

Yesterday, the town of Haymarket celebrated **Earth Day**.....

the stated goal of the day was to “inspire awareness and appreciation of the Earth and its natural environment.”

As Christians.... **WE** ought to appreciate the earth.... but **not** as an end in itself....

Instead... we ought to recognize that **Creation**.... has been designed to **mirror** its Creator....

In nature....we ought to seek out evidences of God’s goodness.... God’s wisdom.... God’s creativity and God’s delight....

likewise.....

We should study and appreciate **humanity** in much the same way....

In people... in social structures.... in relationships.... we should seek out and look for evidences of God’s goodness.... God’s righteousness and God’s justice...

Because GOD is our creator.... and we are made in His image....traces of His character **are** visible within humanity....

#### **Jeremiah 9:24b**

" ...I am the LORD who practices **steadfast love, justice**, and **righteousness** in the earth. For in these things I delight, declares the LORD.”"

That’s Who God is....

On the earth... and in the present....God puts these qualities of Himself on display... mainly... **through** people...

But if you have lived longer than a few weeks.... you know that we humans.... have significantly **disfigured** these aspects of God’s creation.....

Instead of steadfast (faithful, covenant keeping) love..... we mostly see selfishness..

In place of justice → we see corruption....

In place of righteousness → we see **evil**...

At almost **every** level....

and if we are honest..... the **FIRST** place we can find it... is within ourselves.....

Solomon was **BOTHERED** by this reality....and you should be too.....

.... I have entitled the message this morning:

### Responding to Evil

If you know Biblical history.... you are aware that early on in Solomon's reign he was **known** for displaying God's wisdom through just and righteous judgments....

**Psalm 72** records his prayer that He himself would honor God by **ruling justly**.....

You might recall the story from **1 Kings 3** where Solomon dealt with the dispute over an infant child in such a way that amazed all Israel at his wisdom and justice....

So as Solomon looked out on the world....it grieved him when he saw the **opposite** of God's goodness taking place upon the earth....

### Ecclesiastes 3:16

" 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."

It is one thing to find injustices done to the members of a **gang**..... by its leaders....or to open the door of a **crack house** and find every evil thing under the sun.....

But what about when you find wickedness in the PLACES meant to sustain justice and righteousness on the earth?

A Court of Law (for example) is designed to be a place where people can believe that their wrongs will be righted.... where the standards of righteousness will be upheld... where justice will be served upon those who break the law..... so that further lawlessness (in society) can be suppressed.

How sickening it is .... when (in that place) of supposed JUSTICE.... you find **corruption**... you find judges taking bribes or (worse yet)... MAKING **new** laws rather than upholding existing ones... bending rules according to what SEEMS right in their eyes...

- How do you respond to those things?

It is easy to join the bandwagon of **CYNICISM** and calloused criticism of our society....

That is what you will do if you watch enough of the news.....

But it really doesn't really help **anyone**.... or anything.....other than letting you vent a little bit...

I would suggest that God intends for you NOT to become hardened by evil in our world... even as you see it increasing....

Instead...

## Responding to Evil

### 1. **Grieve Over Corruption**

Do not let your hearts be hardened.... do not **gloss over** the in-equities and injustices and unrighteousness of the world around you....

Allow your heart to grieve (with God) over the **blackness** you see..

#### 2 Peter 2:8

"for as that righteous man lived among them day after day, he was **tormenting** his righteous soul over their lawless deeds that he saw and heard;"

We have already said that under Solomon....-> Israel enjoyed its golden age....both geographically and economically (within one generation) the nation went from being a fledgling existence to a **superpower** ....

As new **provinces** were added....and wealth increased.... so did oppression and corruption from top to bottom....

#### Ecclesiastes 5:8

" If you see in a province the oppression of the poor and the violation of justice and righteousness, **do not be amazed at the matter**, for the high official is watched by a higher, and there are yet higher ones over them."

**Money** and power go together. The **allure** of both of them..... naturally drives sinful people to push others aside... in order to get what they want.....

To **step on** others..... just because they **CAN**....

Solomon says.... this should not surprise you....

You should not be amazed that **the same** dirty politics and sleazy business practices are practiced by each rung of the food chain....

If Justice is not served... in a lower court..... why do you expect a Supreme Court (which made abortion legal) is going to overturn it?

The problem of **Evil** .... is everywhere..... top to bottom..... in every nation of the world....

- Because evil stems from every human heart.

**Genesis 6:5**

"The LORD saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that **every** intention of the thoughts of his heart was **only** evil continually."

Even as you or I go to do something good..... (this side of heaven) our motives will always be **tainted** with some mixture of selfish ambition.....

With some degree of desire for US to get credit..... to experience personal **GAIN**....

for our SELF esteem to be enhanced .... because we are doing good....

- Don't gloss over that..... don't deny it.....

Instead admit that God is completely true.... and you are oftentimes are NOT....

**GRIEVE** over it.....

One advantage to sharing the gospel (the way we have been teaching the young people) is that your own ears get to hear the standard of God's holy law over and over.....

This week... I was convicted (to the point of weeping) over something God exposed through His Law.....

**Mourn** over your own sin.... and then be compassionate towards the evil others are experiencing.....

**Ecclesiastes 4:1-3**

" 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. And I thought the dead who are already dead more fortunate than the living who are still alive. But better than both is he who has not yet been and has **not seen** the evil deeds that are done under the sun."

Few **regimes** in modern history have committed as many **atrocities** as Nazi Germany in the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century...

I was reading an article about the Holocaust this past week.... that contained details of the oppression the Nazi's inflicted upon the Jews....

One job the guards gave Hebrew people was to go through the dead bodies of those who had been murdered and pull out any teeth that contained **gold** fillings.... If they missed **any**.... the ones who missed it were thrown alive into the furnace....

Can you imagine... being in a situation like that?.....

No one to bring **comfort**.... b/c everyone around you either wants you dead or is in so much shock themselves they can not console anyone....

Not only the initial horror of having to go through such evil..... but then living with the **memory** of it?

**That** is how Solomon felt as he viewed much of the oppression of his world.....

I wonder.... for any of you..... has the **pain** and oppression you have suffered sometimes seemed so UNBEARABLE.... that you wish you had never been born...

Maybe during those periods where your attackers just seem to keep piling on....and **no one** seems **to care**....

David wrote...

**Psalm 69:20**

"Reproaches have **broken my heart**, so that I am in despair. I looked for pity, but there was none, and for comforters, but I found **none**."

If that describes you... this morning.... believe it or not ... you are in **good** company....

Because you have come into the presence of the ONE human being who can **relate** more than you know.....

He has experienced MORE **injustice** done to him..... and has felt more of the oppression of the sin of man.... than you will ever come close to facing.....

He experienced the **ultimate** example of evil... in a place... and in a people where you would have **expected** to find good.....

**Matthew 26:57-75**

" Then those who had seized Jesus led him to Caiaphas **the high priest**, where the scribes and the elders had gathered. And Peter was following him at a distance, as far as the courtyard of the high priest, and going inside he sat with the guards to see the end. Now the chief priests and the whole Council were seeking **false testimony** against Jesus that they might put him to death, but they found none, though many false witnesses came forward. At last two came forward and said, "This man said, 'I am able to destroy the temple of God, and to rebuild it in three days.' " And the high priest stood up and said, "Have you no answer to make? What is it that these men testify against you?" But **Jesus remained silent**. And the high priest said to him, "I adjure you by the living God, tell us if you are the Christ, the Son of God." Jesus said to him, "**You have said so. But I tell you, from now on you will see the Son of Man seated at the right hand of Power and coming on the clouds of heaven.**" Then the high

priest tore his robes and said, “He has uttered blasphemy. What further witnesses do we need? You have now heard his blasphemy. What is your judgment?” They answered, “**He deserves death.**” Then they spit in his face and struck him. And some slapped him, saying, “Prophecy to us, you Christ! Who is it that struck you?”

As you grieve over wickedness in the world.... over the oppression of others.....

And even over wrongs **you** have experienced at their hand.....

Make sure you Grieve **MOST** over the pain that **your** sin caused the innocent... Suffering Savior to endure.... at the hands of wicked men....on your behalf...

He had come into Jerusalem..... (on this day we call **Palm Sunday**) to shouts of acclamation and praise....

But one week later ... he was headed to a cruel CROSS.... to be pierced through and to **bleed** ....

Moreover... to take into his body.... the very wrath of God which only **EVIL deserves**..... which your sin deserves..... but which He (alone) did **not** deserve.....

In order....that we might be **FREE** from sin.... and live in the power of His good grace....

**GRIEVE** over sin.... in order that you might contrite over your own....

In order that you might remain **sensitive** to the Holy Standard of God’s righteousness....

Then ...when you discover that you have fallen short.....

come **running** to the CROSS!...

And Receive the FREE gift of His righteousness.... of His **forgiveness**.... and His promise of an eternity WITHOUT any trace of evil.... whatsoever.....

Responding to Evil

## 2. Believe in Divine, Universal Judgment

If the Amazon bestseller list is a reliable indication of what Americans are currently **believing** .....you will find that one of the most popular books in America right now is one about **heaven being real**....(in fact it is #1 on the NY Times bestseller list)

But down at #7 on Amazon you will find a book that is rapidly gaining popularity teaching us that Hell is **not** real..... Love Wins (Rob Bell) is tickling ears all over the world by saying that God is too loving to actually judge sin....

Solomon would beg to differ....

### **Ecclesiastes 3:16-17**

" 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. 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."

Judgement Day is coming..... for each and every person that has ever lived..... including you...

Just as right now... is the time for the wicked to dig their own graves deeper and deeper by piling up evil deeds one after the other.....

God has also appointed a time... in fact **a DAY** when He will bring every deed of every person before the perfect judgment **bar** of His righteousness.....

### **Romans 2:6-11**

"He will render to each one according to his works: to those who by patience in well-doing seek for glory and honor and immortality, he will give eternal life; but for those who are self-seeking and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, there will be wrath and fury. There will be tribulation and distress for every human being who does evil, the Jew first and also the Greek, but glory and honor and peace for everyone who does good, the Jew first and also the Greek. For God shows no partiality."

By Believing that this Day **is** coming..... you will find a **SOLACE** against all the wickedness you see being carried out in the world....

You will find **RELIEF** from the pain of evil being carried out against you.....

And you will find a RESTRAINT against you following your flesh into more deeds that God will hold you accountable for....

- Not ONE of you....will escape God's judgment... it is **UNIVERSAL** in scope... and comprehensive in nature....

### **Hebrews 4:13**

"And no creature is hidden from his sight, but all are naked and exposed to the eyes of him to whom we must give account."

That's why all of us have ONE THING in common.....we need a **Savior**.... Amen?

We need a Deliverer to Save us from what we rightly deserve.....

- Believe in the Judgment.... Bank on it....

Entrust yourself.... and Your situation....to the God who says... Vengeance is MINE... I **will** repay... says the Lord of Hosts.....

Because we are so prone to forget ..... how much God hates sin.... He has left the harsh reality of its consequences in our world..... in order to help remind us....

DEATH is the ultimate experience of evil on our planet...

Like us....In his despair over how unfair life seems because of death..... Solomon laments...

### **Ecclesiastes 3:18-22**

"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. 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. All go to one place. All are from the **dust**, and **to dust** all return. **Who knows** whether the spirit of man goes upward and the spirit of the beast goes down into the earth? 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?"

Solomon was most certainly the **wisest** man of his millennia..... He understood... the connection between sin and DEATH.....

He had learned from (Gen. 2:7)...that

The curse of sin upon Adam.... was that we came from dust ...and to dust our bodies will return....

Kidner – “creatures of **common chemicals**”

God formed our bodies in order to be temporary residences for our souls.....

And because we have sinned against Him.....What we deserve.... is NOTHING other than **death**...

But..... even in Solomon’s **great** wisdom..... He **did not** know the precious truth which God has revealed to you through the New Covenant in Jesus Christ....

Responding to Evil

3. Believe that God **has** Revealed Your Destiny

Each new generation takes pride in having its own unique expressions to describe feelings and activities of their life....

But....Isn't it amazing that the human **heart** flows in the same channels it has since Adam and Eve? That the emotions and doubts and **fears**... and desires which Solomon experienced are the same ones some of you are experiencing right now....?

Some of you are facing **uncertain futures**..... maybe in your job..... or in a relationship.....

- Maybe you don't know what God intends to do with your life....

And if someone pressed you for an answer to those emotionally laden uncertainties in your life.....

You would use exactly the same expression Solomon did here.....

- WHO **KNOWS**!!? I sure don't know.....

In fact.... because he did not know.... the answer to life's biggest question.....( and he was privy to ALL the revelation of God He had given to His people thus far.....)

Solomon goes so far as to say.... Who **CAN** know?? No one knows what is in store for **ANYONE** beyond the grave....

Might as well just enjoy your job.... and have fun..... because...

"Who can bring a man to see what will be after him?"

This is driving me crazy! It must be some sort of cruel **TEST** from God.....

All we know is dogs die and so do we..... Do they have a soul?

Do they go up or down....?

**WHO KNOWS!**

It is sometimes frustrating isn't it..... that God seems to leave us having to trust Him for answers to many questions about our future.....

But I want you to take note that He **has** answered the **ONE** question.... the BIGGEST question....

that is supposed to make all those lesser questions fade into the background...

He wants you to set your hope on.... and to shape your future around....THIS:

**1 John 5:13**

" I write these things to you who **believe** in the name of the Son of God that you may **know** that **you have eternal** life."

You **can** KNOW what happens after you take your last breath.....

Get the connection?..... between having life eternal..... and the Son of God who is right now **ALIVE** forevermore!

The **Jesus** who was delivered up because of your sin....into the hands of evil men.....

The Jesus who died on the cross in your place..... and whom God raised from the dead on the third day....

In order to PROVE that your sin debt was paid in full.....

In order to LEGALLY **credit** you with the PERFECT righteousness of His Son.....

So that you could LIVE forever in His presence!.....

God says..... I have written these things ( Bible).... so that you may **KNOW** that you have eternal life....

Not so you might know that you are more than just a dog... or a cat.....(you are)

but so that you can personally find **HOPE** in and SECURITY in a personal relationship with God as your Father....

**1 John 5:11-12**

"And this is the testimony, that God gave us eternal life, and this life is **in** his Son. Whoever **has** the Son has life; whoever does not have the Son of God does not have life."

A few of you in here....have been busy trying to figure out all kinds of complex questions about life....

That is natural..... normal.....

But God wants to say to you today..... that Satan will also keep you **distracted** with hundreds of **smaller** questions.....

While you dance around the only REAL QUESTION....

- Do you have the Son?

If you have Jesus... you **HAVE** eternal life..... because the LIFE God has granted to us.... comes **in** and through His Son!

If you HAVE eternal life..... then rejoice in God's mercy and Fatherly kindness in **revealing** that reality to you.....

(he could have you believing some myth like purgatory....or leave you falsely secured in your own good works)

INSTEAD He wants you to Find security by standing on the PROMISE of His Word alone...

You will be able to face the evils of this world in a whole new light.....

You will still grieve over evil..... but you will no longer grieve as one who has no HOPE....

As one who is driven to despair.....

You will still be constrained by the reality of a coming day when all your actions will be brought into the light.....

But you will view that **Day of Reckoning** as someone who knows that their SINS are **completely paid** for in Jesus.....and that no ONE can take His life from you.....

Not Hitler..... not your husband..... not your parents.....

Not your past..... not your future.....

GOD has brought you out of darkness INTO the Kingdom of His Son.... done deal.

**John 10:28**

"I give them eternal life, and they will never perish, and **no one** will snatch them out of my hand."

However..... if you **DON'T** have the Son..... you DON'T have life....period...

At the judgment.... you will be tossed into outer darkness.... with Hitler... and every other sinner against God who refused to repent.... and trust in the free gift of LIFE in His Son...