Crossroads International Church Dr. Rick Griffith

3 August 2014 Message 5 of 17

NLT 40 Minutes

**When Life is Unfair**

Title

***Ecclesiastes 3:16-22***

**Topic:** Injustice

**Subject:** What should we do when life is unfair?

**Complement:** Account to God and enjoy life.

**Main Idea:** Don’t let your ignorance of God’s plans keep you from responsibly enjoying life now.

**Purpose:** The listeners will replace their frustration over injustice and death with accountability to God and enjoyment of life.

**Meditation:** God is Just

# Introduction

### Interest: [We all observe injustice in our world.]

#### Chuck Swindoll writes, “Everybody loves a story. We especially like stories that have neat and tidy endings. We don’t mind if there is sadness and hardship—just so there’s justice in the end. We like for right to win and wrong to lose. We want the guys in the white hats to come out on top and the ones in the black hats to wind up in jail. Let me illustrate this from a few well-known fairy tales.

Story

#### “Humpty Dumpty: As children we were never bothered by the fact that even though all the king’s horses and all the king’s men worked feverishly to put Humpty Dumpty back together again, they were unable to do so. Part of the reason we could live with Humpty’s situation was the realization that nobody pushed him off that wall. That would’ve been unfair and unjust treatment. Eggs have no way to defend themselves. Since nobody was to blame for his condition and since everybody from the king’s horses to the king’s men tried everything they could to help him out, we can tolerate the sad ending. His story may be unhappy, but it is not unjust.

Broken

Humpty

#### “Cinderella: This lovely young woman was raised in a cruel home by a cruel stepmother. Her cruel stepsisters only added to her misery. As you recall, she went to the ball and had a great time, but at midnight the carriage she was traveling in turned into a pumpkin. But that was okay. We can live with that because she was warned about the possibility of that happening. And it’s especially okay since, in the end, she got the glass slipper and lived happily ever after. Justice won out.

• Slipper

• Ball

Cinderella

#### “What we would not have been able to live with is that if somehow one of the cruel stepsisters would have gotten that slipper. That would not have been just. Cinderella’s foot deserved the slipper. We smile at such poetic justice.”

• Stepsister

#### Of course, as adults, we now know that these are only fairy tales. As Swindoll says, “Sad endings we can handle, but not unjust ones. Suffering makes us sad, but injustice makes us mad” (*Living on the Ragged Edge*, 97-98).

Quote

### Need: What injustices irk you most? (Share with your neighbor for 30 seconds.)

Irks?

#### Injustice comes in many forms.

##### Not getting credit is really frowned upon here in Singapore. It just doesn’t seem right to work hard and then others get ahead instead. That’s not fair.

• No credit

##### Some of us are victims of being left behind in politicking at work where someone’s unjust "climbing the corporate ladder" left us out. That’s not fair.

• Politicking

##### What about birth defects or life-changing accidents? Is it just that one of my SBC colleagues has three special needs children who are not expected to live to age 25 while I have three healthy sons? That’s not fair.

• Cutting in line

• Birth defects

##### Sometimes injustice is as simple as others cutting in line.

• Family bkgrd

• Text

Injustice

##### Maybe your family background is unjust.

#### How does injustice make you feel? Angry? Vengeful? Withdrawn?

Eccl.

### Background: The past month we have been studying Ecclesiastes.

#### Did you feel a little uncomfortable in our session last week when we observed that, "He has made *everything* appropriate in its time" (3:11)? You mean that God makes even the injustice appropriate at times?

3:11

#### Solomon also probably felt that this statement needed some clarification so he dealt with it in today’s passage. It's as if he's answering an imaginary objector who asks, "How can you say that God condones oppression and injustice?"

Condone?

### Intro to MPI: What should we do when life is unfair?

### Preview: Today we will actually observe two issues and two responses. Injustice is only the first one, but let’s address them one at a time.

Preview

### Text: Injustice is the first issue we'll be discussing today in Ecclesiastes 3:16-22.

(When life is unjust, Solomon advises us to…)

# I. Realize that you will account to God (3:16-17).

MP

[Seeing that the legal system is unfair can ruin us—so we must personalize this by seeing our own accountability to the Lord.]

## Injustice exists where it shouldn't (3:16).

Court

McDonald Coffee

CSUN

### Evil is in the courts where one would expect *justice* (3:16a).

### Evil is in the courts where one would expect *righteousness* (3:16b).

### Justice isn’t always found in the courts.

#### You’ve probably heard about the guy who sued McDonalds because he spilled his coffee on himself and got burned. The court sided with him as the cup didn’t explicitly say that the coffee inside was really hot!

#### Another man used a lawn mower to cut his hedge. A normal person trims with a hedge trimmer. Not this guy! He used a lawn mower for his hedge! Of course, the mower got caught on the hedge and cut into his arm. He was awarded $167,000 because the judge ruled that the instructions should have warned against using it as a hedge trimmer! For crying out loud, it’s called a *lawn mower!*

• Lawn mower

Trimmers

### Justice is lacking in our educational institutions too. A scientist is suing California State University, Northridge (CSUN) for firing him after he publicized a discovery that suggests dinosaurs roamed America thousands of years ago, rather than the millions most evolutionists cite.”[[1]](#footnote-1)

#### “Mark Armitage, who specializes in microscopic evidence for a young earth, unexpectedly stumbled upon [soft tissue in a triceratops fossil](http://www.worldmag.com/2014/07/trumpeting_a_dinosaur_horn) and wrote about his discovery for a scientific journal. Two weeks later, he was out of a job. Armitage filed suit against the university’s board of trustees… citing wrongful termination and religious discrimination.”

Armitage

3 slides

#### “Terminating an employee because of their religious views is completely inappropriate and illegal,” Brad Dacus, president of Pacific Justice Institute, [said](http://www.pacificjustice.org/press-releases/university-silences-scientist-after-dinosaur-discovery) in a press release. “But doing so in an attempt to silence scientific speech at a public university is even more alarming. This should be a wakeup call and warning to the entire world of academia.”

How respond?

PJI

(So how does God want us to handle these injustices? We may not be able to change the system, but we *can* change *us!* The next verse says to…)

Judge

## Realize that you will account to God (3:17).

• You

### The righteous and the wicked will both account to God (3:17a).

#### The wicked will all give an account to God at the Great White Throne Judgment (cf. Rev. 20:11-15).

#### The righteous will all give an account to God at the Judgment Seat of Christ (cf. 2 Cor. 5:10; Eph. 6:8).

3 slides

### A time of judgment will come for everyone alive (3:17b).

### Therefore, we do well to consider that we all will appear before God—not just the perpetrators of injustice!

We all

MPI

(I noted earlier that Solomon takes on two relevant subjects in today’s text. The first was injustice and his advice is for us to realize that God will judge us all. In the remaining verses he addresses another subject so real that it hits 100% of us. That’s death! How should we respond to the seeming injustice that we will all die just like animals? He says…)

Issues

# II. Enjoy life now (3:18-22).

MP

Reaper

Don’t think death

 [We know so little about the afterlife, but God tells us to live now.]

## It may seem unjust that we are mortal like animals (3:18-21).

### We are like the animals in that we also die (3:18-20).

#### Since both people and animals die, life is just as fleeting for humans (3:18-19).

##### Why is it *hebel* (“meaningless” NLT) that both people and animals die (19)?

3:19

###### It is probably better ***not*** to see *hebel* here as “meaningless” (NLT, NIV). The idea is that both human and animal life is “fleeting.”

• Fleeting

###### “Solomon argued that **man has no advantage over** an **animal,** for both are transitory (lRbRh can be rendered “transitory” here rather than **meaningless;** cf. 6:12, and lO;k can be rendered “both” rather than **everything,** as in 2:14; 7:18)” (BKC).

Hebel
3 slides

##### Many people don’t want to even think about death.

###### The Chinese word for the number four sounds like death.

4 & Death in Chinese

###### So throughout Singapore you won’t see a 4th floor in buildings.

Lift

###### A Norwegian friend called Singapore Telecom some years back and requested an easy-to-remember telephone number. The customer service lady said, “Do you mind a number with a lot of “4s”? Ola responded, “Why do you ask?” “Because it’s hard to give out these numbers as they sound like death,” she responded. “No problem,” Ola said. “Great!” was the response. “Your number is 6447-4464.”

SingTel

#### Both people and animals came from and return to the dust (3:20).

Dust

##### This isn’t a dismal statement from a cynic.

NAU

##### It is a reality that we are as mortal as animals.

(In fact, Solomon continues by declaring that…)

### Our advantage over animals can’t be shown or observed as they die (3:21).

Boy & Dolphin

(So how should we respond to the fact that death is coming for us all? What do we do when we see that each of us is terminal but it’s just a matter of time?)

## Realizing that we all will die should cause us to *enjoy* life now (3:22).

Pomegranate

### Realizing that we will die should cause us to enjoy life now (3:22a).

#### The NLT indicates that our work or employment is in view: “So I saw that there is nothing better for people than to be happy in their *work*. That is why we are here!” But that seems to say that our existence is only to work!

NLT

#### The NAU is more accurate here: “I have seen that nothing is better than that man should be happy in his *activities*, for that is his lot.”

BKC

MI

Fight Injustice?

#### “This **is** man’s **lot** (a word that means lit., “portion, share, or allotment”…people are ignorant of God’s plan and cannot know what the future, including life after death, holds for them. He summarized this point in the rhetorical question, **Who can bring him to see what will happen after him?**” (Donald Glenn, in *BKC*, 1:986).

### We don’t know many details of the afterlife (3:22b).

Man & Bible

(How did Solomon show the purpose of injustice in God's plan in today’s text? He didn't answer that question, did he?)

# Conclusion

### What answer did Solomon give to the question I posed at the beginning, " What should we do when life is unfair?"

Subject

### Account to God and enjoy life (MI).

### Does this mean we shouldn't be concerned with injustice and oppression around us?

#### Look at all the unjust events that we see daily.

#### How is the Lord speaking to you about doing what you can to stem the tide of injustice in one of these areas?

### Let's look at some applications in three specific areas:

3 areas

#### If you are an **observer** of injustice…

Observer

##### Stand up for the victim of injustice you already see.

##### Support an orphan child through World Vision.

##### Get involved with Lakeside Family Services.

#### If you are an **initiator** of injustice…

Initiator

##### Change procedures at work to pay employees fairly.

##### Spend more time with your wife/husband/family.

#### If you are the **victim** of injustice… (Swindoll, pp. 107-8 story of Tom Sullivan)

Victim

##### Identify your area of struggle: What is your unjust disadvantage?

##### Exchange feeling sorrow for yourself for positive action: When do you plan to replace passive self-pity with active courage?

##### Trust God to minister to others through your disadvantage: Have you considered the impact your distinctive message would have on the world around you?

### Prayer

Prayer

# Preliminary Questions

**Verses Questions**

# Context: What did the author record just prior to this passage?

# Purpose: Why is this passage in the Bible?

# Background: What historical context helps us understand this passage?

# Questions

### Why is it *hebel* (“meaningless” NLT) that both people and animals die (19)?

#### It is probably better ***not*** to see *hebel* here as “meaningless” (NLT, NIV). The idea is that both human and animal life is “fleeting.”

#### “Solomon argued that **man has no advantage over** an **animal,** for both are transitory (lRbRh can be rendered “transitory” here rather than **meaningless;** cf. 6:12, and lO;k can be rendered “both” rather than **everything,** as in 2:14; 7:18)” (BKC).

# Tentative Subject/Complement Statements

Text

# Possible Illustrations

# http://www.worldmag.com/2014/07/university\_fires\_scientist\_after\_dinosaur\_discovery\_offers\_young\_earth\_evidence

# University fires scientist after dinosaur discovery offers young earth evidence

## [Religious Liberty](http://www.worldmag.com/topic/religious_liberty/)

By [Sarah Padbury](http://www.worldmag.com/writer/sarah_padbury/)

Posted July 25, 2014, 10:38 a.m.

### A scientist is suing California State University, Northridge (CSUN) for firing him after he publicized a discovery that suggests dinosaurs roamed America thousands of years ago, rather than the millions most evolutionists cite.

### Mark Armitage, who specializes in microscopic evidence for a young earth, unexpectedly stumbled upon [soft tissue in a triceratops fossil](http://www.worldmag.com/2014/07/trumpeting_a_dinosaur_horn) and wrote about his discovery for a scientific journal. Two weeks later, he was out of a job. Armitage filed suit against the university’s board of trustees on Tuesday, citing wrongful termination and religious discrimination.

### Armitage’s fascination with microscopes and tiny creatures started as a teen when he spent a summer on a marine science station staring at tiny planktonic algae through double lenses. Since then, he’s founded a successful microscope sales and consulting company, patented an optical inspection device, and discovered two new parasites. He holds memberships in several national scientific societies, and also serves as a Creation Research Society board member.

### In 2012, while at a world-famous fossil dig in Montana called Hell Creek Formation, Armitage uncovered the largest triceratops horn ever found at the site. To his surprise, he discovered soft tissue in the horn when he examined it under a high-powered microscope back at CSUN. Armitage believes the fact that the soft tissue wasn’t completely fossilized indicates dinosaurs roamed in the United States only thousands of years ago. Evolutionists claim dinosaurs went extinct more than 60 million years ago.

### As the manager for the Electron and Confocal Microscopy Suite in the CSUN biology department, Armitage trained students to use the school’s high-powered microscopes. In the summer of 2012, while demonstrating one of the instruments, Armitage showed students the horn’s tissue samples and engaged them in “brief Socratic dialogue about the age of the horn,” according to the lawsuit. He believed the exchange was in keeping with leading students through the scientific method. A student reported the event to Armitage’s supervisor.

### According to the suit, the supervisor stormed into the lab, shouting, “We are not going to tolerate your religion in this department!” and berating Armitage for his “creationist” views. Armitage informed the biology department chair and the head of technical services that what the supervisor said was a “clear example of religious discrimination.” Both of them assured Armitage his views would “not be a problem” and to “forget about the confrontation.” But they took no action to correct the supervisor or prevent future discrimination in the department, the suit claims.

### Armitage [published](http://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0065128113000020) his findings in February 2013 with a peer-reviewed article for Acta Histochemica, a journal dedicated to the structural biochemistry of cells and tissues. His findings mirrored other [recent](http://www.nature.com/news/molecular-analysis-supports-controversial-claim-for-dinosaur-cells-1.11637) discoveries of soft tissue in dinosaur bones. Two weeks later, CSUN fired Armitage, claiming his contract was temporary and the school lacked funding to continue the position.

### On July 22, Pacific Justice Institute (PJI) filed a lawsuit in Los Angeles Superior Court on Armitage’s behalf, declaring he was fired due to his “perceived” religious views and, contrary to the school’s claim, his position was not temporary nor was funding an issue in the department. Armitage’s contract defined his position as “permanent part-time” and he was enrolled in the university’s benefits package. On the job for three years, he held progressively increasing responsibilities, received numerous commendations from co-workers and supervisors, and was told by his supervisor via email there were “big plans” to increase his lab, “complete with it’s own building(!)”

### The lawsuit accuses the university of violating the Fair Employment and Housing Act, as well as Armitage’s First Amendment right to free speech and his academic freedom. A CSUN spokeswoman said on Thursday she couldn’t comment on the lawsuit because the school hadn’t been served.

### “Terminating an employee because of their religious views is completely inappropriate and illegal,” Brad Dacus, president of PJI, [said](http://www.pacificjustice.org/press-releases/university-silences-scientist-after-dinosaur-discovery) in a press release. “But doing so in an attempt to silence scientific speech at a public university is even more alarming. This should be a wakeup call and warning to the entire world of academia.”

#  Possible Applications

### Text

**When Life is Unfair**

***Ecclesiastes 3:16-22***

**Exegetical Outline (Steps 2-3)**

# *Exegetical Idea*: The way to respond to injustice and death is to balance accountability to God with enjoyment of life.

# I. The right response to injustice in the courts is to realize that God will judge us all (3:16-17).

## Evil exists in the courts where it shouldn't (3:16).

### Evil is in the courts where one would expect justice (3:16a).

### Evil is in the courts where one would expect righteousness (3:16b).

## God will judge both the righteous and the wicked (3:17).

### The righteous and the wicked will both account to God (3:17a).

#### The wicked will all give an account to God at the Great White Throne Judgment (cf. Rev. 20:11-15).

#### The righteous will all give an account to God at the Judgment Seat of Christ (cf. 2 Cor. 5:10; Eph. 6:8).

### A time of judgment will come for everyone alive (3:17b).

# II. The right response to our ignorance about death is to enjoy life now (3:18-22).

## Death shows people that they are mortal like animals (3:18-21).

### People are like the animals in that both die (3:18-20).

#### Since both people and animals die, life is just as fleeting for humans (3:18-19).

#### Both people and animals came from and return to the dust (3:20).

### People’s advantage over animals can’t be shown or observed as they die (3:21).

## Ignorance of life after death should cause us to enjoy life now (3:22).

### Realizing that we will die should cause us to enjoy life now (3:22a).

### We don’t know many details of the afterlife (3:22b).

**Purpose or Desired Listener Response (Step 4)**

The listeners will replace their frustration over injustice and death with accountability to God and enjoyment of life.

**Homiletical Outline** (Cyclical inductive form)

# Introduction

### Interest: We all observe injustice in our world.

### Need: What injustices irk you most?

### Background

### Intro to MPI: What should we do when life is unfair?

### Preview: Today we will see two issues and two responses.

### Text: Injustice is the first issue we'll be discussing today in Ecclesiastes 3:16-22.

# I. Realize that you will account to God (3:16-17).

## Injustice exists in the courts where it shouldn't (3:16).

### Evil is in the courts where one would expect justice (3:16a).

### Evil is in the courts where one would expect righteousness (3:16b).

## Realize that you will account to God (3:17).

### The righteous and the wicked will both account to God (3:17a).

#### The wicked will all give an account to God at the Great White Throne Judgment (cf. Rev. 20:11-15).

#### The righteous will all give an account to God at the Judgment Seat of Christ (cf. 2 Cor. 5:10; Eph. 6:8).

### A time of judgment will come for everyone alive (3:17b).

# II. Enjoy life now (3:18-22).

## It may seem unjust that we are mortal like animals (3:18-21).

### We are like the animals in that we also die (3:18-20).

#### Since both people and animals die, life is just as fleeting for humans (3:18-19).

#### Both people and animals came from and return to the dust (3:20).

### Our advantage over animals can’t be shown or observed as they die (3:21).

## Realizing that we all will die should cause us to *enjoy* life now (3:22).

### Realizing that we will die should cause us to enjoy life now (3:22a).

### We don’t know many details of the afterlife (3:22b).

# Conclusion

### What should we do when life is unfair?

### Account to God and enjoy life (Main Idea)!

### Does this mean we shouldn't be concerned with injustice and oppression around us?

### Let's look at some applications in three specific areas:

#### If you are an **observer** of injustice…

#### If you are an **initiator** of injustice…

#### If you are the **victim** of injustice… (Swindoll, pp. 107-8 Story of Tom Sullivan)

### Prayer

****

**Rick Griffith**

3 August 2014

Message 5 of 17

**When Life is Unfair**

***Ecclesiastes 3:16-22***

# Introduction

### We all observe injustice in our world.

### What injustices irk you most?

### What should we do when life is \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_?

### Today we will see two issues and two responses.

# I. Realize that \_\_\_\_\_\_ will account to God (3:16-17).

## Injustice exists in the courts where it shouldn't (3:16).

### Evil is in the courts where one would expect *justice* (3:16a).

### Evil is in the courts where one would expect *righteousness* (3:16b).

## Realize that you will account to God (3:17).

### The righteous and the wicked will both account to God (3:17a).

#### The wicked will all give an account to God at the Great White Throne Judgment (cf. Rev. 20:11-15).

#### The righteous will all give an account to God at the Judgment Seat of Christ (cf. 2 Cor. 5:10; Eph. 6:8).

### A time of judgment will come for everyone alive (3:17b).

# II. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ life now (3:18-22).

## It may seem unjust that we are mortal like animals (3:18-21).

### We are like the animals in that we also die (3:18-20).

#### Since both people and animals die, life is just as fleeting for humans (3:18-19).

#### Both people and animals came from and return to the dust (3:20).

### Our advantage over animals can’t be shown or observed as they die (3:21).

## Realizing that we all will die should cause us to *enjoy* life now (3:22).

### Realizing that we will die should cause us to enjoy life now (3:22a).

### We don’t know many details of the afterlife (3:22b).

# Conclusion

### What should we do when life is unfair?

### \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ to God and \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ life (Main Idea)!

### Let's look at some applications in three specific areas:

#### If you are an **observer** of injustice…

#### If you are an **initiator** of injustice…

#### If you are the **victim** of injustice…

**Thought Questions**

1. Read Ecclesiastes 3:16-22 aloud. What truths about injustice and death do you find in these verses?

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Verse** | **Teaching on Injustice & Death** |
| 16 | We expect courts to give justice but judiciaries are corrupt |
| 17 | Knowing our accountability to God motivates justice |
| 17 | Righteous people know that God will make things right |
| 19 | It seems unjust for man to die like animals |
| 22 | Be happy in your activities |
| Text | Text |
| Text | Text |
| Text | Text |
| Text | Text |

1. What injustice can you help resolve? How?

We should all have proper medical care, so we should help Nim pay for her baby.

Text

Text

1. How should you live in light of the fact that you will certainly die?

Enjoy life now.

Don’t be Epicurean (“Eat, drink and be merry…”) without responsibility.

Don’t fear death (Phil. 1:21).

1. Sarah Padbury on 25 July 2014 (http://www.worldmag.com/2014/07/university\_fires\_scientist\_after\_dinosaur\_discovery\_offers\_young\_earth\_evidence) [↑](#footnote-ref-1)