When your World Doesn’t Make Sense

Ecclesiastes 3:16 - 4:16

Introduction:

1. We have learned that there is no real meaning of life apart from God.

2. There’s a time and a season for everything.

3. God’s program is good.

His purpose is clear. But His program is sometimes mysterious.

Today, he is going to make some observations which we will recognize and agree that they exist. But that will raise the question, “How does a loving and righteous God allow those things to go on?”

12:11

“The words of the wise are like goads, and the words of ﻿﻿scholars are like well-driven nails, given by one Shepherd”

Solomon will give us some Goads – the advice of a wise man. The Nails are what God says.

The First Goad is:

I. The Problem with Faulty Justice – 3:16-22

A. What Solomon Saw – 3:16

“Saw” 3:16, 22; 4:1, 7, 15

1. Wickedness had replaced Judgment

2. Wickedness had replaced Righteousness

There is little or no difference between judgment and righteousness in this context.

Solomon saw the injustices of his day right where you least expect it, in the courts of Righteousness. [scale]

He repeats “wickedness was there” for emphasis.

It emphasizes his surprise and consternation.

As in Solomon’s day, today there are those who are innocent, who are found guilty; and those who are guilty, who are found innocent.

B. What Solomon Said – 3:17-22

1. Judgment is Coming - 3:17

This judgment is not just eternal. It may be temporal. In any case it is in God’s time.

“For *there is* a time there for every ﻿﻿purpose and for every work.”

They think they got away with it. It looks that way to you as well.

But, here and now and/or then and there they will pay.

2. Death is Certain - 3:18-21

Death is inevitable. What are the odds?

a. Men are like the animals -19-20

1) They both die.

2) They both return to dust.

b. Men are unlike animals. – 3:21

1) Man’s spirit goes upward.

2) Animal’s spirit goes downward.

3. Life Continues – 3:22

Rejoice in your works. In the meantime leave the evil to God

“God holds the key of all unknown and I am glad. If other hands should hold the key, Or if He trusted it to me I might be sad, I cannot read His future plans, but this I know, I have the smiling of His face And all the refuge of His grace, While here below.” (J. Parker)

II. The Problem with Fierce Oppression – 4:1-3

1. The Living Have No Comfort – 4:1-2a
   1. The tears of the oppressed. There is no comforter.

* 1. Power is with the oppressors.

Psalm 7:2-3, 16

“as for me, my feet had almost stumbled; My steps had nearly ﻿﻿slipped. ﻿﻿For I *was* envious of the boastful, when I saw the prosperity of the ﻿﻿wicked… When I thought *how* to understand this, it *was* ﻿﻿too painful for me—

1. The Dead Are Happier – 4:2b

Therefore, I praised the dead.

1. The Unborn Are Happier Still – 4:3

They have not experienced oppression at all. Job suffered more than most.

Job said, “Why was I born? Or having been born, why did I not die immediately?” (Chapter 3)

“Until I went into the sanctuary of God; *Then* I understood their ﻿﻿end. (v. 17)… But *it is* good for me to ﻿﻿draw near to God; I have put my trust in the Lord God, that I may ﻿﻿declare all Your works” (v. 28).

III. The Problem with Financial Rivalry – 4:4-6

1. Both Hands Full – 4:4

Some people work to show off. They drive a $60,000 car instead of a $20,000 to make the neighbor jealous.

1. Both Hands Empty – 4:5

Dropouts of the 60’s.

1. One Hand Full – 4:6

Get some balance in your life.

Proverbs 16:18

“Pride *goes* before destruction, and a haughty spirit before ﻿﻿a fall.

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Proverbs 16:8

”Better *is* a little with righteousness, than vast revenues without justice.”

Proverbs 30:7-9

“Two *things* I request of You (Deprive me not before I die): Remove falsehood and lies far from me; Give me neither poverty nor riches— Feed me with the food allotted to me; Lest I be full and deny *You,* And say, “Who *is* the Lord?” Or lest I be poor and steal, and profane the name of my God.

I Timothy 6:6

﻿ “Now godliness with ﻿﻿contentment is great gain.”

IV. The Problem with Fractured Relationships 4:7-12

1. Riches over Relationships – 4:7-8

1. He was alone – no son or brother 4:7- 8a

He had either alienated or ignored family and friends in his greed. Now he had no one.

2. He worked hard and was rich 8b

He got what he was after- wealth. That’s all he had.

3. He was not content with his wealth – 4:8c

He didn’t need to work. He had plenty for himself. But he kept on working.

4. He never asked - For whom do I toil and deprive myself of good

B. Relationships over Riches – 4:9-12

1. Two Are Better Than One for Working- 4:9

Get more done, but more than that - the whole is greater than the sum of the parts. Together, they get more done than they could have separately. (Crosscut saw).

` 2. Two Are Better Than One for Walking – 4:10

They are company for each other

They encourage one another

3. Two are better than one for warmth – 4:11

Two can lie down together and keep warm.

Keep it in context!!

4. Two Are Better Than One for Watching – 4:12

They can protect each other.

V. The Problem with Fickle Popularity – 4:13-16

[United Kingdom of Israel - Saul-David-Solomon]

40y 40y 40y

A. The Old but Foolish King – Saul – 4:13

The people’s king was head and shoulders above other men. He started with everything, ended with nothing. He consulted the witch of Endor instead of God.

1. The wise youth from poverty – David – 4:14

Saul has slain his thousands

David has slain his 10 thousands

C. The Second Youth – Solomon – 4:15-16

He built the Temple

He built the Palace

He expanded the kingdom - The Golden Age of Israel

People came from “all over the world” to see his kingdom and seek his wisdom.

But he married foreign wives and worshiped their gods.

Those who came after did not rejoice in him.

Popularity is indeed fickle.

Conclusion: