd Jones says. He says, "How many of you know perfect peace inside your soul? How many of you know absolute rest in there? Is there tension in your heart? Is there strife? Of course there is because that's what it means to be human. And more importantly, do you know why it's there? It's there because you are a sinner. Sin lives inside of you. Evil resides within your nature, so when you see evil in the world, it should not surprise you because you see it inside your heart. The world is a mess, because you're a mess. It all starts with you." That was well said, wasn't it? There's nothing unusual happening in the world today. There's nothing strange when you see people attacking each other because you see it in your own heart. If you think about it, Adam and Eve sinned in a perfect environment. They fell in a perfect world, which means the world is not the problem. Despite what you may hear, the environment is not the issue, mankind is,

because wherever we go, injustice follows. And you have to turn to something greater than that for hope. You need the grace of God.

When I was in university, I took a particular interest in history. And I'll never forget the irony of finding out that when Joseph Stalin took over the Soviet Union, he went on to kill more than 20 million people in the name of justice. He did in order to make a perfect world. He sent them to Siberia, he put them in the gulags all in the name of fair play. That was his platform. And then Mao Zedong did it in China. He did the same thing there. It was a bloodbath under his reign; he murdered one person after another. All to put power in the hands of the people. Fidel Castro did it in Cuba. Hugo Chavez did it in Venezuela. Idi Amin did it in Uganda. We could just go on and on, but it didn't work. Even after all those wars and revolutions, the world is still the same.

You know, Jesus said this, He said, "The poor you will always have with you." That doesn't mean it's a good thing; it just means that the way it is in this planet. There will always be rich and poor. Deuteronomy 15:11 says, "For the poor will never cease to be in the land." That's in the land of Israel. But the good news is we have someone who cares about the poor.

And that's what I want to talk to you about today. So if you're taking notes in Ecclesiastes 4, we're going to look at three examples of injustice in this passage. That's our outline for today. If you're taking notes in Ecclesiastes 4, we're going to look at three examples of injustice that Solomon mentions, and we're going to tie this into the subject of vanity because that's what he does here. He says it's vain to expect perfect justice in this world. It's foolish because it just can't be done. Solomon says, "I know because I tried." He was a good king; he had a heart for the poor, but he said, this issue always comes up. But it doesn't mean you should sit back and do nothing. You still need to care for the poor because that's what God does, and that's what we're going to talk about today.

By the way, I didn't really plan on timing the sermon for this morning, but every time restrictions come down for the from the from the government, it's the same discussion we all have. That's not fair. That's not right. Solomon's wrestling with that here, that's very good timing. So let's see what he says about that. He gives us three examples of injustice in this passage.

The first one is the example of the courtroom. The first example of injustice that he mentions here is the example of the courtroom, which means that he saw it from the judge, the least likely person imaginable. You would think if anybody would be just it would be the person presiding over the court, but that's not what he finds.

If you read in verse one, in chapter 4:1, "Then I looked again at all the acts of oppression which were being done under the sun. And behold I saw the tears of the oppressed and that they had no one to comfort them; and on the side of their oppressors was power, but they had no one to comfort them."

If you notice, Solomon starts off here, and he says, “Then I looked again,” which means he was looking for the secret of happiness. He was looking for something to answer this problem of vanity that he keeps finding. And he turns to justice, and he says it failed because I saw oppression there. You see the word oppression in the passage. That's an interesting word in Hebrew, because it's the word *asuqim*, which means oppression or extortion, or just any corruption in the halls of government. If you notice, it's pluralized in Hebrew because he saw many actions, is another word. Solomon says, “I didn't see this one time; I saw it over and over again.” But specifically he says I saw it in the positions of power. Verse one says on the side of their oppressors was power. In the context that refers to judicial power; it could refer to political power, the power of the ones in charge, because the idea is that Solomon went into a courtroom to watch a trial, he sat in the audience's chamber, and he was shocked by what he saw because the innocent were being oppressed. They're being punished for things they didn't do, and they wept over it, and they pleaded, and they begged for their lives, but it didn't help because the judge wouldn't listen, which was a shock to Solomon.

It's really a shocking when you think about it because Israel had a good legal system. There was not a hint of imperfection in their laws because it was based on the Word of God. So they said things that no one else said at the time. For example, there were 613 commandments in the Old Testament, and one of them told judges not to pervert justice or show partiality to rich people. That was unusual; most laws didn't say that. But instead it said give an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth. In other words, give people what they deserve was the command in the Old Testament. It also said you should have multiple witnesses for a crime; can't have one person just throw someone in jail; you had to have multiple people. They had cities of refuge where the accused could go for safety while they were awaiting trial. They had a kinsman redeemer system where if something bad happened to you, one of your kin was supposed to help you. They had all kinds of things in place to give them a good legal system, but Solomon says this was still a problem here. Things were still a mess. You know, I've heard it said the reason we have so many laws in Canada is because we can't keep 10 simple laws in the Old Testament. That's true. I mean, if we kept The Ten Commandments, you wouldn't have problems in society, right? But we can't. And that's the kind of thing he's wrestling with here.

And he says this in verse two, he says,

So I congratulated the dead who are already dead more than the living who are still living. But better off than both of them is the one who has never existed, who has never seen the evil activity that's done under the sun.

It sounds pretty bleak, but what he's saying there is I would rather die than watch that again. I would rather commit suicide than see things like this because it's so unfair. They've done studies on this, and they found that the suicide rate in prison is four times higher than it is in the general population, for this reason because it seems so unfair to the people. They don't think it's right.

And let me tell you what this means practically, just to kind of back up for a moment and take a pause and take a break. Let me tell you how you can apply this to your lives. When you read a passage like this one, you kind of wonder, “Boy, this sounds really bad but what does it mean?” A couple things. One thing it means is you shouldn't put all your faith in the court system. I don't say that to be negative or cynical or bleak; that's just what it's saying. You shouldn't put all your hope in the hands of a judge because there's times when he'll let you down, not every time, but sometimes. I think the reason people are so angry with the government right now is they forget that; they put too high a priority on the office of the human court. They think if we just get the right guy in, it'll solve all our problems. If we just elect the right candidate, then they'll turn this country around. You know what? It might do that for a while, but eventually it'll go bad again. It always does because it doesn't fix the problem of sin. And that's what you have to keep in mind. We've all heard it said that power corrupts, and absolute power corrupts absolutely. But it's true. You need to hold that with a loose hand otherwise, it's going to drive you nuts. If you watch politics all day, you will go crazy. I've talked to people like that, and I've almost told them I want to go in your house and rip your TV out of the wall. It's poisoning their mind. I remember when the provincial courts here in British Columbia, presided over a major case several months ago against churches that were meeting during the pandemic. If you recall, they were being fined thousands of dollars for coming together. It was it was pretty high thing, pretty high charge. So they protested and it went all the way up to the Supreme Court where they lost. Despite the fact they had evidence saying that we're not super spreaders of the virus, we're not making everybody sick like we're accused of, but the courts dismissed it. They decided against them anyway, which infuriated a lot of people because that's what the court does sometimes. Sometimes it drives you nuts. Solomon says on some level in this broken world, you should expect that. It's going to happen at times. I've told you before the book of Ecclesiastes has been called a dose of reality for this reason because it just tells it like it is. You almost wish there to be an Ecclesiastes part two, which will give you hope for all this. But that's not the reason he's writing. He's just telling you blunt force, this is how life is. Sometimes life is not fair. Sometimes it throws dirt in your face when you don't deserve it.

Which leads to another application here, and that's that you can't put all your trust in men. And that's really the point he's getting at here. You can't put all your hope in them because they'll let you down at times. Remember, the world is so bad because men are so bad. We're the problem. So wherever you put men, you're going to see this issue. Now thankfully, most men and women are not as bad as they could be, and we're grateful for that. Most of the courts don't do everything wrong; they do some things right. In fact, by most accounts, we live in a very fair society here in Canada. It's better than a lot of countries, but it has its share of problems. And you have to keep that in mind; that's just the way it is. I remember when all that stuff happened to the churches back in the spring, someone asked me, “Do you think the government's persecuting us right now?” And I said, “Well, that's a difficult question because there's the government's run by many different people, and some of them are persecuting us. Just listen to what they say; they hate us. But there's other ones who don't. There's other leaders in the halls of government here who are Christians; they're on your side. But either way, it's a mixed bag. It always has been. Solomon is in a monarchy, which means the political system he is and he's on top. As a believer, he's

running the country and he sees this issue, which means this issue is going to be everywhere. So you can't put all your eggs in that basket. It's a vain thing to do. You have to put your hope in something higher than that. Put your faith in something greater than that. I've had several conversations this week where people were very disturbed by what's going on, and I get it, I understand. But what I've tried to remind them is you need to put your hope in the Lord, not in all this stuff, because this stuff's gonna go sideways. It's going to go up and down. It'll get better or get worse like this all the time, so you've got to put your trust in a higher place.

I don't know if you've heard the name Samuel Rutherford before, but he was a pastor from the 1600s, who wrote a book called *Lex Rex*, which means the Law and the King in Latin, and it infuriated the King of England, because he thought the title was wrong. He thought it should be *Rex Lex*, the King and the Law because the king comes first, and Samuel Rutherford said no. He said, "The king submits to the law just like everyone else because he's under the authority of God." In fact, he was an old man when he wrote that book, and they sent some policemen to arrest him and take him to trial and kill him. And he said, "You can do that if you want to, but I'm so old, I'll die on the way there." So they left him alone and let him die in his office. But the point is, everyone submits to God, even the king. That's where our trust is found.

Listen, friends, if you don't get a fair trial down here, you'll get a fair trial up there, amen? And if you don't get your day in court now, you will get it later. And on that day, you will stand before a perfect Judge who never gets anything wrong. So don't get too upset when they make mistakes down here. We're not living for the stuff down here.

It brings me to another point to consider in this passage, another example of injustice that Solomon mentions here. And that's an example of the marketplace. The first example of injustice he mentions is the courtroom where justice should prevail the most. I think that's the reason why it upsets us when it's unjust because the courts are supposed to be fair. And Solomon says it doesn't always happen, which is a frightening thing. Because if you lose the battle there, you lose it everywhere. If the courts go down, everything goes down with it, which is what's happening in a lot of places now. But to continue his train of thought here, he gives you a second example of injustice. And that is the example of the marketplace, which means that this occurs in the world of business as well.

Not only does Solomon see injustice in the courts, but he sees it from the hands of those who buy and sell. It's so easy to point fingers at the judge and say, "You're wrong, you're wrong, you're wrong." But if we took the fingers down for a moment, and pointed them in our jobs, we would see a very scary thing too. If you look in verse four, Solomon says this, he says, "I've seen that every labor and every skill which is done is the result of rivalry between the man and his neighbor. This too is vanity and striving after wind." As you read that you see a familiar expression there. And that's the phrase, "I have seen." If you look back up in verse one, it says, "Then I looked again." And now he says, "I have seen" because the idea is that Solomon is coming down from the throne, he's going through the streets of the city,



walking around town, and as he does so, he passes by the courts and sees all the stuff we just talked about. And now he goes to the shops. He heads to the office complexes and the stores. And what he sees there bothers him just as much as what he just saw. It's no better. Remember, he's looking for something that's not vain.

Because he says the main motivation for work is rivalry. It's not harmony, but competition. People just can't seem to get along with each other anywhere. And this word "rivalry" here, it's from a Hebrew word that means envy or jealousy. In some cases that could translate rage, because Solomon says men don't work just to work. They do it out of jealousy. There's an undercurrent of rage behind all they do because someone's getting more than me, and that can't happen, right? I can get more than them, that's fine. I can get paid more. I don't have a problem with that, but they can't get paid more than me. Because in his journeys, he saw a carpenter building a house and getting paid \$100 for it. That doesn't happen here in Chilliwack, right? Nobody builds a house for \$100; let's say a million dollars. While looking at the carpenter next to him building a house and getting paid \$900,000 or a million dollars and one, and it made him mad. He said that's not fair; he got more than me. Or you see a teacher teaching her students, preparing lessons, working hard at that, and driving a Toyota Camry to school, pulling up next to another teacher driving a Mercedes and saying, "That's not fair. I can't stand that." And it made them turn against each other. If you think about it in the workplace, the strangest thing happens because you hate people you don't even know there, right? You get angry at people you've never even met because of that type of thing.

Solomon says that's vanity as well. It's a striving after wind; it's chasing after nothing because as soon as you get more than that person, you don't have as much as that person and that person and that person. It never ends.

Then he says something, it seems kind of random, but it's not. If you look in verse five, he says, "The fool folds his hands and consumes his own flesh." Sounds a little odd, but the reason he says this is because after talking about the person who works too much, now, Solomon talks about the person who doesn't work at all. He says a fool folds his hands, and in the ancient world, your hands were synonymous with your work. So to fold your hands meant that you're not going to work; you're quitting. That's what he sees now. Because now he walks around and he sees not only workers, but he sees people who do nothing all day but sit around and drink and party. For he peered through the windows of houses, and he sees people sitting on the couch, watching TV, playing video games and hanging out on the sofa, which is no better than that. Because Solomon calls this foolish because it makes you eat your own flesh, which means it causes you to self-destruct. That kind of behavior makes you eat yourself alive. They found that the unemployment rate, in some cases has been on the rise here in Canada due to its COVID-19. And the danger with that is that every time that number goes up, so does the crime rate in the country because people are bored. They stopped working, start committing acts of theft, violence, got on drugs, and alcohol, got into all kinds of trouble. Because idle hands are the devil's workshop. You were made to work.

But to balance this out, Solomon says this in verse six. Just to put this all together, he says, “One hand full of rest is better than two fists full of labor and striving after wind.” And that could be translated, one handful of peace is better than two fistfuls of labor because the idea is that you shouldn't work just to work or just make money, you should find something that gives you peace on some level, you find a job that makes you happy. We don't have time to get into this, but in verses seven through twelve, if you just look in your Bibles, he describes a man who forgot that because he didn't have anyone to help him, so the man worked himself to death, basically put himself in an early grave. And Solomon says you shouldn't do that because this too is vanity because what's the point of working hard in your 20s and 30s only to die in your 40s and have a heart attack, right? What's the point? Or what's the point of working 80 or 90 or 100 hours at the office and making lots of money if you don't have time to spend it? It happens all the time now, you see people all around town, all they do is work and buy stuff that they can't use. What's the point of a boat? You never go to the lake? What's the point of a motorcycle? You can't ride it? Or the golf clubs? I've seen you play golf, you need to find another hobby brother, that's not for you. Things happen all throughout human history. It's happening here in the book of Ecclesiastes.

Let me tell you what this means practically, and say some ways to apply this to your life. For one thing, this means that hard work doesn't always pay off in life, so you shouldn't expect it to. It'd be nice if it did. It would be great if life was that simple, but unfortunately, it's not because sometimes people take advantage of you at work, don't they? Sometimes they oppress you in this area as well. And I don't have to tell you this because many of you have experienced this. But I've heard of builders finishing a house here in Chilliwack putting in hours and hours and hours into it tons of their own material, only to finish it and not get paid because the owner ran out of money. Apparently, that's happening quite a bit right now because there's a rush on the market. It's a dog-eat-dog world out there. I've heard of other people working hard for a company for 20, 30, 40 years, devoting half their life to it only to be laid off right before retirement so the office doesn't have to pay them all their benefits. It's not fair. It's not right, but that sort of thing happens. And just like it is with the court system, you've got to put your hope in something else otherwise it's gonna crush you.

Leads to another application and that is that you don't always get what you deserve in this life either. You don't always get what's coming to you. Life is not a bargain. It's not a quid pro quo, this for that kind of thing. I give you this much; you give me this much. I give you 40 hours a week; you take care of my expenses. It doesn't always happen right away. In fact, this one's important because there's a real push towards what is being called economic equality right now in Canada, in the US as well. Because the politicians understand that things are not right in the workforce, they see that there's a problem, so in order to fix it, they say that we should just make everything the same. We should pay everybody the same wage all across the country. It used to be called communism in previous years, but I don't think anybody remembers what that means anymore. But Solomon says before you do that, you need to understand what this is saying. It says that's not the problem. The problem is not the wage but the world. The problem is not a system like communism or capitalism, the problem is life itself. People don't want

equality; they just want to do better than the next guy, right? They don't want things to be fair, they just want to be on top of the pile. Because I've seen that every labour and every skill which is done is the result of rivalry. The workforce is about competition, and communism can't stop that. Passing a few laws can't do it. It's built into the fabric of our world. That's why every time you saw a communist person take over like Joseph Stalin, he had to murder so many people. He had to stop the competition. Stalin was so bad at it, he said, "If I kill 100 people, and only nine of them are truly guilty, that's good math." If you remember the first murder in human history was over this issue. Cain killed Abel because he was jealous. There were only four people in the world at the time, and they couldn't get along. Four of them. As far as we know, they all got paid the same. There wasn't any money back then, and one of them murders another. Then later on in the Bible, you see the same thing happening with Joseph and his brothers because they throw him down a well. That's how Israel started. Talk about the beginning of a nation. It couldn't get much worse. Then the nation started, and they tried to kill Moses; they were jealous of him. Then the monarchy started, and the first king tries to kill the second King. Then the church began and the apostles fight over who gets to sit next to Jesus, talk about bad priorities. But the point is that this has always been a problem in the world. This is what everyone wants, they want to be the boss. They want to be the one in charge, and nothing can stop that nut the hand of God.

You know, as I've gotten to know people from our church, I'd have to say we have a very diverse group here at Grace because you guys do all kinds of jobs. And we have people that do everything. We have doctors and lawyers and teachers here. We have plumbers and welders and farmers and mechanics and builders and truck drivers. And some of you work with your hands and some of you don't. Some of you work outside, some of you don't - you never see the sunlight. Some of you like your job; some of you don't like your job, you've told me about it, we've counseled, I get it. But you've all got the same story, and that is that work is not always fair. It can be tough at times. But that's okay because as a Christian, you have an answer to that. And that is if you put your faith in Christ, your faith is not in your job. Your faith is not in how much you get paid. You trust in a higher power. I'll never forget the time a friend of mine went through a terrible tragedy because his partner at work stole all his money. And when I asked him how he got through it, he said, "I did it because that doesn't define me." He said, "I don't find identity in my job; I find it in Christ." Friends, we should all say that today. Your identity needs to be found in the Lord.

That brings us to one more point in this passage. Just one more example of injustice that Solomon mentions here. Just to review these other ones, the first one is an example of the courtroom. The second one is example of the marketplace where people do business. Solomon saw oppression there as well. You know, I don't know if you've ever thought about this, but oppression is such a problem in the workplace that we have to make contracts. You ever thought about that? You don't just get to shake someone's hand, and look them in the eye, and that's the deal. You got to get a thousand pages of legal work lawyer and a notary and spend hundreds of dollars because you don't trust people. It's oppressive there. But that's okay, because we trust in other things. And that brings us to one more thing to talk about. And that is the example of the highway.

You got to find this one interesting thing, but a third example of injustice that Solomon mentions here is the example of the highway which means he sees it in the most innocent place in the world, out on the street where people are driving their cars. And if you look in verse nine, it says,

Two are better than one because they have a good return for their labor. For if either of them falls, the one lift up his companion. But woe to the one who falls when there is not another to lift him up. Furthermore, if two lie down together they keep warm, but how can one be warm alone? And if one can overpower him who is alone, two can resist him. A cord of three strands is not quickly broken.

As you read that, this is one of those passages in Ecclesiastes that sounds beautiful, it really sounds lovely. But what is he talking about? And to put it simply, he's saying that the highway is not fair either. It is a dangerous thing too and to explain this, when he talks about someone falling in here, the roads in Israel were not paved. They didn't have the technology we have today, so there were many potholes in them. And if you're not careful, it's easy to fall into one and break a bone. Solomon says that's why it's helpful to have a friend so he can pull you out of that. That's what that means there.

And he goes on to talk about another issue on the highway, and that is warmth. If you look in verse 11, he says, "Furthermore, if two lie down together they keep warm, but how can one be warm alone?" And he says that because temperatures in the desert would easily drop 30 degrees overnight, to go from 38 degrees Celsius during the day to well below freezing. So you need a friend for that as well. You need someone to block the wind from your face, otherwise you would freeze to death when you travel.

And one more issue he mentions on the road is fighting. Because verse 12 says, "And if one can overpower him who is alone, two can resist him." And that's not an issue today, but in Solomon's day on ancient highways, it was very dangerous, they were full of robbers. You had thieves and even the hotels at the times were not trustworthy; the innkeeper would slit your throat and take your money in the night. So people would often travel in groups in large caravans because a cord of three strands is not quickly broken. But the point he's making here, Solomon says, is as I journey through this world, and as I looked at life, I came to the streets and the roads where I saw people traveling, and I saw the same problem there too.

Thought I'd find truth in the courts, couldn't find it. Thought I'd find it in the marketplace, wasn't there. Now it's not even out on the road. We obviously can't relate to everything he's saying here because our roads are very different today, but we do have problems on the road like road rage, right? You guys know what I'm talking about. We've all been guilty of losing our temper and shouting and honking at people when it wasn't their fault. They didn't do anything wrong. You guys have been to Vancouver, you know what I'm talking about. Pull up behind someone acting like that, on the back they have a Jesus fish on the back of their car and scratch your head and think that's not right. Take that fish off your car.

Another example of this would be accidents today because we've all been involved in an accident where we were not at fault. If you've had a fender bender or collision, that sort of thing. Solomon says when you do that, it's good to have a friend. Which is why every time you see an accident and you see someone on the phone, they're calling a doctor or mechanic or tow truck to help them through that. But his point is that life does that to us. It puts us in situations like that because there's oppression here too. No matter where you go in life, there's injustice. You can't even get a break from it when you get in your car; can't escape the fact that this world is against you.

And we can talk about other examples of this. In fact, last week we saw how unfair time is. You guys remember that? We saw how unjust fate can be. If you look in chapter 3:3, just a reminder of what we looked at. Solomon says in verse two, there's a time to give birth and a time to die, and there's a time to kill and a time to heal. In other words, some gets sick, and some don't. Some catch a Coronavirus, and they get healed; some get killed, they end up going to the hospital. We don't know why. We can't explain that. It's all in the hands of time. In verse eight he says this. He says, "There's a time to love and a time to hate. There's a time for war and a time for peace." But the idea is that that's not up to you. You don't determine when the world goes to war. The universe does that. God does that. But his point is that you see this all over the place. Injustice is everywhere.

And the question is what are we supposed to do about that? Okay, we've pointed out the problem the problem is sin. We talked about the issue behind all this evil and mistreatment and bad things in the universe. The issue is the human heart and its depravity. That's where it comes from. The world is bad because we're bad. But how do you stop it? Or how do you solve it? And the answer is the thing we keep going back to this morning is you need to trust in Jesus Christ. You need to give your life over to Him. He's the only one that can fix the problem of injustice in this world, the government can't do it; neither can politics. Communism can do it; neither can socialism or capitalism, or any other ism that you come up with. Neither can protests or violent action, you can have a holiday or a national day for truth and reconciliation. I think it's a wonderful thing the country wants to reconcile, but you can't reconcile without Him. 2 Corinthians 5:18-19 says, it says this, "Now all these things are from God, who reconciled us to Himself through Christ and gave us a ministry of reconciliation." In other words, what he's saying there is that Jesus has given us the ability to reconcile people once and for all. Yes, this world is bad. Yes, it's unrighteous, and it's unfair, and it's unjust, and it's oppressive, all these things that we're talking about, but He's given us a chance to defeat it in here. And as a result, you can defeat it out there. Jesus has come to make peace in your heart, and as a result, you can make peace in the world. In Ephesians 2:14, speaking of the relationship between Jew and Gentile, Paul says this, he says, "For He himself is our peace, who made both groups into one and broke down the barrier of the dividing wall." Which means Jesus broke down the wall of separation; He tore it down. When everything else failed to do it, He did it. When all these other things tried and were turned away, He wasn't turned away. Even today, you can go to the remotest parts of the earth, and you can find a church somewhere where there's Jew and Gentile together. Even today, in the 21st century, you can go anywhere in the planet, any continent you choose, and you can see white people and black people worshipping together. You can see

rich and poor, haves and have nots, male and female, all because of Christ. They're not there because of their politics. You're not here because of that. It's all because of Him.

Friends, I don't know where you're at on this, but let me tell you, Jesus lived the perfect life, which means He always got along with God. He never sinned. As a son of God, He had a perfect relationship with the Father, but He was crucified for our sins. He was punished so that the enmity that exists between us and God could be paid for and His perfect justice satisfied once and for all. As Richard told us a moment ago, God's justice was satisfied at the cross. The question is will you believe that today?

I read a quote this week I want to share with you, but it said this, it said you shouldn't worry about the Delta when you have the Alpha and the Omega, amen? These church signs man, they're sermon illustrations every week; I see these church sign. That was a sign on a church in the States. That's what you have in Jesus. You have someone who knows the end from the beginning. He's got it all under control, and He knows how to fix this crazy messed up world. You need to put your life in His hands.

And in my studies this week, I came across a story of a time a man in Spain who lost his son, couldn't find him. So he put an advertisement in the Madrid paper that said, "Dear Paco, please meet me in front of the courthouse all is forgiven, and I love you." So the next day, a very unusual thing happened in Madrid, 500 Pacos showed up all wanting to be reconciled to their father. People were like that. We're all just sinners seeking forgiveness, aren't we? We're all a bunch of fallen people. The good news is you can have forgiveness if you trust in Christ today. And let me pray that you would do that. Let's go to the Lord in word of prayer.

Heavenly Father, we do come to you this morning, thanking you for the Lord Jesus Christ. And anytime we talk about justice, there's so much we can say. We can say so much about Your wrath, and Your righteousness and Your holiness. We could talk from end to end about the judgment throne, and the fact that one day You will take care of all this horrendous stuff we're seeing on the planet. But at the same time, Father, as Christians, we don't stop there. We go on to the cross. We remember that we have a Father who not only is just, but He forgives us because of what His Son did.

And Lord, I pray for that if there's any here this morning you don't know Christ, and they're wrestling with these things, you would draw them to the Saviour. Remind them that they will face a perfect Judge one day and that will not be a good thing without Jesus. That'd be a horrible thing, but with Christ, and with His blood, it's the most beautiful thing in the world. To stand before You and say I should go to hell, I should be punished, I should be thrown into the abyss along with everyone else, but I have a Saviour, and I have One who has forgiven me. Lord, thank You for that blessed salvation.

And Father, we do pray for our world today. We pray for our government leaders and the decisions they need to make. We pray for those in the workplace and the issues that they face like we just talked about. They face deception there, they face sin, they face all kinds of horrible things. And yet they have to

shine the light of Christ there. Would you give our brothers and sisters grace in that this week? We pray for those out on the highway as well. Lord, in and all these things, we want to be a testimony for Christ. We want to show the world there's a difference in us because You have saved us. Would You allow us to go and do that now? May Christ be glorified in these things? We pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.