



DANUBE
INTERNATIONAL CHURCH

Ecclesiastes

LIFE IN LIGHT OF ETERNITY





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When The World Isn't Right

Ecclesiastes 3:16-4:6



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Ecclesiastes 3:16 - 4:6

Thesis

- 2 **Vanity of vanities**, says the Preacher, **vanity of vanities! All is vanity.**
- 3 What does man gain by all the toil at which he toils under the sun?

Hevel



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Thesis

- 2 Vanity of vanities, says the Preacher, vanity of vanities! All is vanity.**
- 3 What does man gain by all the toil at which he toils under the sun?**



Ecclesiastes 3:16 - 4:6

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?

Ecclesiastes 3:16 - 4:6

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.



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When The World Isn't Right

Ecclesiastes 3:16 - 4:6

I. The World Is Not As It Should Be (3:16-4:3)

II. Our False Responses Make It Worse (4:4-5)

III. The Better Way (4:6)



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The Big Idea

**When justice fails, power oppresses and work exhausts, life under the sun exposes our false hopes and drives us to the only true source of justice, meaning, and rest—
God Himself.**



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Ecclesiastes 3:16 - 4:6

I. The World Is Not As It Should Be (3:16-4:3)

“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.” (3:16)



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I. The World Is Not As It Should Be (3:16-4:3)

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**.

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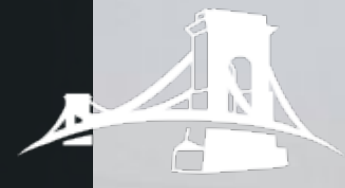
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(4:1-3)

If injustice troubles us, it's because we were made for a just world.



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Auschwitz





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I. The World Is Not As It Should Be (3:16-4:3)

Remember

**The Preacher looks where justice should be—and finds injustice.
He looks where compassion should be—and finds silence.**



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II. Our False Responses Make It Worse (4:4-5)

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.



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1. Restless Striving: Comparison, Envy



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1. Restless Striving: “If I win, life will work.”



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1. **Restless Striving:** *“If I win, life will work.”*

2. **Cynical withdrawal:** *“Self-protection”*



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1. Restless Striving: *“Save yourself by winning.”*

2. Cynical withdrawal: *“Save yourself by withdrawing.”*



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**Diverse
Diagnostics**

1. Diagnostic Question: What makes me feel justified?

Striving Idol (Success):

- *Do I feel most at peace when I'm productive, recognized, or outperforming others?*
- *Do I feel anxious or irritable when I'm falling behind—even spiritually?*

Practical Application:

- **Practice Sabbath-like limits:** stop working before you're "done."
- **Name one area where you deliberately choose faithfulness over visibility.**
- **Ask: Am I obeying God—or auditioning for worth?**



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2. Diagnostic Question: *What do I avoid because it might cost me emotionally?*

Withdrawal Idol (Self-Protection):

- *Do I disengage when relationships get complicated?*
- *Do I numb myself—through distraction, cynicism, or isolation—to avoid disappointment?*

Practical Application:

- Re-engage in one relationship or responsibility you've quietly abandoned.
- Replace avoidance with prayer: *"Lord, help me risk love again."*
- Take one step toward community instead of comfort.



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**Diverse
Diagnostics**

3. Diagnostic Question: *What am I trusting to keep me safe in a broken world?*

This question cuts beneath both idols.

- **If it's achievement, you'll never rest.**
- **If it's distance, you'll never love.**

Practical Do this:

- **Identify what you fear losing most—and bring it honestly before God.**
- **Pray not for control, but for trust: *“Lord, be my security when outcomes are uncertain.”***
- **Shift from managing outcomes to practicing obedience.**



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III. The Better Way (4:6)

Better is a handful of quietness than two hands full of toil and a striving after wind.

Two hands full—gripping, clutching, chasing. Always busy, never settled.

Versus—

One open hand—Not empty, but enough. Not passive, but at rest.



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Versus—

One open hand—Not empty, but enough. Not passive, but at rest.

Third way:

Faithful engagement without anxious striving.



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III. The Better Way (4:6)

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Two hands full—gripping, clutching, chasing. Always busy, never settled.

Versus—

One open hand—Not empty, but enough. Not passive, but at rest.

Third way:

The issue isn't how much is in your hands—
it's what you're trusting to fill your heart.



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How can I live this way?

1. Name what you are gripping

Ask yourself honestly:

- *What am I afraid will fall apart if I loosen my grip?*
- **Bring that fear into prayer—not to solve it, but to surrender it.**



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How can I live this way?

2. Replace striving with prayer

Each time anxiety rises, practice a simple exchange:

“Lord, I will do what you’ve given me today—and trust you with the results.”

That is quietness.

3. Stay connected to the means of grace

- **Word:** to remind you who you are apart from achievement
- **Prayer:** to return control to God daily
- **Community:** to resist isolation and self-sufficiency



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How can I live this way?





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The Gospel





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The Gospel

- He entered injustice and was condemned by a corrupt court
- He stood with the oppressed and became the Man of Sorrows
- He carried the weight of envy, rivalry, and striving to the cross
- He rose to guarantee that God's judgment is real and coming (3:17 fulfilled)

“Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.”

Matthew 11:28



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Small group Discussion

1. Seeing the Brokenness

In *Ecclesiastes 3:16–4:3*, the Preacher looks for justice and compassion but finds oppression and silence. Where do you see similar patterns today—globally, locally, or personally—and why do you think Scripture allows such raw honesty?

2. Why Injustice Hurts So Deeply

How does *Ecclesiastes 4:1* affirm our moral outrage rather than dismiss it? What does this suggest about how we were created and what kind of world we were meant for?



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Small group Discussion

3. False Responses to a Broken World

Read *Ecclesiastes 4:4–5*. How do striving (comparison-driven work) and withdrawal (self-protective disengagement) show up in everyday life? Why do you think both ultimately fail to bring peace?

4. The Better Way

According to *Ecclesiastes 4:6*, what is the difference between “two hands full of toil” and “one handful of quietness”? How is this verse calling us to trust God differently in our work, relationships, and expectations?