When Authority is Flawed
Ecclesiastes 8:2-17

Authority
Examples of authorities in our lives

Examples of how authorities may fall short of being right and good

What are we to do? What is a distinctly Christian response to flawed human authorities, at any level?

The Context of Ecclesiastes

Kings ruled with very few limits
"All the king's officials and the people of the royal provinces know that for any man or woman who approaches the king in the inner court without being summoned the king has but one law: that they be put to death unless the king extends the gold scepter to them and spares their lives." Esther 4:11

Ecclesiastes 8:2-17

2-9:
Everyone loses with an unjust ruler

And there is no easy escape

10-13:

14-17:
In our broken world, it is impossible to find a way to make it fully good and right

The Big Idea

True peace can never be found through human goodness or reform or vengeance

It only comes from God
"I say to the Lord, "You are my Lord; apart from you I have no good thing."" Psalm 16:2

"Our faith did not arise from the order of the world; the world's convulsions, therefore, need not destroy it"

"Strengthen the feeble hands, steady the knees that give way;
   say to those with fearful hearts, "Be strong, do not fear;
   your God will come, he will come with vengeance;
   with divine retribution he will come to save you."   Isaiah 34:3-4

"So then, those who suffer according to God's will should commit themselves to their faithful Creator and continue to do good." 1 Peter 4:19

It requires TRUST because…what we see and experience does not favor those who do what is right

Application

Find peace by trusting/fearing God
"Now may the Lord of peace himself give you peace at all times and in every way. The Lord be with all of you."
   2 Thessalonians 3:16

The Gospel = the Good News

"Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ"
   Romans 5:1

"The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, PEACE, …" Galatians 5:22-23

"Do not repay anyone evil for evil. Be careful to do what is right in the eyes of everyone. If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone. Do not take revenge, my dear friends, but leave room for God's wrath, for it is written: "It is mine to avenge; I will repay," says the Lord. On the contrary:
      "If your enemy is hungry, feed him;
      if he is thirsty, give him something to drink.
      In doing this, you will heap burning coals on his head."
   Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good."   Romans 12:17-21

THEN pursue what is good and right wisely and carefully with contentment
Peace can never come for human goodness or reform

Peace from God is the foundation on which we can pursue goodness and justice and reform

A heart that is at peace can pursue justice well

A heart that is not at peace will plant more trouble

> Stephen was killed because he spoke about Jesus: "While they were stoning him, Stephen prayed, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit." Then he fell on his knees and cried out, "Lord, do not hold this sin against them." When he had said this, he fell asleep." Acts 7:59-60

> As Jesus was dying, He prayed: "Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing." Luke 23:34

Where are you experiencing injustice and oppression? Where do you see injustice and oppression?

> "So then, those who suffer according to God's will should commit themselves to their faithful Creator and continue to do good." 1 Peter 4:19

Reflection Questions for later today or this week…

1. Romans 12:21 says, "Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good." What does that look like? Where are you tempted to be overcome by evil?

2. What is "divine retribution"? See Isaiah 34:3-4.

3. What does it meant to "leave room for God's wrath" (see Romans 12:19)? What does it look like to do that?

4. What does it mean for peace from God to be a foundation on which to pursue goodness and justice and reform?

Conversation Starters

Where does peace come from given the reality of abusive power?