

Everyone struggles with questions about fairness and justice. And those struggles are more intense when we are the ones caught in the middle! How does it feel when life is unfair? So, what is the most unfair thing that has happened to you?

Someone on welfare in this country could talk about how unfair their life is ... but someone in Somalia, living on \$200 a year might beg to differ. Some might feel a company makes too much profit ... but others might be glad that they have a job in that company. What is fair? Who gets to decide? How might perspective change depending on which side of the fence someone lives?

In our land it is legal to abort babies in the womb – how fair is that for the baby? In some states it is legal to euthanize people with terminal disease to save health care costs – how fair is that for someone God has not yet “called home?”

What is fair and what isn't? *Why do we assume God should create the world as we think it should be, rather than helping us to live in the world that is?* Fairness, like beauty, is in the eye of the beholder.

Now, if logic is the measuring stick, “yes” life is unfair ... many realities are undeserved and unjust.” But if we really think this through, what is more unfair than God’s rescue mission to earth? What is more unfair than Jesus’ willingness to trade heavenly glory and be trapped in an earthly body?

For God to take on our flesh, as an infant, in a little mountain village, in a manger, away from the spotlight, with adoptive parents who were a carpenter and a young girl were most unfair. But so were the conflicts with the religious leaders he came to support, or the confusion of his disciples he had gathered to carry on his mission. Even more unfair was the ridicule, the arrest, the mock trial, and the earthly death by crucifixion.

Is that not the most “unfair thing of all” --- God in the flesh? And then we should ask, “Would Jesus *choose what is unfair rather than making everything fair? Why stoop to our level? For God so loved the world, that he embraced what is unfair to change the eternal outcome.* God’s love embraced all the injustice we endure, so that in the midst of any suffering we would know that we are not alone. And with the ultimate injustice (which we call death) destroyed, all life has new look.

Before I complain about my pain, maybe I should remember who carries that pain for me. Before I cry “unfair,” maybe I should reflect on the price of God’s love for me. Grace changes the perspective of an unfair and broken world.

Faith is not about what is logical or rational, it is about what we cannot see or comprehend. *Of course* it makes sense that if suffering DESERVED, PATIENCE is called for. If we goof up we feel we deserve what we get.

But how can *God expect* PATIENCE when afflicted with UNFAIR suffering? Why is that the reward of faith? A young mom, dying of cancer said she was taught “God doesn’t give you more than you can handle.” She asked, “Does that mean if I didn’t have faith, I wouldn’t have cancer?” This is how our struggle with a broken world gets us all tied up in knots!

When we lose a job or a marriage ... when we are injured in an accident or by someone else's negligence don't we have right to be angry? To seek revenge? To be compensated to make our unfairness "fair?" The world says you have those rights, and deserve to have unfair changed to fair. So much of our news and social media conversations are centered on what some feel is unfair.

In our lesson today from 1st Peter, the admonition is: *"Slow down, take a deep breath, live by faith, and be patient."* The reality is that life is NOT fair. Heaven will never come to earth. But heaven can change how we walk through earth, and the unfair gifts of forgiveness, grace and peace can be mine forever.

Next time you struggle with what is Un-Fair, look at the cross -- your guarantee of salvation! A Savior on a cross, then buried in a tomb, is the ultimate in "unfairness," yet look how that has become our greatest gift and strength!

No -- life isn't always fair, but Christ is always the answer! And we have choices. We can curse the darkness or rejoice in the light that shines into our darkness.

Can't we scream and complain and cry out to God? Of course, that is what God's love is willing to accept. But also accept the love that reaches out in return, a love that has already embraced you and keeps you safe for all time.

I have a close friend named Lavonne, who was my secretary years ago. She lost her husband at an early age and raised her children all by herself. She might be the most positive, faith-filled person I know. When my wife went through cancer treatments and died, Lavonne she was a powerful source of support for my faith and my fears. Years later she went through chemotherapy and surgery, and called so that I might come and visit with her. Later she would support me through emails and prayer when I had health issues of my own. What each of us faced, by the world's standards, was definitely UNFAIR! Together we could have had a wonderful "pity party" and argued over who had to endure the most unfair things in life. But Lavonne would never have accepted that approach. Her faith led her (always) in a wonderful direction.

Her words to me were simply, "I believe God has brought us to know each other, just for moments in time such as this." In faith, the language is never about "fair or unfair," but about the healing presence and power of God's love! Despite all that we could curse, the God of blessing works miracles and brings power through his presence and love.

We will always have unanswered questions. But more powerful is the answer that goes unquestioned -- God's powerful love that touches us in undeserved and unexpected ways. No matter what, accept and share his gift of peace!