When Life Isn't Fair

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[0:00] Yes, we do. That's exactly what we do. We've been studying this all the last several weeks.

! Would y'all take a look at the screen for a minute here? I'll read it to you if it's a little hard. Why can't I stay up late? Calvin says. You guys can. It's not fair!
The world isn't fair, Calvin. I know, but why isn't it ever unfair in my favor? How many of y'all liked Calvin and Hobbes? Anybody? All right. How many of y'all ever feel like life is just not fair and you've accepted that, but maybe like Calvin here, you feel like it's always unfair against you? Like the odds are just always stacked against you. Sometimes we feel that way.
Life has a way of pulling that out of us. When did you first learn the lesson that life wasn't fair? Anybody? What's that?
What? Building fence with your dad. That's fine. Is it dads that find their way into these stories often? I don't know what it is when we're kids and that's not fair. Life isn't fair, son.
[1:31] Just how it works. Usually we're forced into learning that lesson pretty early, I think. Sometimes relationships force us to realize that life isn't fair. Sometimes jobs or promotions make us realize that life isn't fair make us realize that life isn't fair. Watching someone do the wrong thing and seemingly still get ahead. It's hard as Christ followers to turn on the news, see strife, see suffering, see injustice everywhere, and try to figure out who's right and who's wrong.

And that feels almost impossible. But we know that injustice is everywhere. Life is not fair.
At some point, all of us have to learn that truth, that this life under the sun will never be fair. And that's what the teacher in Ecclesiastes is teaching us here. The question is not whether we'll notice that. It's when we'll notice it and then what we do with it when we notice it. And that is exactly where Ecclesiastes is teaching us next, is taking us next. So if you would go ahead, for some reason this thing isn't working. There we go. Thank you. Did you do that or did I do that? You did that.
All right. Well, that's bad news. If you'll take your copy of the Word of God and turn with me to Ecclesiastes chapter 3. Let's go to Ecclesiastes chapter 3. We've been in this book for the last several weeks. If you want to catch up, you can always go to our YouTube page at FBC Henrietta. You can get caught up on all the lessons before this from Ecclesiastes. This is a fascinating book. It's unlike any other book in the Bible. The Bible is comprised of 66 books written across generations, across geographical locations, not all from the same area, spread around the world from different writers who shared very little in common often and were written over centuries and centuries apart from each other. And it's all compiled into this precious gift that God gave us we call the Bible. This book of Ecclesiastes is so different from all the others. And the theme here that we've drawn from it is catching smoke. Hard to catch smoke, isn't it? You think you've got it in your hand and you open your hand, there's nothing there. It's not something you can grasp or hold on to. And that is what life is like. The teacher who we understand is Solomon, King Solomon, the wisest and wealthiest man in recorded history, wrote this down, these powerful lessons for us at the end of his life.
[4:18] Let's not miss it. If we value the wisdom from Solomon in the book of Proverbs, let's value his end of life lessons as he reflects back on all his success. And he writes to us in chapter three.

We covered the first part of chapter three last Sunday. Let's pick it up in verse 16 and we'll read down through the beginning of chapter four. So in setting up this point, Ecclesiastes is teaching us by the teacher the meaning of pleasure, success, time, seasons of life. We've looked at all these things and now he lifts his eyes and what he sees, he's not just frustrated with, he sees systemic injustice ingrained into the fabric of our lives, our cultures. Chapter three, verse one. I'm sorry, verse 16. I also noticed, verse 16, I also noticed that under the sun, there is evil in the courtroom.

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Even the courts of law are corrupt. Does that surprise anybody here? The courts of law are corrupt? Anybody have absolute faith in the justice system? No, of course not. We're grateful for the justice system. We're grateful for the judges and the attorneys who try to fight for justice in a system that often seems stacked against them. Sometimes corruption can make its way even through those places and those jobs that are supposed to be defending those who are oppressed. So there is, of course, evil in the courtroom. Even the courts of law are corrupt. Solomon says to himself, by the way, this is an ancient problem. It's not just a modern day problem. It's always been this way. And the reality is it's because people are corrupt. And so wherever people go, corruption will be there. In due season, he says, I said to myself, God will judge everyone, both good and bad, for all their deeds. I also thought about the human condition. Boy, that could write a series of books and has over all time, writing about the human condition. But I'd like to see what Solomon has to say about the human condition. Because if anyone understood it, Solomon seemed to have wrapped his head around it with this wealth of wisdom that God had given him. He says, I thought about the human condition, how God proves to people that they are like animals, beasts. You realize that? We're all like animals.

And God proves that to us again and again. Solomon watched it. Verse 19. For people and animals share the same fate. Both breathe. Both must die. So people have no real advantage over the animals. How meaningless. Both go to the same place. They came from dust and they return to dust. For who can prove that the human spirit goes up and the spirit of animals goes down into the earth. Hold on to that for a minute. Verse 22. So I saw that there is nothing better for people than to be happy in their work. That is our lot in life. And no one can bring us back to see what happens after we die. You and I are all powerless against death. We can't. We can't go back and change what we did. We can't go back and undo what's been done. We can't go back and fix things that we did wrong or others did wrong. And after our time on this earth is done and we're laid to rest, that's it. That's the end of the story. And we don't get to go and adjust public opinion of us. We don't get to go see what happened to the life that we live, what happened to the legacy that we left behind. It's over. And Solomon is hit with this realization. Chapter 4, verse 1. Again, I observed all the oppression that takes place under the sun. Oppression that takes place under the sun. I saw the tears of the oppressed with no one to comfort them. The oppressors have great power and their victims are helpless.

[8:45] So I concluded that the dead are better off than the living. Verse 3. But most fortunate of all are those who are not yet born, for they have not yet seen all the evil that is done under the sun.

Do you feel uplifted this morning? This is hard, isn't it? This is hard reading. But if we value this whole book, and if we believe what it has to say, if we value what it teaches us, that we can't skip over these parts. We've got to dive into them. What is he teaching us?

What is so valuable from the wisest and wealthiest man who ever lived? How does he end up here? Let's get into it. He lifts his eyes. He's not just frustrated by what he sees. He realizes this is a systemic problem across the world. Of all people groups, all governments, all countries, they're fraught, they're riddled, it's baked into what they are, oppression and injustice.

Life is not fair. This is not just rebellion against God. This is refusing to do anything kind for anyone else.

And often when you see kindness, if you dig underneath it, you realize it doesn't come from a place of true kindness anyway. There are motivations, reasons for why they're doing the good they seem to be doing. I'm not trying to make you more cynical than you already are.

[10:46] It's easy to read the book of Ecclesiastes and come away as a cynic. Forget it, man. What's the use? And that, apart from looking above the sun, is exactly the conclusion that we would come to.

But if you continue on and you read through the entire book, and we're going to get there in just a couple of weeks when we conclude our series in Ecclesiastes, when you read to the end, you realize that Solomon gets to the place that we all have to get to, because there's no other place to arrive to find meaning under the sun. You realize it's all catching smoke. It's all pointless. There's really no meaning to any of it until we look above the sun.

We look above, beyond this world to see the God who created it all, to see the God who made us, to see the God who left his heavenly throne, came down to this earth to live among us, and he brought the meaning. He brought the value. And he sees the oppression. He sees the injustice.

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And that's what we're going to talk about today. So truth number one. By the way, we read Ecclesiastes 3, 16 through chapter 4 and verse 3. I meant to have that on the board when we read just a moment ago, but that's all right. You guys listened and you got there. So thank you. Verse number one in your notes, if you're taking notes, looking above the sun means seeing injustice below the sun. You can't just fix your eyes on heaven and say, I'm only going to think about God and the things of God. I'm not going to think about the things going on around me.
It doesn't work that way. Jesus said to his disciples, lift up your eyes and look on the, anybody know? Fields. This was right after he had talked to the Samaritan woman, the woman at the well. He had talked to her. He engaged her, someone who was completely opposite of his social status, someone who didn't merit his time in that part of the world, in that culture. The Samaritans were seen as below the Jews. Why would he be talking to her? She as a woman was seen as below him as a man.
[13:00] That's how things were. It's the system that God came to change. And so as a Samaritan and a woman, why would Jesus stop at this well and engage her? And not only did he engage her, he taught theology with her. He cared for her soul and he introduced himself as the Messiah, the promised one, the savior of the world to her. And so this was a powerful moment that Jesus had. And he sees her come to faith in him and she changes on the inside. And then she goes in to the city and starts telling everyone who will listen, I just met the Messiah. I met the one sent from God. You got to come meet him. While all this is happening, Jesus' disciples comes back. They've been off trying to see if there was a McDonald's in town and find some food because they were hungry. The ancient version of McDonald's, whatever that was.

And they come back and they said, Pastor, there's no food in this town. We can't find anything. And Jesus says, guys, I got food that you're not even aware of. And they're like, what? Who gave you? Where'd you find food, Jesus? Were you going to tell us? He says, no, I'm not talking about that. He says, I have meat to eat that you don't know about. And they said, lift up your eyes and look around you. Look on the fields because they are white, ready to harvest. If you've ever harvested wheat or harvested crops, you know that when they turn white at the top, they're ready to be harvested.
And so Jesus is saying, listen, there are people all around, just like this Samaritan woman that I just talked to. There are people all around you searching for God, searching for hope. They don't even know necessarily that they need Jesus, but their souls know it. Their souls crave it.
He says, guys, lift up your eyes and look around. There's a harvest to be had. But he had to see her first. He had to care that she was oppressed. As a woman, as a Samaritan, he had to care enough to get past the injustice that was baked into their society and see her.
[15:21] So you got to look where Jesus is looking. You got to see what Jesus sees. If you're going to call yourself a follower of him, it's not enough just to look at God. If you're looking at God, you got to see what's he looking at. Oh, he's looking over there. He sees that person that I wouldn't have noticed.

He sees that situation that I don't have an immediate solution to, and so I'm just going to ignore it. Listen, that's my go-to. Some people, some of you are wired to be empathetic.
Some of you are wired to go beyond sympathy, which is, I feel for you. I'm sorry you're going through a hard time. I feel for you. I'm sympathetic to your condition. Then there's this idea of empathy, which is, I'm going to feel with you. I'm going to step down into your life, and I'm going to feel the pain you're feeling. I'm going to be a part of it. Do you realize that we don't just serve a sympathetic God? We serve an empathetic God. He left heaven's throne. He saw our fallen condition, and he came and lived among us. He walked with us. He hurt with us. He was tempted like we are.
He went through the fatigue, the hunger, the fear. Everything that you and I experienced, Jesus went through. He was empathetic for us. Just like anything, the world can take these things, and they can abuse them. And sometimes you'll hear the word empathy thrown around as a buzzword, and it'll get abused by those who have, once again, their own motivations, their own purposes for trying to take something good and turn it, warp it for their own agenda.
But the reality that God is empathetic is real. He feels not just for us. He feels with us, and he calls us to do the same. So you've got to look where Jesus is looking and see what he sees.
[17:23] When we only look under the sun, the injustice around us can be overwhelming. It can harden us, or it can hollow us out. It can leave us feeling empty because we give more than we have to give, or it can just harden us and say, I can't really fix any of it. I can't fix all of it, so I'm not

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going to fix any of it. You ever feel that way sometimes? But you know the story of the kid on the beach, all the starfish laying there, and he's throwing them one by one back into the ocean so they can live a little longer. And the old man says, son, you're never going to save all these starfish. And he says, yeah, I know, but I can save this one, and I can save this one.

So of course, we can't solve the problem of lack of food. We can't solve the problem of people not having enough. We can't solve the problem of the injustice system stacked against people, but we can help one. And then maybe we can help another one. And when God's people see what Jesus sees, that's how he changes this world. And that's how he's chosen to bring his kingdom to this earth is through his people, through his church. Let the church be the church that God called it to be, that God designed it to be. But to do that, we have to see where Jesus is looking.
The teacher says it plainly. He saw. He says, I saw all the acts of oppression being done under the sun. I saw the tears of the oppressed with no one to comfort them. That's what Jesus sees.
The psalmist writes about it this way, oh, Lord, why do you stand so far away? The wicked arrogantly hunt down the poor. He was seeing the injustice around him.
Some of it was affecting him. Some of it was affecting his men, his people that would follow him. And he says, God, why are you not intervening? Why are you not stepping in for the oppressed?
[19:30] Christ, he's taking that cry to God because he knows down here on this earth, there's going to be very little help. But when you turn to God, when you look above the sun and say, God, I see what you're seeing, will you intervene? Will you step in? Will you help?

And then over in Habakkuk, the prophet writes this, God, why do you make me look at injustice? You ever feel that way when you turn on Fox News or CNN or whatever your go-to news channel is?
I'm not sure any of them are all that reliable, but regardless, do you see anything on there that just makes you say, God, why do you make me look at this injustice? It's all around, everywhere, regardless of who's right and who's wrong.
Remember what we said in sermon one of this series? Being right doesn't always fix it. You can be real proud that you're right and you think you figured it out.
That doesn't fix the problem, does it? So going beyond who's right and who's wrong, say, God, why do you make me see this injustice? The law is paralyzed. Justice never prevails.
[20:42] No matter who wins, justice never prevails. Faith doesn't require silence. It believes God enough to say the truth.

Looking above the sun does not mean pretending everything around you is fine. It doesn't mean hardening yourself off. It means trusting God enough to name what is broken.
Ecclesiastes chapter 4, we read it a moment ago. I concluded that the dead are better off than the living. But most fortunate of all are those who are not yet born. That is a hard verse to read.
Be better if you've never been born. Jesus said that. Do you remember? He said it would be better if they'd never been born than if they hurt one of these little ones.
It would be better if a big old stone was tied around their neck and they were thrown into the water. If you went a little further, it would be better if they'd never been born than if they hurt one of these little ones.
[21:56] You know what that is? Injustice. The oppressed. The helpless. The vulnerable. Society will always prey on the oppressed, the helpless, the vulnerable.

And those who are not out to do evil too often turn a blind eye to when society prays on the helpless, the oppressed, and the vulnerable.
And that's why the law is paralyzed and justice never prevails. Jesus modeled this perfectly for us. How do we respond?
We go to Jesus. What did he do? Mark chapter 10. Jesus stopped a blind beggar named Bartimaeus. And he helped him when everyone else tried to silence him or even just ignored him. And he called out, Jesus, master, help me. And Jesus stopped and he healed the blind man that everyone else ignored. In John chapter 8, Jesus stopped the justice system in its tracks.
[23:06] The righteous justice system that said a woman who was caught in adultery would be guilty, would be sentenced to death by stoning. The law required it.

And Jesus stopped the justice system in its tracks. And freed her by showing the religious leaders of the day the bigger point. None of you are without sin.

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None of you can actually condemn her. Even though she was guilty. A guilty person. Jesus stopped the justice system in its tracks. These are the kinds of people that Jesus so often gravitated toward. The sinful, the hurting, the outcasts of society. They're who he stopped for. They're who he noticed. They're who he saw. So, looking above the sun means seeing the injustice below the sun.
And this leaves us here. Faith does not look away. We look away. But Jesus doesn't. So, if we want to follow him.
[24:12] If we want to be like him. If we want to truly be his church. Remember a couple years ago. I'm not expecting you to remember all the sermons that I preached for the last two years.

But if I throw this reminder out. We don't just go to church. We. Look. See, y'all do remember, man. Pat yourself on the back for that. That was great. If you don't just want to be somebody who goes to church.
But you want to actually be the church of Jesus. Then you can't look away either. And I can't look away either. I'm not wired like that. Some of you are.
Some of you are empathetic people. Like we said before. Some of you are just wired. I want to go help whoever I can. You know who I want to help? You know who I really care about? The people I care about.
My people. Me. Those three down there. And if you happen to get close enough to me that I start caring about you too. That sounds really bad, doesn't it?
[25:12] Really does. But I'm sorry, y'all. That's just true. That's just me. That's how I'm wired. So if God wants to use me, then he's going to have to change me, right?

Well, he's been doing that. He's been changing me. Now, I try, but that doesn't work very well. So God's training me to care about who he cares about.
And that's all y'all. And that's the people out there. Now I have to care about people that I don't just naturally care about. You've got to go against your nature.
You've got to let God change your nature. You ever heard somebody say, or maybe the words have escaped your lips, that's just how God made me. No.
Don't blame that on God. God, that's what sin has done to you. That's what this broken world has manifested itself in your life. That is your sin nature. God made you perfectly.
[26:16] And he wants to restore you through his spirit to have a big role in his kingdom. Building his kingdom here. That means you've got to let him change you.

That means you've got to let him make you nice. It means you've got to let him make you care about people you don't naturally care about. They want to help people you don't naturally want to help.
Because it's like, man, I don't have any extra right now. I can't go buy that guy asking for money a burger. Come on now. I can't go fill up their gas. It's all I can do to put gas in my own car.
But you let God change you and you trust him to take care of you. And then you point those people to Jesus. Say, listen, I can't fix everything in your life.
But I'll do whatever I can for you right now. And I want to introduce you to someone who's a good father. Who will provide for you. He will take care of you.
[27:14] That's what we're called to do. We're not called to look away. Number two. Looking through the eyes of Jesus means being loved. I'm sorry, being moved by the multitudes.

Looking through the eyes of Jesus means being moved by the multitudes. Before we get there, can I back up? I want to give you this quote. One of my favorite Christian writers is a man named Tom Wright.
He goes by N. His initials N.T. N.T. Wright. And there's nobody in this world that I agree with 100% of the time, starting with myself. I don't agree with myself 100% of the time.
I agree with myself a lot, though. I'm sure you all agree with me most of the time, right? But I do agree with N.T. Wright quite a bit in his writing.
And I want to share this with you. This quote. The line between justice and injustice, between things being right and things not being right, can't be drawn between us and them.
[28:14] Now, it is, right? In any issue out there, it's always us versus them. Whichever us or them you happen to line up with, that's how lines are drawn. N.T. Wright is saying, as a Jesus follower, that can't be how it is.

The line between justice and injustice, it's not an us versus them thing. He says, instead, it runs right down through the middle of each one of us. Why?

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Because this world is so fallen, this world is so broken, none of us are right anymore. We're all wrong. We're all wrong. And God's trying to show us that.
There's not much difference between us and the animals. The difference is, God gave us a soul, and the Holy Spirit can change that soul.
And so he has to change you. What does he mean by this? When he says it runs right down the middle of each one of us. He goes on to explain it. The conviction of the Christian faith is that the one true God revealed in and through Jesus has come to sort things out in this present world.
[29:23] But what's more is he's promised to come again to make all things right in the end. However, the point for us is not to wait patiently until we escape.

Escape from this world and escape from all the brutalities, the inequities, the corruption caused by those who oppress and dominate others. Instead, the God of justice calls his followers.
That's you and me. Because I'm taking you, most of you I know have identified as Jesus followers. If you haven't, that's okay. Hang out with us long enough. You might make that decision. But I'm taking you at your word that you're a Jesus follower.
So it said, what it means for us is God has called us to be the justice bringers right now. What we find throughout John's gospel, read the book of John, is the putting right of humans.
Sorting out the mess that humans are in. And the invitation to join the ongoing project of Jesus. Jesus calls us to be bringers of God's justice by following him.
[30:30] John 20, 21, he said, as the father sent me, right after he raised from the dead, right after he performed the greatest miracle this world has ever seen. Jesus coming back to life. He said, now, as the father has sent me, so I am sending you.

By the spirit, those who follow Jesus are commissioned and equipped and sent out to be people who promote God's new creation.
Justice people. Hope-giving people. To places where injustice still reigns. And that's everywhere.
So this leads us to truth number two.
Looking through the eyes of Jesus means being moved by the multitude. You can't just see them. You then have to be moved to help. First, you have to notice.
You can't just ignore. But then the spirit of God has to move you to step into it. Seeing clearly is the first step. If we stop there, we run the risk of becoming observers and never servants.
[31:39] That's why we don't just look above the sun. We learn to look through the eyes of Jesus. Matthew tells us in chapter 9 and verse 36, when he saw the crowds, Jesus, when he saw the crowds, Jesus had compassion on them because they were harassed and helpless like sheep without a shepherd.

The Greek word, by the way, reminder, the New Testament wasn't written in English. It was written in Greek originally. And so the Greek word that has that word harassed there, the translation in English, it could also be translated confused.
But either way you look at it, harassed or confused. They didn't know what was going on. They were confused, harassed, tormented, led astray by a justice system, a religious justice system, by the way.
Rome was less oppressive in some ways than their own religion was. That's who Jesus saw. People are harassed.
They're helpless. They're confused. They don't know what's right. They don't know what's wrong. You turn on the news. You see the stuff going on at the border. You see the stuff going on in Minnesota. You see, just pick a year.
[32:46] Pick a year. Pick a time of year. Turn on the news. There'll be all kinds of issues going on that are dominating the talk radio waves and the talk shows on TV.

And everybody's got an opinion. And everybody says, here's who's right. Here's who's wrong. They're all confused. Justice will never prevail on this earth till God makes it new again.
Till God restores it all. And Jesus sees this. That's why the truth runs down the middle. Jesus says, I came to heal all of you who are broken.
And I came to use my people to do it. They're sheep without a shepherd. Guess who the shepherds are supposed to be? Us. Jesus is the good shepherd.
And then he calls you to shepherd somebody else. Some he calls to be shepherds of a church. And that's who we give this term pastor to, which comes from the idea of shepherding sheep.

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[33:51] Some he calls to be shepherds of families, parents. Some he calls to be shepherds of classes, teachers. Whether it's in the school system, whether it's in Sunday school.

Some he calls to shepherd a life group. We've got the Canadiens. We've got Wade. We've got Penny. We've got others. Because God shepherds through his people.
The sheep need a shepherd. Otherwise, they're harassed. They're helpless. They're confused. And then over in Zechariah chapter 7, the prophet Zechariah speaks of the heart of Jesus.
When he writes in Zechariah 7.10, do not oppress the widow. Don't oppress the fatherless. The sojourner. One who's traveling from their homeland away.
You could say refugees. The poor. Let none of you devise evil against another in your heart. Hey, we can grab onto that last part, right? Well, yeah, that's right.
[34:50] I shouldn't go out and make up evil plans against somebody else in my heart. But take it in the context of what he's saying. Don't oppress the widow, the fatherless, the sojourner, the poor.

How do you oppress those people? Number one, by never helping them. And then often you can take it a step further by hurting them.
And sometimes we see systems stacked against these people. The children of God should never, never be guilty of that.
We should be different. It shouldn't come down to politics for us. It should come down to these are people. These are image bearers of God.
And we're going to do everything we can to show compassion to them. Even though they might be wrong, we remember they're confused. We remember they're helpless. We remember they're sheep without a shepherd.
[35:50] I'm going to go be a shepherd for somebody. And I'm going to pray that God would send shepherds to those sheep who need them. Ecclesiastes helps us see reality clearly.

But then Jesus shows us how to respond to that reality rightly. That's the shift. We don't explain suffering away. We don't wait until everything makes sense in our minds.
We let what breaks God's heart begin to shape our heart. And when your heart changes, what follows after that? When your heart changes, what else changes?
Think about it. When your heart changes, what follows next in your life? Your actions.
Your relationships. It starts affecting what you do. Romans 12, 2, we were talking about it in our class this morning. God changes the way we think.
[36:51] When he changes the way we think, then everything else starts to change. So this leaves us with this idea. Seeing like Jesus always leads to compassion. 100% of the time, when we see through the eyes of Jesus, it will result in compassion in us.

It doesn't always mean we're going to go give people what they're asking for. They're confused. They don't always ask for the right thing. We can't meet every single request that comes through this church and we refer it to our benevolence committee.
Or, you know, people ask for help all the time. We can't give everyone what they're asking for. Sometimes it wouldn't help them. Sometimes we truly don't have it to give. But what we can do is have compassion on them.
And that will lead us to do something. It will lead us to pray. It will lead us to refer them to wherever they can find help. It will lead us to do what we can because we see them truly not as an inconvenience, not as an irritation, but we see them like Jesus does and we care.
And we have compassion. That's what we've got to do. That's what I've got to get better at. God's brought me a long way from the guy who's like, man, I don't care about the rest of y'all.
[38:11] I'm taking care of me and mine. God's changed me a ton. He can change you too. He's got to. The church has to be different.

So here's an application for us. A church that prioritizes the kingdom of God moves toward and welcomes the outsider, the overlooked, and the oppressed.
So let's forget about national news for a minute, okay? Let's bring it down here to Henrietta, Texas in Clay County. Who is the outsider?
Who's the outsider who feels like they don't fit in in First Baptist Church? Y'all, I've heard many testimonies of people who eventually walked through these doors, but they thought they didn't fit in here.
They weren't wealthy enough. They didn't have their life all together. They were too sinful. They felt like they were outsiders. How can we move toward them? How can we welcome them to say, no,

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no, no.
[39:20] This church cares about you because Jesus cares about you. How can, who is the overlooked? Who's the people that we just walk past every day and we don't think about them a second time?

God cares about those people. And who are the oppressed? Who is our system stacked against? Who's hurting? Talk to the people who know.
Talk to our local government officials. Talk to Ms. Clark and those in the school system. They know who the oppressed are. Talk to our sheriff's department.
They know who the oppressed are. They know who the people who are hurting, who don't seem to have a chance in life to really succeed. How can we go show compassion to those people?
How can we let Jesus step into their life and put it on a completely different track than it's been on? That's what the church is here to do. We're not here to have a nice social club.
[40:21] We love being around each other. We need that. We need the community of God's people getting together and feeding off each other and building each other up. Life is hard. The devil is always throwing attacks at us because he doesn't want us to do those things.

He wants us to forget about the outsider, the overlooked, and the oppressed. He doesn't care about showing compassion to anybody. So the church has to do that and say, nope, that's exactly what we're going to do. We're going to step into the gap that no one else is standing in.
Ecclesiastes does not rush us past injustice. It makes us stop and wait and look at it and stare at it and say, what can I do? What can God do through me?
Jesus doesn't stand far away from injustice. He moves toward it and makes a difference there. And he can do it in your life and he can do it through you in someone else's life.
So together they can teach us to see clearly, to feel deeply, to move compassionately. So what do we do, church? When we see suffering, when we see injustice, we don't have an option.
[41:24] If we're going to move toward Jesus, remember our theme for 2026? It's not a year of perfection. It's a year of direction. Look, y'all knew. Let's say it again.

It's not a year of perfection. It's a year of direction. If we're going to obey, then this is directional obedience to show compassion like Jesus does in the face of injustice.
So what do we do? We don't turn a blind eye. We don't feel obligated to take a side. We cry out to the God who sees. It's the same answer to the question we've been asking every week.
How do we live under the sun? We look above the sun. One more time. How do we live under the sun? We look above the sun. Would you bow your heads with me right now? God, let us lift the eyes of our hearts right toward you right now.
In the quiet of this moment, I pray that you would convict us. Show us where we have turned a blind eye. Show us where we have felt obligated to choose a side and figure out who's right and who's wrong and campaign against those who are wrong.
[42:34] Get online. Say our peace. Whatever our issue is. Maybe we've just ignored. Maybe we've just turned a blind eye. God, let us lift our eyes toward the heavens and above them.

Let us see the one who sees everything. You see the hurting. You see the oppressed. You see the poor. You see the ones who are struggling to pay their bills. You see the ones who are struggling to put food on their table.
You see the ones who are facing medical problems that there's no answer to. You see the ones crippled by fear and anxiety. You see the ones who, maybe because of the color of their skin or their social status, the system is stacked against them.
You see all of it, God. You see the product of this broken, wicked world who for generations has oppressed each other, has hurt each other. And you're the answer, God.
God, we need to try to vote the best way we can according to what you value. We need to try to make a difference in our communities politically when we can according to what you instruct us to do.
[43:41] But most of all, God, we've got to turn to you and ask you for help and then be willing to let you inconvenience us to go help somebody. More than legislation will ever do, your people can do.

In small towns like Henrietta and beyond, the outlying areas, you can do so much. A group of people like this, there's no limit to what you can accomplish.

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Open up our hearts to it. But don't let us be hardened against you or against those who need us. Let us see who you see.
In the stillness of this moment, before we dismiss, would you look inwardly and ask yourself, what am I doing about injustice?
I know life isn't fair. But I have faith that God cares anyway. He cares about people I maybe don't naturally care about.
[44:56] He can use me to change them. You know, when you go help somebody, that gives you the best opportunity to point them to the one who can help them the most.

It's been said a million times. People don't care how much you know until they know how much you care.
I'll ask this question before we dismiss. If there's someone here who says, maybe I've had a different picture of God.
Maybe I haven't always seen him as the God who cares, the God who has compassion. Or maybe it's something else. But whatever it is, I've never placed my faith in Jesus. But the Jesus I heard about today, I want to follow him.
I believe he died on the cross for me. I believe he rose from the dead. I want to put my faith in him to forgive me and make me a child of God. If that's you right now, would you slip your hand up?
[46:01] I'd love to talk with you in a moment. Thank you. I'll follow up with this question. If there's something that you need prayer for, would you slip your hand up now?

Anything at all? Thank you. Thank you. God, you see the hands, but you know what's going on in each heart. I pray that you would speak clearly. You would remind them of your mercy, your compassion, and use us as vessels of mercy and compassion to those around us.
It's in Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

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