

Sermon Series: "Questions I Want to Ask God"—Lord of Life Lutheran Church—11/12/2000

Sermon Title: "Why Are Things Not Fair?"

Sermon Text: Psalm 78

Introduction: *Illus.: "That's not fair-----Life's not fair"*

Theme: When injustices seems to far outweigh justice in our world and life, instead of throwing up our hands in despair we need to turn back to the one who holds life's scale of balance in his hand with integrity and grace.

Life will always seem inherently unfair when we fall into the comparison trap

• Perceived Injustice

1. **PRINT AND READ PSALM 78: 1-5**
2. **Envy** and **jealousy** always highlight and accentuate the differences between you and me
 - the Gospel lesson parable for today—on a physical and spiritual level
 - the differences of home, vehicle, vacation, occupation, achievement, life of "rich and famous" (vs. 4)
 - **ILLUS.: EQUALITARIAN**
 - particularly when "the wicked" seem to prosper and I don't (vs. 3)
3. **ILLUS.: BEN FRANKLIN ON CONTENTMENT**
4. Be careful of pitfalls (vs. 2) because you don't necessarily want what the other person is "*possessed by*"
5. To be rich does not necessarily reside in the material (vs. 1—**pure heart—be rich toward God Luke 12:21**)

• Real Injustice

1. **PRINT AND READ PSALM 78: 6-11**
2. **ILLUS.: AUTHORITARIANISM**
3. Often there is real injustice in which people manipulate, violate, and annihilate you and others
 - in the work place as bosses and fellow workers jockey for what they can get out of you (vs. 6, 7)
 - among family as they snipe, argue, fight, try to get the inheritance (vs. 8, 9)
 - among community and church where the "big talkers" seem to get the praise (vs. 10-11)

• Handling an unfair world in a way that does not consume us

1. **PRINT AND READ PSALM 78: 12-20**
2. Remember that your life and its work—in Christ— are never in vain (vs. 13)
3. "*Be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your toil is not in vain in the Lord.*" (1 Cor. 15: 58)
4. Remember that God's mercies are new tomorrow morning when you awaken (vs. 14)
5. "*The Lord's lovingkindnesses indeed never cease, , for his compassions never fail. They are new every morning; Great is Thy faithfulness. Lamentations 3: 22-23*
6. Compare the unfair and the unjust to God---not to yourself (vs. 15-17)
7. Remember Judgment Day cometh when all the out-of-balance that needs to be balanced will be (vs. 18-20)

Life lived under the umbrella of mercy and grace

• **PRINT AND READ PSALM 78: 21-26**

• Live in a constant pattern of confession and forgiveness

1. When we let the sin of bitterness over a life-tragedy hang around, it **pollutes** your soul and **pierces** your heart(v.21)
 - "*See to it that no one comes short of the grace of God that no root of bitterness springs up causing trouble.*" **Hebrews 11: 15**
2. Confess your own unfair accusations of God and his perfect, eternal plan for your life (vs. 22)
3. When God restores me to the joy of salvation in his forgiveness, he becomes the strength of my heart (vs. 26)

• Live with the confidence the Lord will take you through dark times into glorious times, ahead

1. **ILLUS.: GOD'S ABIDING PRESENCE** (Choose His presence in the dark over his absence in the light)
2. By **SEEKING HIS COUNSEL** (vs. 24)
3. By **ACTING AS IF YOU'RE JUST PASSING THROUGH** (vs. 25)
 - "*For those who say such things make it clear that they are seeking a country of their own...they desire a better country, that is a heavenly one.*" **Hebrews 11: 14-16**
4. By **TRUSTING AN EVERLASTING GOD RATHER THAN A TEMPORAL LIFE** (vs. 26)

EQUALITARIAN

A socialist once came to see Andrew Carnegie and soon was railing against the injustice of Carnegie having so much money. In his view, wealth was meant to be divided equally. Carnegie asked his secretary for an assessment of everything he owned and at the same time looked up the figures on world population. He did a little arithmetic on a pad and then said to his secretary. "Give this gentleman 16 cents. That's his share of my wealth."

DISCONTENTMENT

"Content makes poor men rich; discontent makes rich men poor." [Benjamin Franklin](#).

AUTHORITARIANISM

Rule #1: The Boss is always right.

Rule #2: When the Boss is wrong, refer to rule #1.

GOD'S ABIDING PRESENCE

That bed in that room on the third floor seemed to be at the end of the earth, remote from human habitation, close to unexplained noises and dark secrets. At my urging, my father would try to stop the windows from rattling, wedging wooden matchsticks into the cracks. But they always rattled in spite of his efforts. Sometimes he would read me a story, but inevitably the time would come when he would turn out the light and shut the door, and I would hear his steps on the stairs, growing fainter and fainter. Then all would be quiet, except for the rattling windows and my cowering imagination. Once, I remember, my father said, "Would you rather I leave the light on and go downstairs, or turn the light out and stay with you for awhile?" . . . [I chose] presence with darkness, over absence with light. Is that not what we really want most when we pray—the assurance that Someone is there? Citation: Kenneth L. Wilson, *Have Faith without Fear*

Psalm 73:1-26

¹Surely God is good to Israel,
to those who are pure in heart.

²But as for me, my feet had almost slipped;
I had nearly lost my foothold.

³For I envied the arrogant
when I saw the prosperity of the wicked.

⁴They have no struggles;
their bodies are healthy and strong.

⁵They are free from the burdens common to man;
they are not plagued by human ills.

⁶Therefore pride is their necklace;
they clothe themselves with violence.

⁷From their callous hearts comes iniquity;
the evil conceits of their minds know no limits.

⁸They scoff, and speak with malice;
in their arrogance they threaten oppression.

⁹Their mouths lay claim to heaven,
and their tongues take possession of the earth.

¹⁰Therefore their people turn to them
and drink up waters in abundance.

¹¹They say, "How can God know?
Does the Most High have knowledge?"

¹²This is what the wicked are like--
always carefree, they increase in wealth.

¹³Surely in vain have I kept my heart pure;
in vain have I washed my hands in innocence.

¹⁴All day long I have been plagued;
I have been punished every morning.

¹⁵If I had said, "I will speak thus,"
I would have betrayed your children.

¹⁶When I tried to understand all this,
it was oppressive to me

¹⁷till I entered the sanctuary of God;
then I understood their final destiny.

¹⁸Surely you place them on slippery ground;
you cast them down to ruin.

¹⁹How suddenly are they destroyed,
completely swept away by terrors!

²⁰As a dream when one awakes,
so when you arise, O Lord,
you will despise them as fantasies.

²¹When my heart was grieved
and my spirit embittered,

²²I was senseless and ignorant;
I was a brute beast before you.

²³Yet I am always with you;
you hold me by my right hand.

²⁴You guide me with your counsel,

and afterward you will take me into glory.

²⁵Whom have I in heaven but you?

And earth has nothing I desire besides you.

²⁶My flesh and my heart may fail,
but God is the strength of my heart
and my portion forever.

(NIV)