

## **Ecclesiastes 3:16 – 4:16**

### **Facing up to the injustice and futility of life under the sun**

#### **Read Ecclesiastes 3:16 - 4:3**

What is the problem the Teacher observes in v16?

*(Note: 'place of judgement/righteousness' is referring to courts of law or such places where a person may presume to find justice)*

In what sense are human beings 'like the animals' in verses 18-21?

→ How does this conclusion relate to the observation of verse 16?

→ And so what does the Teacher conclude is the best way to approach life as a result in v22?

How does the observation of 4:1 build on the point made in 3:16?

→ What bleak conclusion does the Teacher reach here in 4:2-3?

And yet, what hope does he hold on to in the face of all this oppression and injustice (3:17)?

Do you ever feel like the apparent injustice and hopelessness of life in this world overwhelms the conviction that God will bring justice in the end?

*(i.e. Do you sometimes 'know' the truth of 3:17, but feel the conclusion of 4:3?)*

→ Why do you think this happens?

## Read Ecclesiastes 4:4-16

When does work become a futile 'pursuit of the wind'? (*What examples does the teacher give in verses 4-8*)?

What tension do we see in the two proverbs in verses 5 and 6?

→ How can you tell when your work has become a futile task? What are the warning signs?

What are the benefits or companionship or partnership in life (v9-12)?

→ How does this reflection relate to the Teacher's previous observations? (Consider, for example, 3:22 and 4:7-8)

→ Marriage is a relevant example of such partnership, but it's not the only one. How have you seen this principle play out in life for you?

Ecclesiastes 3:16-4:8 reveal that life can seem futile and unjust for many reasons. Sometimes it is because of unwise choices and overvaluing something (i.e. wealth and success), and sometimes because injustice and oppression seem to rob us of hope and meaning (i.e. 4:1-3).

→ How does the final passage in 4:13-16 reflect these two dynamics?

## Reflect

What does this part of Ecclesiastes help us to...

Live well in the face of the injustice and futility of life under the sun?

Appreciate the need for divine justice beyond what we experience in this world?