WHY ISN’T LIFE ALWAYS FAIR?
Ecclesiastes 4.1

We are continuing a series on the Wisdom Literature of the Hebrew Scriptures (Job, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and parts of the Psalms). Contrary to modern understandings, wisdom has a divine origin, not a human one. As we read wisdom literature, we can easily get the mistaken impression that wisdom involves the memorization and application of certain texts. The fact is, wisdom is not just common sense based upon experience, it is a result of a relationship with God.

13 Now all has been heard; here is the conclusion of the matter:
Fear God and keep his commandments,
for this is the whole duty of man.
14 For God will bring every deed into judgment,
including every hidden thing,
whether it is good or evil. Ecclesiastes 12.13-14

In our study of Ecclesiastes, it is helpful to see the word translated “meaningless” (NIV) in a possible different light.

"Meaningless! Meaningless!"
says the Teacher.
"Utterly meaningless!
Everything is meaningless." Ecclesiastes 1.2

“The merest of breaths,”
Says the Teacher.
"The merest of breaths!
Everything is a breath.”
Job 7.7; Psalm 39.4-6, 11; 144.4; Proverbs 31.30

The writer of Ecclesiastes believed that his book was an argument that came to a close in 12.13-14. Therefore, we are able to fairly conclude, that each of the four sections, (1.2-2.26; 3.1-5.20; 6.1-8.15; 8.16-12.14), added something to the progress of that argument. The best way to then understand where the author is headed is to look at the conclusion of each section. If we can understand the conclusion, we might then be able to follow with greater certainty the steps leading up to it.

18 Then I realized that it is good and proper for a man to eat and drink, and to find satisfaction in his toilsome labor under the sun during the few days of life God has given him – for this is his lot. Moreover, when God gives any man wealth and possessions, and enables him to enjoy them, to accept his lot and be happy in his work – this is a gift of God. He seldom reflects on the days of his life, because God keeps him occupied with gladness of heart. Ecclesiastes 5.18-20

The writer of Ecclesiastes finds himself observing the world in which he lives. It is clear that he sees a great deal that is beautiful; but he is acutely aware of the brokenness of his world.

9 Not only was the Teacher wise, but also he imparted knowledge to the people. He pondered and searched out and set in order many proverbs. 10 The Teacher searched to find just the right words, and what he wrote was upright and true.

11 The words of the wise are like goads, their collected sayings like firmly embedded nails--given by one Shepherd. 12 Be warned, my son, of anything in addition to them. Ecclesiastes 12.9-12

Again I looked and saw all the oppression that was taking place under the sun:

I saw the tears of the oppressed –
and they have no comforter;
power was on the side of their oppressors –
and they have no comforter. Ecclesiastes 4.1

The question we want to consider this week is: Why do so many things happen to you that don’t seem fair? The question of injustice can be asked many, many different ways. Why do bad things happen to good people? Why do bad people seem to prosper? Where is God when I hurt? When all the things aren’t fair and just in life, where is God? Why doesn’t he help us? Why doesn’t he do something about the injustice in the world?
This morning I want to look at the reality of injustice, the reasons for injustice and our response – what should we do about it?

1. The Reality: Life is Unfair!

   I saw the tears of the oppressed –
   and they have no comforter;
   power was on the side of their oppressors –
   and they have no comforter.  
   Ecclesiastes 4.1; 5.8; 7.15; 8.1, 11, 14; 9.11

2. The Reason: Why Does God Let it Happen?

   • Because he gives us the freedom to choose.
     
     19  This day I call heaven and earth as witnesses against you that I have set before you life and death, blessings and curses. Now choose life, so that you and your children may live.  
     20  and that you may love the LORD your God, listen to his voice, and hold fast to him. For the LORD is your life, and he will give you many years in the land he swore to give to your fathers, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.  
     Deuteronomy 30.19-20

   • Because judgment is coming.
     
     I thought in my heart,
     
     “God will bring to judgment
     both the righteous and the wicked,
     for there will be a time for every activity,
     a time for every deed.”  
     Ecclesiastes 3.17; Psalm 78

   • He wants to show us we need a Savior.
     
     There is not a righteous man on earth
     who does what is right and never sins.  
     Ecclesiastes 7.20

     All have turned away,
     they have together become worthless;
     there is no one who does good,
     not even one.  
     Romans 3.12, 21-24; 1 Peter 3.8-9

   • Pain can develop character.
     
     1  Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ,
     2  through whom we have gained access by faith into this grace in which we now stand. And we rejoice in the
     hope of the glory of God.  
     3  Not only so, but we also rejoice in our sufferings, because we know that suffering
     produces perseverance;  
     4  perseverance, character; and character, hope.  
     Romans 5.1-4

3. My Response: How Should I React When Life Seems Unfair?

   I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take
   heart! I have overcome the world.  
   John 16.33

   19  Do not take revenge, my friends, but leave room for God's wrath, for it is written: “It is mine to avenge; I will
   repay,” says the Lord.  
   20  On the contrary:
     
     “If your enemy is hungry, feed him;
     if he is thirsty, give him something to drink.
     In doing this, you will heap burning coals on his head.”  
     (Proverbs 25.21, 22)

   21  Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.  
     Romans 12.19-21; Isaiah 1.17; Proverbs 29.7

   17  For our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all.  
   18  So we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen. For what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is
   eternal.  
   2 Corinthians 4.17-18