

**Community Discussion Guide [3.28.10]  
Ecclesiastes: Losing Your Illusions  
Week 6 – Ecclesiastes 3:16 – 4:3**

Encourage each other about praying for friends to invite on Easter Sunday.

Intro

Solomon is desperate to make meaning out of things. He presents a series of tensions that show the source of his frustrations with being “under the sun”.

Tension 1: Wickedness in the Place of Justice

*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.*

We’ve established courts (then it was elders at the gates of the city) overseen by self-interested sinners. Justice is not always done and litigators are motivated by self-interest. We also have a love/hate relationship with justice. When we sin we want mercy, when others sin we want justice.

**Where are you frustrated by justice not being done? In your relationships? City? World?**

**What sin in others makes you the most angry? Do you want justice for them? Do you want mercy for yourself? Do you judge yourself by your good motives but others by their bad actions?**

Tension 2: Eternity is Your Own Best Guess

*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?*

We were created in the image of God, but because of sin, we often respond to the seasons of life just like beasts. When threatened we’ll either run or attack. So for all of our advantages...in the ground you’re no different than your pet. Left to our 5 senses...this is it. This is the best that we can observe under the sun. Left to that, we have to be honest...we don’t know what happens at that point.

**What recent situations cause you to respond like a beast, like living under the sun? Are you responding with anger? Depression? Care-free self-centeredness? Hopelessness?**

Now, we’ve devised various theories and philosophies ‘*under the sun*’ to deal with this: Reincarnation, Annihilation, Moralism, and Everyone in Hell. Conclusion? With only 5 senses and life under the sun - were banking eternity on our best guess.

Tension 3: Oppression with No Comforter

*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.*

Sinful people tend to use power and authority to oppress and exploit rather than encourage and enable. This could be pastors, teachers, employers, politicians...parents, the one’s given by God to bring comfort.

**Have you been causing oppression where you have been called to bring comfort? For example, are you demanding from your spouse, where you should be serving? (other situations at work, family, relationships) How are you justifying thinking about yourself?**

**Have those who should protect you, care for you, and let you down? How have you responded? Confess that to your community. Do we know how to take our oppression to God and receive comfort through the gospel?**

### Resolution: Seeing w/the Right Lens

In 3:11, Solomon declares that God is in control...But he also honestly confesses: "*But look around! I can't just accept that!*" "*Wickedness, Oppression, death...where's the beauty?*"

### The right lens is the story of the bible:

Act 1: God created this stunning cosmos and earth. He placed Adam and Eve...perfect people, perfect world, perfect relationships, perfect worship.

Act 2: Not being content to worship and serve God, Adam Eve exchanged the worship of Him for a lie. In this the floodgates of sin and shambles were opened on creation. Fear, guilt, shame replaced love, worship, and obedience. Creation was cursed with decay, weeds, disease, and death. But there is a promise: God would not let His creation remain shattered...He promised a day of redemption and reckoning...from there he began His plan to wage war on sin and the deceiver.

Act 3: Waiting... unresolved conflict between God's holiness and grace and sin. This is where Solomon is in the story.

Act 4: Then, some 900 years after Solomon, God's grace and our rebellion come to a climatic point as God sends His Son, Jesus, to earth to win the decisive victory over sin and death by living the life we were created to live to God's glory and dying on the cross to pay the price for the life that we live instead. God raised Jesus from the dead vindicating His sacrifice on our behalf. Redemption and Reconciliation AND JUSTICE has been accomplished.

Act 5: This is where we live now. God is applying the results of his victory to His sins scarred kids and sin-scarred creation. Yet, his work is not yet completed, but we know the end.

**Are we growing in our contentment with Jesus? Is redemption and reconciliation not just true, but is it real to you? Do other circumstances seem to be more real than this? Seem bigger? Ask your community how you can see and savor Jesus more.**

Act 6: The Return of King Jesus - Total restoration. The story isn't over until Jesus returns and in that day death will be defeated...every tear will be wiped away...we will be made like Him and live with Him forever. We won't be whisked away to the hinterlands...but God will restore His creation to it's intended place.

### Final Justice will be delivered through the Cross.

In John 5, Jesus claimed to be God and they sought all the more to kill Him:

*(19-22)* I will be The Judge

*(23-24)* Those who believe Me will not face judgment

*(25-30)* I tell you the truth, those who don't...they'll face judgment

For those who repent of their self-righteousness and believe in Jesus, judgment occurred 2000 years ago. On the cross, Jesus...the just and the justifier, was judged in my place for my sins. All of them. For the pervasive nature of my sin. He answered Solomon's question...when will God make it right?

Instead of turning His back on you, God turns His back on Jesus...His Son. On the cross Jesus exhausted the wrath of God for sin and cried out 'it is finished'. It's done...you don't need to earn a better life for the next go around...or live apart from God in hell for eternity...or live with shame, guilt, despair, morality...you just need Jesus.

**Do we really believe that God's wrath has been exhausted? We are living it out to the extent that we are quick to confess, quick to repent, and quick to be reconciled with each other. How long does it take you to get to the cross after you have sinned? Why?**

After he died, they wrapped Him up and placed Him in a tomb where 3 days later just as he promised, he rose from the dead. That's Easter. He's not dead. He died in our place and conquered death. He's the only one who knows what comes after.

**What this means for us.**

Left to ourselves, like Solomon, we lament that here is wickedness in the place of justice, oppression in the place of comfort. We are wired for eternity and but can't see how God will make sense out of it. Without eternity, the seasons make no sense. If there is no point or no direction, following Jesus is a colossal waste of time. In fact, as 1 Cor 15:19 states, *If in this life only we have hoped in Jesus, we are of all people most to be pitied.*

**Have we become weary because we have lost our eternal perspective? Are we “pitying” our own lives because of this? Ask your community, what truth needs to be refreshed in your mind and heart?**

Unlike Solomon, we know that *Jesus has been raised from the dead...we live with the power of the resurrection and can live differently b/c of it. In the face of injustice and oppression...we can live with peace...even though we don't know how it will turn out at the end of the day...we can have peace, b/c we know the end of the story. The day will come when the dead will hear His voice, He's going to make a roll call...and there will be a new kingdom with no injustice, oppression, wickedness, death, or tears.*

**Are we trusting Jesus more than our best guesses?**

**If you're not a Christian...I want you to own the fact that you are a sinner and thank Jesus for dying for your sins past, present, and future.**

**If you are...your life is also marked by repentance and grace empowered to life for His glory.**

**Do we believe that Jesus is sufficient to:**

- **forgive what we have done (the oppression and injustice we have caused),**
- **heal what has been done and the wounds it has left, and**
- **to call us out of our graves to newness of life and day when it will all be made new.**