

## The Antidote to Fatalism

## Ecclesiastes 3:16-4:6

You are walking down the street. Suddenly there is a scream and you see an elderly lady having her handbag snatched by a youth. She is knocked to the ground and the youth runs off. What do you do. I hope the very least we would do is try to help the lady, call the police if we have a mobile. Perhaps one of you fancies yourself as a have a go hero!

But how many times have we heard stories of people being mugged and passers by just doing nothing. Why? "Keeping myself to myself, not wanting to get involved? What if the mugger hasn't left the scene and has a go at me? I left my phone at home so can't help? I don't know first aid. *Other people were there to help so I wasn't needed*"

Often its a feeling of helplessness ourselves, a feeling of an inability to do anything that leads us to ignore situations of injustice and disaster. *so we protect ourselves and do nothing*

I find it amazing that a man as powerful and wise as Solomon could actually utter such things as we read this evening. He was an all-powerful monarch. He could make a difference, yet he felt powerless to change the injustices in society.

In a sense, knowing the history, I don't find that surprising. He was the source of that injustice in his own nation. Here's a selection of verses from 1 Kings 11

*11:1 Solomon loved many foreign women. Besides the daughter of the king of Egypt he married Hittite women and women from Moab, Ammon, Edom, and Sidon. 2 He married them even though the LORD had commanded the Israelites not to intermarry with these people, because they would cause the Israelites to give their loyalty to other gods.*

*9 Even though the LORD, the God of Israel, had appeared to Solomon twice and had commanded him not to worship foreign gods, Solomon did not obey the LORD but turned away from him. So the LORD was angry with Solomon 10 11 and said to him, "Because you have deliberately broken your covenant with me and disobeyed my commands, I promise that I will take the kingdom away from you and give it to one of your officials.*

*14 So the LORD caused Hadad, of the royal family of Edom, to turn against Solomon.*

*23 God also caused Rezon son of Eliada to turn against Solomon. Rezon had fled from his master, King Hadadezer of Zobah, 24 and had become the leader of a gang of outlaws. (This happened after David had defeated Hadadezer and had slaughtered his Syrian allies.) Rezon and his gang went and lived in Damascus, where his followers made him king of Syria. 25 He was an enemy of Israel during the lifetime of Solomon.*

*26 Another man who turned against King Solomon was one of his officials, Jeroboam son of Nebat, from Zeredah in Ephraim. His mother was a widow named Zeruah.*

Solomon worshipped foreign gods and in so doing took on their values and his vassal nations revolted and then his own people.

Here is what the foolish man says in Ecclesiastes:

*16 In addition, I have also noticed that in this world you find wickedness where justice and right ought to be. 17 I told myself, "God is going to judge the righteous and the evil alike, because every thing, every action, will happen at its own set time." 18 I decided that God is testing us, to show us that we are no better than animals. 19 After all, the same fate awaits human beings and animals alike. One dies just like the other. They are the same kind of creature. A human being is no better off than an animal, because life has no meaning for either. 20 They are both going to the same place--the dust. They both came from it; they will both go back to it.*

He had broken the covenant and intentionally disobeyed God. Yet he could not bring himself to repent. And it's reflected in this passage. He sounds like your average unbelieving biologist. We are no better than the animals. We have 90% of the DNA of most animals and 50% of the DNA of a banana. And that's that. God, is going to treat everyone the same, we have no control of our own destiny, He has. So there's nothing we can do about it – we all end up kicking up daisies. This nonsense is a product of an unrepentant heart. Oh how far he had fallen!

But in our own age, this is the reality of a fallen world – the human race has reversed God's order. Solomon is right about God judging. It's a bit about God that people prefer not to think about these days. He's a judge. We will die, we are faced with the fact that we have a responsibility for our actions before God. But that's where any identification we may have with Solomon ends.

God is conscious of the fact He is a judge. But He has created us to be more than just another pile of DNA along with the rest of life. When He breathed life into ~~Solomon~~, he didn't just breathe in Him physical life, but man became a living soul – a spiritual being – a being that exists beyond earthly life, beyond the lives of animals.

↑ ADAM!

And what is the desire of God for a lost and rebellious world? 2 Peter 3:9 *9 The Lord is not slow about his promise, as some think of slowness, but is patient with you, not wanting any to perish, but all to come to repentance.*

And the perfect judge proved His love for a lost race by committing the ultimate act of grace and mercy and we see that expressed in the bread and wine tonight as we remember Jesus. It's the antidote to the fatalism of Solomon.

What I find so tragic about this story is that the Lord appeared to Solomon twice to warn Him, but he was more interested in hormones and power. And the consequences? We see it here – the rantings of a depressed man, a failed monarch, <sup>who began</sup> an unjust society <sup>and ultimately</sup> a destroyed nation. The most powerful man in the world became a feeble, powerless monarch.

Here's the end of chapter 3: *22 So I realized then that the best thing we can do is enjoy what we have worked for. There is nothing else we can do. There is no way for us to know what will happen after we die.*

Er, he could have and should have known. It was all on tap for him from the God he abandoned. I can't help getting away from the comparison with many in our own society who see life as pointless and when everything fails for them, they also become depressed at how powerless they are to change anything. But the answer is right in front of their eyes and has been for generations! And here it is as a simple picture in front of us as to the antidote to the

fatalism of Solomon and of this generation. It's been here for 2000 years!

As we pass into chapter 4 we see how awful fatalism truly is. Solomon was not totally powerless at the time he wrote this. He could have repented. But we see the ultimate consequences of fatalism. He looks at the injustices of the world and says this:

*4:1 Then I looked again at all the injustice that goes on in this world. The oppressed were crying, and no one would help them. No one would help them, because their oppressors had power on their side. 2 I envy those who are dead and gone; they are better off than those who are still alive. 3 But better off than either are those who have never been born, who have never seen the injustice that goes on in this world.*

He was a king. He could have and should have done something about it. He was the best equipped person in Israel to do so. Even at this late stage in life he could have brought power to bear, but like the passer by who fails to help someone in need, he makes his fatalistic excuses and walks on.

If nothing else, the Christian faith is about power. At it's most basic, as we trust and follow Jesus, the Holy Spirit breathes spiritual life back into our dead bodies. He raises up to life. He empowers us to change. He reveals that hope that is a full antidote to fatalism.

*Gives us a message that changes people from the inside out - the Gospel.*  
He also opens up our eyes to see how we can change the world. We can pray, we can use our collective will to change things. Our modern society was shaped by Christian men and women who had the belief that ordinary people can and should change things. Why should powerful people abuse the system and get away with it? Why should politicians hit the poor with cuts to their income and allow the rich to get away with dishonest gain? We have a society open enough to be able to stop them – but only if people use their collective power to do so and they have been given plenty of peaceful and legal channels to do so if they can be bothered to pick themselves up and do something about it. But fatalism gives rise to the kind of apathy that led Solomon to just ~~man~~ when he had the power to do something. He just didn't have the humility to repent! *MOAN*

I find it a pity that people don't use the ability that they have to change injustice in our society and just allow the political class and big business to walk over us. Part of our witness for the Gospel is that we show that in our actions we can change lives and that we bear witness the the fact that God can really change lives in ways that nothing or nobody else can do – by bringing them back into spiritual life and giving each an eternal hope.

Never get to be like Solomon and think we can't change things. Individually maybe not, collectively yes we can. Let's never pass by. Our community needs Jesus now. Our nation needs Jesus now. We can and should make that difference. Let's go for it!