

Happily ever after? Fighting dragons, fairy tale endings and the Christian faith

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Preacher: Brian Douglas

[0:00] Sorry, Phil Wells is not very well tonight, so I'm just going to do the introduction.! We're really pleased and the third of our B-Thinking talks to have Brian Douglas with us.

! He's doing a D-Phil in Intellectual History at Sussex University. So, that's the background. We have this talk tonight, Fighting Dragons, Fairy Tale Endings and the Christian Faith. Really looking forward to it. Thank you so much Brian for all the work you put in for this and we're looking forward to hearing from you. Thanks so much.

Thanks to Calvary for hosting these B-Thinking talks. I think they've been really helpful. We did two last term. We've done two already this term. I guess this is the last one of this term.

And thanks to you guys all for coming. I hope that this is useful to you. The title tonight is Happily Ever After? Fighting Dragons, Fairy Tale Endings and the Christian Faith.

And what is it about? It's about what the stories that we tell reveal about ourselves, our world and our faith. That's what it's going to be about. It's going to be about stories and how they relate to the Christian faith.

[1:14] And in that sense, I'm sort of picking up on a couple of the talks from last term. One was given by our own Steve Ellicott and another one by Philip Sampson last term. I'm picking up sort of on those themes and sort of, let's just say, building on what they've said.

So, if you weren't here for that, that's too, you know, I'm sorry that you missed them. But hopefully this will make some good sense to you anyway. Why do we tell stories?

You know, stories are something that is just integral to sort of human existence. Stories are everywhere. You think about it. What do you do for entertainment? You watch TV. You read a book. You watch a movie.

You know, those kind of things all involve stories. Every one. When you talk to another person, what do you talk about? Think about it. I mean, you might tell them something about yourself.

They might tell you something about themselves. But typically, our conversations with one another involve telling stories to one degree or another. So stories are everywhere. They're an integral part of our lives.

[2:16] And have you ever wondered why human beings seem so oriented towards stories? That's sort of one of the... keep that in mind as we go through this tonight.

Why are human beings sort of, let's say, obsessed with stories? Aristotle. You all know who Aristotle was. One of the most famous philosophers of all time.

The talk tonight is going to focus fairly heavily on some ancient thought. And hopefully drag all that into the present day and show how it's relevant to what we're...

the way we think, the way we live in our own society. These are not new ideas. These are... the problems of today's world are not new problems. We don't need to reinvent the wheel.

That's, you know, this is an intellectual historian speaking to you. I think if we look at history, we can learn an awful lot. And Aristotle said, we tell stories, one reason is because we learn from them.

[3:13] Stories are sort of educational to one degree or another. You hear something bad that happens to somebody else. They tell you, I went to this restaurant and it was absolute rubbish.

The food was horrible, the service was bad, it was overpriced. What do you learn from that kind of story? The next day, you're going to go down there first thing in the morning and you're going to order the most expensive thing they have, right?

No. You learn from that story. You say, you know what, I'm going to avoid that one. I'm going to avoid that one because my friend, the person whom I trust, who I place some credit in what they

say, they told me the story about the horrible time they had and you learn something from that. But stories are not just educational. We also delight in them, Aristotle says. There's something that really interests us about stories. A really good story can captivate you. It's too bad my wife's not here. She's ill tonight. But if she was here, I could use her as an example. I will anyway. My wife is the fastest reader that I know.

[4 : 13] She can read 900 page Charles Dickens novels in like a day and a half. Why does she, I mean, all her life, the reason she can read so fast is because all her life she has read and read and read.

She loves fiction. She reads a lot of it. And consequently, she's been able to build up to speed. What is it about fictional stories that grab somebody and make them pay so much attention? I can't read through 900 pages of anything in a week.

I mean, you know. But, you know, what is it about a story that can sort of grab you and make you pay absolute attention to it? We'll look at some of these.

You know, these are questions we're raising now that we'll look at more carefully as we go on. The ancient Greeks, Aristotle especially, he would say that stories use particulars, but they represent universals.

Now, what does that mean? That's, you know, sort of vague sounding. They use particulars in the sense that they're about a particular person doing a particular thing in a particular way, at a particular place, at a particular time.

[5 : 25] The story is always about particulars. You don't have some nameless character who wanders around doing vague unknown things. No, you have a specific person who you have some idea of who they are and what they're like and what they do, and they go and do specific things.

And that's what makes for a good story. They use particulars. But Aristotle said, and ancient Greeks said, and I think it's true, that stories appeal to us because there's something universal about them. It's not about Huckleberry Finn floating down the Mississippi River. It's not about Henry V at Agincourt. It's about something much, much bigger.

There's something that's universal about the stories that we tell. Now, this might surprise you. Let me ask you first. How many stories do you think you've seen, read, or heard in your lifetime?

I mean, give me an estimate. I mean, you know, a really good estimate. Oh, I don't know, you know, four. Four. Four. Just four. Chris doesn't pay attention to anything.

[6 : 28] No, I'm just kidding. You know what's funny? You know what's really funny about what he says? Is that he's right. According to the ancient Greeks, there are only four stories.

Every story that has ever been told falls into one of these four categories. Okay? So we're going to look at the categories. Now, remember, as we go through each of these, the terms that I'm using, the way that I'm describing them, I'm using the ancient Greek categories.

These are the ways they said these stories, these are the characteristics that they said are, these are the characteristics of these particular kinds of stories. But I think that you'll be able to see this even in the stories that you know.

I'm going to use sort of old examples. But at the end of each one, I want you, as we go through this, to think about stories you know. Because at the end, when we get to the end of each of the four categories, I'm going to ask you, what stories do you know?

What books have you read? What movies have you seen that fall into this category? Now, the first, the first category is epic. Epic is the first category.

[7 : 36] Epic is all about the hero. And the hero in epic stories is someone who's larger than life. You have humanity, and then you have that one person who stands out.

That one person who's exceptional. That one person, when everyone else fails, this person says, He succeeds. What does he succeed in?

Well, see, it's not all about, it is all about the hero. But it's also all about his actions. It's all about what he does. In epic stories, the hero destroys evil. He slays a dragon.

He founds a city. He restores peace. And that founding of a city, maybe, is the most important one. In a true epic, what happens as a result of the actions of the hero is a new world order.

The hero comes. He does his deed. He destroys evil. He slays the dragon. He defeats. He conquers. He does what he does. And nothing is ever the same again. I have some examples of these.

[8 : 39] And I'll bring them up here at the end of the slide. Timing is very important in these Greek ideas of stories. Each of the categories, each of the four stories, has its own sense of timing.

An epic does not focus on a span of time. It's not about a year or five years or a campaign of battles. It focuses on one complete action.

It's very tricky to find this in an epic because a lot of times you read an epic and it picks up right in the middle of the story. You don't know what's going on when you first start to read. It picks up right in the middle.

And you feel like, wait a minute, you just dumped me right in the middle of this story. And then it just seems to end sometimes, right before it should. Well, because the focus of the epic is not on the whole story.

It's on one action. It's teaching you one thing about the hero. It's teaching you one thing about good and evil. And that's what you need to watch for in an epic. Epic inspires awe using the improbable and the amazing.

[9 : 47] It's, you know, the giant comes along. A giant that nobody can defeat. And the most improbable thing in the world happens. There's a shepherd boy who kills a giant.

And nothing is ever the same again. That is epic. You see that? You recognize that? It's something that is improbable and absolutely amazing. But in the end, it inspires awe.

You walk away from that story never thinking the same again. You say, no, that changes the way I see things. Here are the examples that I have. The Iliad and the Odyssey.

The two great Greek epics. The Iliad is a great example of the time factor in the epic. It dumps you right in the middle of the story. All of a sudden, they're besieging Troy. You have no idea why. You have to know the back story before any of that makes any sense. And the Iliad doesn't give you the back story. And then it goes on through and, you know, it has all these battles concerning Troy, conflict and whatnot. And then it just sort of dumps you off and you sort of feel like, well, you know, what happens?

[10 : 49] What's the end? What happened to this character and to that character and to that character and to that character and that character? And it stops when it stops. Because it's not about all those people. Who's it about? Have you ever read the Iliad?

It's about Achilles. It's about Achilles. He's the larger than life superhero. That's what it's about. The Aeneid. The Aeneid is about a man who survives the siege on Troy and wanders.

He has this prophecy that he's going to found an eternal kingdom. And he wanders all of his life.

And then at the end of his life, or not the end of his life, but he eventually ends up founding the city of Rome.

And that's one of the myths that is involved in the Roman folklore that Aeneas founded our city. And therefore, we are a continuation of Troy. Therefore, we are a continuation of the Greek ideas.

Do you ever wonder why Romans took on so much Greek philosophy into their own system? Why the Romans used all the Greek gods? They just renamed them all? And you have this one. And there's a one-to-one correspondence, pretty much, between the major Roman and Greek gods.

[11 : 56] But because they adopted all of that. Because they saw themselves as continuing the legacy of the Greeks. That's the power of that story. It made the Romans feel like we are ultimately at our origins.

We're Greeks. Beowulf. Have you guys ever read Beowulf? What's that about? It's a kingdom. The kingdom of the Danes. Hrothgar, king of the Danes, was a mighty man once.

What's wrong with him now? He's old. He can't fight anymore. He's too old. And the beast to end all beasts. This horrifying dragon comes and terrorizes the kingdom of the Danes.

And Beowulf, who is this epic superhero. I mean, he's just amazing. What a character. He comes from across the sea and slays the dragon. And ends up restoring peace and order in the land of the Danes.

So we have an example of the timelessness. We have an example of the founding of a city. We have an example of the slaying of the dragon. And those are some examples of epic.

[13 : 00] What do you guys see? Do you know any stories? Have you read any books? Have you seen any movies? Have you gone to plays or anything that are epics? Robin Hood. Sorry? Robin Hood.

Yeah, there's a sense in which that's an epic. Absolutely. Robin Hood. Yeah, yeah. There's other aspects to it. A lot of times stories can kind of straddle between some of these categories.

But I think you'd have to say that's an epic. And who's the... You know, the Lord of the Rings is amazing. It inspires awe because it uses the improbable and the amazing. What's the most improbable and amazing thing about the Lord of the Rings?

Who's the epic superhero in Lord of the Rings? Frodo. I mean, if you had to pick someone to save the world, and you were making your list up, would you write number one, Frodo?

No. No. And that's what makes it amazing, isn't it? What else? Shrek. Shrek? Yeah. That might fit more into a coming category.

[13:58] So save that thought. You'll like it. They'll fit into this other category very well. Well, this is another... Star Wars. Star Wars has got epic elements to it, sure.

What about... Ben-Hur. Yeah, Ben-Hur is of course an epic. What about, like, Superman or something? I mean, what's the attraction to Superman? How many Superman movies have they made?

I mean, you know, my goodness, how many... They made so many Superman movies. Why? Because people want to go see that. I mean, you wouldn't make the movie if it didn't sell, right? So they make the movie, people go see it.

Why are people so interested that they'll go back six, seven times to see the same character do exactly the same thing? Have you thought about that? Because there's something larger than life about Superman. He's the epic hero.

There's something that's really important about that. Keep that kind of thought in mind. We'll move on to the next category. This one... This one's very, very different than epic. This is called the lyric.

[14:56] The lyric is the most poetic of all the four stories. And what I mean by poetic is that it doesn't pay attention to the usual elements of a story.

You know, in a story you have plot and it sort of starts in a place and things happen and there are crisis moments and things develop and then it reaches a conclusion. It's got this, you know, climactic part and things happen, progress, characters develop, situations change and it sort of begins at a certain place and moves toward an ending.

The lyric has none of that. It says, the form of what I'm writing is not about plot. It's about something else. Lyric is always or almost always set in a garden.

Garden and paradise is very important for lyric. Lyric poetry or any kind of lyric story or anything like that. The garden, that sort of place of peace.

That place where you can focus on all the other things that lyric focuses on without ever being interrupted, without ever being bothered. That's why it's set in the garden.

[16:08] There's nothing there to bother you. There's no disorder. It's only beauty. Lyric ignores, for the most part, any sense of time. I think that goes somewhat with the plot, the plot thing.

You know, it ignores plot. It ignores time. It's not concerned about those things. What is it concerned with? It's concerned with a deep longing and desire. It's about passion.

It's about, to a certain extent, pain, in the sense that you want something so badly that it hurts. What is it that you want? What is it that the lyric writer desires?

Lyric stories or lyric poetry, I guess it's best to call it poetry, because it tends to take that form. It's not a story. Like I say, it's not so plot driven.

Anyway, lyric poetry is nearly obsessed with pure love and pure beauty. What is the most beautiful thing?

[17:07] That is what lyric is after. Lyric wants to know what is true beauty, and then it wants to have it. And it wants to love it. And it wants to have it and love it in the most pure, perfect way that it possibly can.

There are some examples that we have of this. The Psalms are lyric. The best example, probably, and I'm not biased in saying this, I think a lot of people would say this with me.

I think the best example of lyric poetry in all the history of the entire world is the Song of Songs. It's not concerned with time and place and plot. It just isolates what is it that my soul craves, what my soul desires.

It is beauty and it is love. And that's what it's all about. Dunn's love poems, Shakespeare's sonnets. Perhaps you've read those.

Can you think of any other examples of lyric? Lyric, you might not be able to. If you can, great. I'd love to hear them. Lyric, it tends to be much more difficult to write.

[18 : 13] It tends to be much more rare. And I think there's something in that. Because the subject matter is rare, isn't it? True, true, pure love and beauty is rare.

That's one of the themes of lyric poetry. It looks for it. It searches for it. It longs for it. It takes forever to find it. And then when it finds it, it wants it. It will set aside everything else to gain that one true, pure, beautiful thing.

But can you think of any examples? Love songs. Love songs. I think so. Because sometimes you hear a really good love song. It's not about plot. It's not about then I did this and then I did that and then I danced the hokey pokey and whatever else.

You know, some of the other pop songs or whatever else are about. True love songs. It's almost an obsession, isn't it? I mean, it just focuses so keenly on one, one thing.

What else? Yeah. Or you know what? We might save that for another category. We'll see. It either fits into Epic or the last category.

[19 : 32] But the Romantic poets were worth it. Absolutely. Yeah. Yeah. I think so. I think very much so. Some of your, a lot of your 19th century poets probably fit into this category.

And you know what? All those guys who were really good, who wrote that kind of poetry in the 19th century, the Romantic era, all of them knew about the classic Greek genre of lyric poetry. They all knew about it and they were all trying to achieve it.

It was the theme of lyric poetry sort of led to their pursuit of poetry itself. They were looking for the ideal of poetry. They were looking to see if they could create the true and the beautiful using words.

Anyway, we'll move on. Here's the third category. Tragedy. I think we all know what tragedy is.

Tragedy actually is the category that maybe is the most powerful.

Maybe. Maybe. It moves us the most. Tragedy always starts high and ends low. What do I mean by that? It always starts with a character who's quite noble.

[20 : 40] He's royalty. He might even be quite a good man. He might be kind of a maybe not so good guy in some stories, but usually I think you try to set, if you're writing tragedy, you try to set it up as high as possible at the beginning.

So you have a guy who's nobility. He's prosperous and he's good. You know, he may be a ruler, but he's generous to his people.

He's a kind man. You know, all these things that are wonderful characteristics. And it all goes downhill from there. It starts there and it all goes downhill. I mean, it just crashes down.

Okay? Tragedy is very, very specific when it comes to time. Much more so than the others. Epic focuses on one action, no matter how long it takes.

Lyric doesn't care in the slightest about time. Time is not what's important. It's love and beauty that's important. But tragedy happens in a very, very brief period of time. You're supposed to write tragedy.

[21 : 48] It doesn't always work out this way. But if you're writing in the real official, if you're writing an official ancient Greek tragedy, it would take place in one day. The guy would wake up one morning and everything would be perfect.

And by the end of the day, everything is lost. All is gone. It happens in one day. It happens that fast when tragedy strikes. The main character has a fatal flaw, which ends up to be his ruin.

This fatal flaw, he may not even possibly, he could not have ever been aware of. But something is lurking. Something is lurking.

And the idea is fate plays a huge role in this. It's luck of the draw. It's fate, according to the Greeks. You know, this thing that's been covered up for years that nobody knew about.

Nobody knew about. All of a sudden, in one day, it comes to surface. And it's fate that does it. And it just crashes and burns everything. Tragedy is very plot driven.

[22 : 52] There are two things that must be in tragedy. One is reversal. That is that things have to be going very well. And then at a certain point in the story, there's the reversal.

And from that point on, it never looks up for the main character. Things never improve. That's the moment of reversal. It's the transition between things being just fine.

And then all of a sudden, going downhill and fast and never to return. And then there's the second crucial point, is the point of recognition. And this happens almost...

That happens toward the beginning, is reversal. Recognition happens toward the end. At the end, as things are coming apart, he doesn't have any idea what's happening to him.

He doesn't know why. Things start to crash and burn, and perhaps he has no idea. And then all of a sudden, at this crucial point, the most crucial point of tragedy, everything clicks into place, and he understands exactly why everything is happening to him.

[23 : 58] It all comes clear. A true tragedy, a true tragedy in this ancient style, doesn't happen where this guy just... Everything bad happens to him and he dies and he never knows why. He always learns why.

That's the moment of recognition. And the reason that that's there, the reason we have the reversal and the recognition, is that because with the reader or those who see the drama of this played out on a stage or screen, the idea is that it's supposed to evoke fear and pity.

You are supposed to, if it's a good tragedy, if it's a good drama, you are supposed to be able to put yourself in the shoes of the character. And you're supposed to actually feel the pain.

You're supposed to actually be able to say, I hope that nothing even remotely close to that ever happens to me. Fear and pity is always the desired end emotions of tragedy.

And why? Why is that? Because fear and pity is supposed to result in a purgation. The Greek word for that is catharsis.

[25 : 08] The idea is that by reading about this, you are able to purge these emotions from yourself. And you, the idea is, now keep this in mind as we develop, the idea is that by reading tragedy, by understanding tragedy, by experiencing tragedy in sort of story form, you purge a lot of these things out of yourself.

And here it is, this is a key idea. You yourself never have to go through the tragedy. That's important. We'll come back around to that. Here's some examples. Ancient examples.

Prometheus bound. Prometheus was, have you guys ever read this? It's an ancient Greek drama.

Prometheus was a god. And he was the only god who pitied man.

Man was suffering. He couldn't survive on earth. The conditions were too harsh. And do you know what Prometheus did to ensure man's survival? He took something the gods alone had. And he gave it to man.

And that was fire. He gave man fire. And the rest of the gods, because he had given man fire, they punished him for it. They bound him to a rock with eternal chains.

[26 : 16] And he was killed every day. He was killed. And a raven would come and eat his eyes after he had died. But because he's a god, he's immortal.

And that was his punishment, was that he had to die every day, because he had had pity on man. So Prometheus is eternally chained to this rock.

And he has to die every day. Oedipus Rex. You guys have to have heard of Oedipus Rex.

Everybody's read it. Come on, Mark. Read a book, man. Sorry.

Anyway, Oedipus Rex. This is maybe like the greatest tragedy of all time. This guy is the most benevolent king that you could possibly imagine. He's a wonderful guy.

And here's what happens to him. He discovers in one day's time that he is married to his mother.

And that long ago in his life, he had killed his father.

[27 : 15] And so, I mean, this really grotesque, gruesome things happen. And it's just a horrible ending. And you really ought to read it. It's a really good tragedy. You guys know Hamlet?

What's the classic line about the end of Hamlet? You know it's a Shakespeare tragedy when, at the end of the play, the stage is littered with bodies.

That's what happens in Hamlet. Everybody dies in Hamlet. I mean, they're all dead. And they're all there at the same... They don't die just like one by one. I mean, everybody dies. It's this great ending scene. And there's one that perhaps evokes a little more pathos in our hearts.

And that's Romeo and Juliet, right? I mean, my goodness. You know, pure love they had. And, you know, all this stuff. They were able to transcend these horrible family quarrels.

And they were able to, in the end, love one another. And then, you know, it's all taken away from them. And they end up dying. But it's in a way that really evokes fear and pity, isn't it? Because it didn't have to be that way.

[28 : 19] Juliet fakes her death in order to... So that when she's dead and buried, you know, she had some accomplices in this. She was going to fake her death.

They were going to, you know, pretend like she was dead for a while. And she was going to sort of slip away and go live with Romeo. Well, she fakes her death. Romeo hears from, like, her family friend, you know, a mutual acquaintance, you know.

He gets an email about Juliet and finds out that she's dead. But he doesn't know it's a hoax. And so he goes to her deathbed where she's there, you know, laid out.

Right before they bury her, she's in this, like, she had taken this potion so that she looked like she was dead. He goes in, he sees her there, he kills himself. And five minutes later, she wakes up.

That just stinks, doesn't it? That didn't work out at all. Paradise Lost, you might have read that.

That's a great classic, John Milton.

[29 : 19] Great epic, sort of tragic poetry. Can you guys think of any tragedies that you've read or seen? Anything like that? Yeah, I'm sure.

There's lots of them. I think Thomas is a bit of a process. Yeah, probably. Yeah. Oh, Athel is great. Athel is wonderful. Neck Beth is great.

A lot of Thomas Hardy. Yeah, Thomas Hardy, yeah. Certainly, yeah. In actual fact, the most of the sun spots in the same way are actually tranquil. Oh, yeah.

Yeah. But you see, they just always cycle back around, you know. It's like, somebody dies, but he's not really dead. And then somebody sort of breaks up with somebody, but then you know you're watching. Keep watching, they'll get back together.

It's okay, you know. Don't panic. It'll work out. That's the way it is when he's so-called. Faust. Faust, yeah, certainly. Undoubtedly. Lord of the Flies. Lord of the Flies, yeah. Unquestionably.

[30 : 15] Any recent movies? Titanic. Pretty tragic. Even though her heart will go on. Yeah, that's undoubtedly. I didn't actually see it, but yeah, I read the plot. Actually, the Jurassic Park movie is kind of... Almost. Yeah, almost.

Yeah, almost. Anyway, even though the Jurassic Park movie is kind of... ..

... Yeah, almost. Anyway, you get the idea, don't you? The next category, the fourth story. There are only four stories.

We've talked about ethic. We've talked about lyric. We've talked about tragedy. What do you think is the last one, do you know? Comedy. That's what you're supposed to do. You're supposed to laugh at comedy, right?

Now, as we talk about this, keep in mind that comedy is not always, ha ha, that's so funny. That's how we use the term now, but we're going to think about it in some ways. We're going to think about it in sort of a Greek sense.

[31 : 13] It can be that. But it has its own very distinctive plot. So it's not about, you know, slapstick humor and, you know, Mr. Bean and Monty Python. Well, Monty Python, he's actually really classic comedy.

He's really... Think about him. He really fits this category. Anyway, comedy always starts low and then is high. What I mean by that is this. It always starts with somebody who's common.

Somebody who is utterly undistinguishable. Somebody who has no reason to ever hope for anything for their entire lives. And then in the end, what are they?

You know what the two classic endings of comedy are? One is that the common man becomes royalty. That out of this, nobody becomes somebody who's really somebody.

And you know what the second one is? It's a wedding. It's a wedding. It's true love consummated. Made perfect.

[32 : 14] There it is. There's the two endings and we'll get into that a little bit. Main character. The ordinary becomes royalty. Somebody who's nobody becomes somebody. They're humorous. They do tend to be humorous.

There's tons of puns in them. In almost any kind of comedy anywhere you go. And it's oftentimes very, very much parody in them as well. You know, sort of poking fun at something else, you know. Something that takes itself too seriously is fair game for comedy, isn't it? Just poke fun at it, you know, and then let it not take itself so seriously. They tend to be kind of vulgar.

I mean that in sort of a classic sense. I mean that in sort of a... It's of the people. Comedy is aimed at the people. And why wouldn't it be, right? It's about somebody who's a common person.

And he becomes uncommon. That's what it is. It's common who becomes uncommon. It uses...

They were almost always written in popular language. So instead of having this real high style that your epics or your lyrics or that your tragedies might have.

[33 : 18] Like if you've ever read Homer, Iliad and the Odyssey. Very sort of high, profound language. Elevated in style. Very, very technical. Nobody can write like Homer.

All the meter and the rhyming and the rhyming not just of words but of ideas and everything in Homer is so complicated that we're still thousands of years later, literally, sorting it out. We're still figuring it out. But comedy is not like that. It's always written in a very low style. You know, if it was written today, it would be written in Cockney. Right? You know? It would be written in American.

No. You know? You know? You know? You know? You know? You know? You know? You know? You know? You know?

You know? You know? You know? You know? You know? You know? You know? You know? You know? You know?

[34 : 17] You know? You know? You know? You know? You know? Comedy always has a wacky plot. Wacky plot. Crazy stuff happens.

I'll cite an example of that at the end, and you'll see exactly what I mean. This is just crazy. But it's either buffoonish and laughable. It's a really slapstick, goofy humor.

Or it's kind of grand and joyous. It's big. Something that sort of begins in a seed and then takes on this gigantic form that becomes really big and happy and grand and joyous, really wonderful, tends to end in a wedding, which communicates, in a classical sense, the prospect of continued life.

So here's some examples. Clouds. This is the classic Greek comedy. Have you guys ever read Clouds by Aristophanes?

Okay, here's the plot of Clouds, okay? Please try to refrain yourself from laughing. And please remember, I did not write this. Okay? This farmer has an issue with the gods.

[35 : 28] Because the gods, after all, they don't pay a whole lot of attention to man. They're up there in heaven. They've got the best food. They've got the best drink. You know, they're having a great time, and they don't need to pay attention to man.

And this farmer, you know, life is hard for him. He's had a hard time. And so what does he do? He wants to talk to the gods, but the gods aren't going to come to earth, are they? Gods never come to earth, do they?

So what does he do? If they're not going to come to earth, what does he need to do? He needs to go up to the heavens, right? And so how do you think that this guy gets there? Flying track.

It's something even worse. He finds a giant dung beetle. And rides this giant dung beetle up into the heavens.

I mean, my... I mean, the whole plot just sort of goes downhill from there. I mean, it just descends into mirth and merriment. I mean, this guy rides a dung beetle into the sky.

[36 : 31] Okay, that's how it begins. Okay? You can read the rest for yourself. Shakespeare. Since we're talking about Shakespeare, we've cited some examples. The Merchant of Venice. It's a guy who's poor.

So poor that in order to woo the woman he loves, he needs to borrow money from his friend. And all this stuff happens. It's a really complicated plot, really wonderful, and an excellent example of true comedy.

A lot of funny stuff happens in it, too. Really subtle humor. And then in the end, how does it end? In this massive wedding. And he ends up marrying, the girl he ends up marrying, turns out to be a princess.

So what does that make him? Makes him a prince. There you go. Paradise Regained, which is the far less read second half of Paradise Lost. The Phantom of the Opera is a very, very consciously, classically styled comedy.

All the elements are in the Phantom of the Opera. Anyway, you guys have got to be able to think of some examples of comedy. Throw some at me here. Jim Carrey. Jim Carrey is always like this, yeah? Shrek is a comedy.

[37 : 39] I mean, it doesn't get any more comedy because it ends in this fairytale wedding between this princess and this prince, and there's lots and lots of gas and other humorous things to happen.

What? Sorry? Aladdin? Yeah, undoubtedly, yeah. Because who is he? He's a nobody. Wizard of Oz, I think that most people place that under the epic category.

Interestingly. Yeah, undoubtedly, yeah. Bridget Jones is a comedy. And that's actually, I was hoping you guys would get to that. Think about that. If Bridget Jones is a comedy, what does that tell you?

You guys use the phrase chick flicks here? We do in the States. Chick flicks. Do you know that chick flicks are comedy? I don't care how serious they take themselves. They're always comedies.

They're always comedies. Think about the plot. People wandering through life, looking for true love, no luck, nothing happening. Boy, you know, I wish I could find that Mr. Right.

[38 : 40] I wish I could find that Miss Right. Disparate people who have no chance at all of meeting each other. And all of a sudden, fate, one thing. You know, he trips over the curb and knocks her down and spills her drink.

I don't know. Stuff happens. Dumb, crazy stuff happens. And they're kind of a mismatch, aren't they? Like, he likes this, but she likes that. And, you know, they'll never work together. But you know what? The more they hang out with each other, the more attracted they are to each other. And the more time, you know what? They really like each other. And it seems like everything's going just right, doesn't it? And what happens always in the chick flicks? That's the worst, you know.

I always have this moment of dread when everything's going well in the chick flick. Because you know that just then, something is about to go horribly wrong. And they're going to break up. And you know it's only temporary.

But man, you know, the tears start coming. And you're like, oh, they need to be together. But they won't. They won't reconcile. And then, you know, just at the moment, you know, they take it down a bunch of notches.

[39 : 42] They really kind of wrench it on you. They really try to do that. But they'll make it look like it was bad. And then, oh, you thought it was bad. There. Well, now it's really bad. And now they're never going to get back together. You know what? And then they see each other one time.

And you're like, oh, just say I'm sorry. Just say I'm sorry. And then he'll take you back. But, you know, they don't do it. They walk away. And, you know, it looks like there's no hope. And at that moment when there's no hope, again, fate intervenes.

Fate intervenes. And something happens. And they end up doing what? What's the classic fairy tale ending phrase? They live happily ever after. They're married. They live in a castle. It always happens that way.

You know what is the probably most quintessential comedy of all time? As far as stories go. The most common one.

You know that there are only two stories that as far as we can tell exist in every single culture. in every single corner of the face of the earth.

[40 : 41] In the folklore of every single culture, there are two stories that we can identify that in some form exist. The one, interestingly, is a universal flood.

Every single culture in the face of the earth has some story in its folklore about a universal flood that happened long, long, long ago. The second one, that may not come by this name, but it always comes in a similar form, is the story of Cinderella.

The woman who's abandoned by her family lives as a scullery maid despite the fact that she's the most beautiful thing that has ever been created. Do you know what, why do they call her Cinderella?

Cinders. That's in her name. So her beauty is what? It's disguise. Her beauty is disguised. And disguise is a, I didn't write that in here, but disguise is a very common theme in comedy.

Things are not always what they look to be with the naked eye. And Cinderella, covered with cinders, does not look like what she really, really is until the prince discovers her.

[41 : 50] And there's that crisis moment in which it looks like it's all over. It's never going to work out for Cinderella. Everything's over. But then the prince seeks her out and finds her and claims her as his own and says, I will have that one as my wife and I will settle for nothing and no one else.

keep that in mind. So those are the four stories. There's epic, lyric, tragic, and comic.

Now we want to see what do the four stories reveal about ourselves, our world, and our faith. The four stories reveal about ourselves. Aristotle said that the reason that there are four stories and that the reason that we consistently write over and over and over again variations of the same theme is because these stories aren't just about something external to ourselves.

They reveal something that is internal to us. There's something about our soul and the way that, he would say, the way that our soul is shaped. That these stories naturally emanate out of us.

That our soul is formed to see the world in these four ways. So, these stories reveal about us the things that we create, the things that we desire, the things that we love, the things that we loathe, and the things that we fear.

[43 : 28] If you were writing a tragedy and you wanted to evoke fear and pity, what would you choose to be the most tragic element? What would you choose?

Whatever it is, you have revealed something about yourself because you have revealed that which is most scary to you. If you had to pick the most scary thing, you've revealed something about yourself.

If you were to write lyric poetry, what would you say? What would you write about? Say you were given, I know, I can't write lyric poetry. I can't even write poetry.

But, you know, imagine if you were given, somebody handed you the gift to write perfect lyric poetry. What would you write about? That reveals about the things you love, the things you desire. Epic reveals what you think is virtue. What is your hero look like? Is he strong? Is he humble?

[44 : 33] Is he brave? Is he self-sacrificing? Those things reveal. If you were to write an epic hero, they would reveal about what you think is virtue.

And if you were to write about comedy, if you were to write a comedy, that would reveal what you think is the happily ever after. It would reveal what your soul thinks is the best possible thing that could happen.

Aristotle says, and I think he's right, that the four stories reveal the makeup of our soul. How do the four stories reflect life?

What do they tell us about our world? That was nifty, wasn't it? The Greeks, you can see on this, I made it a wheel.

The Greeks saw these four stories as a cycle. And it begins with epic. And you see how it's circular. Epic, lyric, tragedy, comedy.

[45 : 42] And it goes in a circle. And what do you know about circles? Where's the beginning of a circle? It doesn't have one. Where's the end? It doesn't have one.

It just keeps going, doesn't it? They viewed these four stories as revealing something about life in the sense that it just keeps going around and around and around.

And it's absolutely true. There are certain cycles to life, aren't there? What cycles to life can you think of? Seasons. How many seasons are there?

There's four seasons, aren't there? What other cycles? What other cycle? I don't know that they had that one scientifically. Yeah?

Yeah, probably. Couldn't make it work for that. What time is it? What time is it? Right now. 8.15. What cycle are we just about to wrap up?

[46 : 39] The daily cycle. There's a daily cycle. There's a daily cycle. There's a yearly cycle.

There's a cycle to life, isn't there? You start out as a... and then you grow into an adolescent child of some kind.

Then you become an adult and you finish as someone who's elderly. Right? It's a cycle to life. It has four parts. So anyway, the Greeks said that the cycle of the stories reflects the day.

There's the morning, which is epic. What do you do in the morning? What do you do in the morning? I get up, you know, I knock the sleep out of my head, I drink my coffee. But then what do you do? You get up, you go out, and you do what you do.

Don't you? You go to work, you go to study, you go and do what you do. You take on the character of the epic hero. You go out into the world and you change things and you do things.

And, you know, we think of life as much more mundane than that. There's a sense in which that's true, isn't it? Then there's lyric. The lyric represents sort of the midday, the afternoon, that time when it's kind of hot.

[47 : 55] And, you know, they don't do this here. If you were down near the Mediterranean and got to midday, what would they do? They would, you go to Italy, you go to Spain, and you can't do anything between like 12, 30, and 2.

You can't do anything. I mean, the stores are closed. I mean, you're lucky if it's 2. I mean, you know, it could be 3 or 4. Sometimes the stores like close from 12, 30 to 5 and then they reopen again for the evening. There's this midday period in which, what do you want to do?

You want to stop working and you want to go and do what? You want to relax. You want to just stop and think, don't you? Or what do you want to do? You want to dream.

What are the things you dream about? That midday period reflects lyric. According to the Greeks, I'm not making this up. Hey, okay, you know. Then there's the evening. How does the evening, do you think, mirror tragedy?

What is the thing that marks the evening? How do we know when it's evening? The sun sets. That's it. That's exactly it. The sun sets and as the sun goes down, light is replaced with darkness.

[49 : 06] Work, the time of productivity, the time of interpersonal relations, the time of fellowship with family, friends, whatever else, comes to an end and what do you end up doing? Sleep.

That's really significant for all the ancient cultures. Ancient cultures always thought of sleep as death-like. And so there's this parity, I'm sorry, parity, parallel between tragedy and evening.

And then what comes last? The night time. The night time. You wake up at midnight so you can't sleep. You went to bed at ten, you get up at midnight, oh man, you can't sleep.

And you get up and how do you feel? You say you can't sleep the whole rest of the night. What do you do? You sit there, time drags, doesn't it?

It goes so slow. And you try to read, but that doesn't help. I mean, you can't read, you're too tired to read. You try to do something, it doesn't help. And that just makes the time drag all the more slow.

[50 : 08] Then what happens? With every click of the clock, every time, every time that little clock blinks, you get a little bit closer to what? Even though it might feel like a long, long time, what happens eventually?

Eventually, the sun comes up again. Eventually, the sun comes up again. And it may be a long, long time. It might feel like forever. But if you were up all night, eventually that sun would come. It would come. And it would usher in a new day. And that's the idea of comedy. It's not just the day, and it's the seasons as well.

You have the spring. What happens in the spring? The snow goes away, the grass grows back, flowers grow, the trees get their leaves back. Historically, if you were the king of a country, sort of in the ancient world or not so ancient world, what would you do in the spring?

If you wanted to go to war, you would go to war in spring. Spring is the time of conquering. It's of going out and doing. It's the time of producing and growing.

[51 : 16] It's the time when you go and sow the seed. And you create in the spring. And those are all the qualities of epic. Summer is the time of lyric.

It's the time of the heat. It's the time where, if you're a farmer, what do you do in the summer? You wait. You pull the weeds, you fertilize, you water.

But when do you see the payoff? Not in the summer. In the summer, you wait. So there's lots of time. What do you do in a timeless thing? A timeless period.

You dream. You think. All the things that you want to think about. And there's the autumn. The autumn is tragic in a lot of ways. The autumn is beautiful, but it's tragic.

What happens in the autumn? You know it's autumn when this happens. What is it? The leaves fall. What do they do before they fall? What color do they become? Brown.

[52 : 12] They die. The leaves die. Leaves die and they fall. And they become nothing. They disintegrate. They just disappear. They're gone.

What happens in the autumn if you're the farmer? Harvest. What do you do in the harvest? What do you do to bring in the crop? You go and you kill it.

I mean it sounds we like the harvest time. But think symbolically. Think about the images of all of this. The days grow shorter so darkness becomes greater.

And you go in and you kill the crop. If you had carrots growing, growing, growing big. What do you do when you harvest them? Do they keep growing? They're done.

It's over. And they become eaten. They disintegrate. They're gone. That's the pattern of autumn.

And that's the pattern of tragedy. And there's the winter. What's the winter?

[53 : 10] The winter's long. The winter's difficult. Why is that? I noticed this when I moved here. My goodness, I'm from Miami. In Miami, in winter, the sun, even in winter, the sun does not set before, I mean, the shortest day of the year it sets at 6 o'clock.

I moved here and the sun is setting. It's dark outside at 4 o'clock on the shortest day of the year. I couldn't do any work in the month of December because every time I looked, I felt like it was about 0, 8, 9, I don't know when it was, but I look at my watch and it's 3 o'clock.

What is going on? This is wrong. There's something horribly wrong here. That's how winter starts.

When is the official first day of winter?

That's right. And what else is marked on that day? It's the solstice. Winter starts on the shortest day of the year.

And then from then on out, what happens? It gets a little longer and it gets a little longer and it gets a little longer. And if you wait long enough, it seems like a long, long time, especially if you live in a really snowy place.

[54 : 26] The people who live in the Midwest United States, they hate, they hate late January, the whole month of February because, okay, snow is neat when it first falls and it's all nice and pretty, but, you know, when it's been there for two months and it's all turned to mud and ice and it just makes your life miserable.

So they hate the month of February. And then, as February wanes on, it feels so long, but then what happens? All of a sudden, like what's happening outside my window, outside my flat, that I noticed this past week, the tree outside is starting to show buds.

Life returns. Comedy is about the return of life. And we could go on and on about all this, but the stories reflect our souls and the stories reflect life.

How do the four stories reflect the Christian faith? They do it in a number of ways. We're going to look at several in a row.

First, we have to say, notice, have you ever noticed that the Bible consists mainly of stories? That tells us what?

[55 : 39] God chose to communicate with man through stories. He did not drop a theology textbook out of the sky. He did not give us the divine confession that outlines for us in bullet point form all the things that we're supposed to believe and not believe.

He did not tell us that. He told us in stories. There's something awfully interesting about the way that God chose to communicate with man and we need to pay attention to it.

Since God communicated with man through stories, therefore, we should pay attention to what these stories, both in our world and in the Bible, teach us. Excuse me.

The four stories reflect the story of the Bible. There's the epic. It starts out epic. The Bible begins with a story of awesome power, the creation of the world.

Who's the hero in Genesis 1? God himself. What is so... You remember how it always uses the improbable, the amazing, in order to inspire awe?

[56 : 56] What is so awe-inspiring about the creation of the world as recorded in Genesis 1? What is it? It's out of nothing for number one, right? I think even more than that.

What is it? That's amazing enough. That's amazing enough, but on top of that, he talks. He talks. He speaks.

And God said. You count how many times in Genesis 1 it says, and God said. The emphasis is not on what God did.

It's on what God said. He speaks and universes are formed. That is awe-inspiring. Continues with lyric.

Genesis 2 is all about a story of pure love in a garden. What's the pure love story? in Genesis 2. I'll give you a hint.

[57 : 59] There are two. Walking in the evening with God is one of them. The fact that man had a personal face-to-face one-to-one relationship with God.

There's amazing things about this. It's not the fact, even the fact that man was, the fact that man is even able to communicate to a God is awesome enough. But what's even more awesome?

What's even more sort of shattering about the love displayed is the fact that God would want to communicate with man. What's the second love story in Genesis 2?

creation of Eve. Creation of Eve. God shows Adam by taking him through all the created world, having all the animals go past him.

He sees everything. He sees everything there is. And he's happy about it, right? He says, yay, I'm in this world. No, what's Adam's emotion? He's longing.

[59 : 10] Remember the elements of lyric? It's a desire. It's a desire for love. It's a desire for true love and pure love and beauty. And Adam says, there is no one for me.

So how does God create a companion for Adam? That perfect love. How does he fulfill all the desires of his lyrically, poetical heart?

He puts him into a deep sleep. He wounds him inside. And from what is taken from that side, he uses what he takes from that side to create the perfect companion for Adam.

There's a parallel there. You know what it is? There was someone else who entered the sleep of death, who was wounded in the side and blood and water poured out of his side.

and the blood purifies and the water purifies a pure, true bride. The one who is the perfect companion for that son who is named in Romans chapter 5 as the new Adam.

[60 : 27] lyric finds its completion not in the garden necessarily but elsewhere. We'll get on to that.

Tragedy, Genesis 3, the fall of man. Do I need to elaborate? How, what span of time are we looking at for Genesis 3? It takes years, doesn't it?

And the whole process, it's just such a slow downward evolution that he's almost invisible to the eye to see what was that point at which man fell, right?

She's nodding. You're not supposed to nod. No, no, no. What span of time does Genesis 3 take? Still stuck on lyric. I'm just teasing.

What span of time is it? You guys know this. It's within one day. I just light bulbs and sensors should be going off in your mind at this point. You should recognize something.

[61 : 29] And it happens in one day. It's this tragic flaw. It's disguised involved, all this sort of insidious wickedness. And what ends up happening?

Not only does man fall, what's the consequence of the fall of man? The whole creation ends up cursed. So it's not just that man falls.

But it's that he takes everything down with him. That is the effect of sin. It corrupts us and it corrupts everything. Do you want to know why societies, why within societies, people can't get along, why there's crime?

Do you want to know why between societies, between this nation and that nation, there's trouble and strife, conflict? It all traces its origins back to here, to here.

There's sin in the world. There's sin in the world. It's introduced in Genesis 3. That is the great tragedy of all time. And then there's comedy.

[62 : 33] There's the promise of redemption, given where? First time. When was the first time there was a promise of redemption given? At the end of Genesis 3, when God is busy pronouncing the curse that man has earned for himself, he deserves, he offers a sign of hope in Genesis 3.15.

And the rest of the Bible, I think it's beyond fair to say, the rest of the Bible is about the fulfillment of that promise. It's about how God worked out that promise so that the redemption, so that the restoration took place.

So man, you know, the story of the Bible begins with epic, continues with lyric, has this tragic flaw, and the rest of the Bible is about this comedic action of restoration.

Now, how long does that take compared to the tragedy? The Bible's a long book, isn't it? Doesn't that fit with the pattern of comedy?

Sometimes it takes a long time before you see the dawn, doesn't it? When you're sitting up in the middle of the night. sometimes that winter feels so long, and you feel like the month of February, even though it's the shortest month of the year, you feel like it's never going to end.

[63 : 56] But you know what? It always ends. Slow but sure. And the rest of the Bible reflects that. Okay. The four stories, according to this, within the context of the Christian faith, reflect the human condition.

There's tragedy. The fall of man into sin ruins him, tainting the unique creation in which he lives, and his place in the world. God gives him a place in the world.

What is the role that God gives him in Genesis 1-2? It's a dominion. That's a word that's used. It says, be fruitful and multiply, fill the earth and subdue it.

Of course, the Bible qualifies that very clearly, that it's to be stewards, to be constructive, to be protective of the creation, but to subdue it. In some sense.

And because of sin, has man done a very good job of that? It's obvious that in many ways he hasn't. The subduing aspect of it overtakes the rest of it sometimes, doesn't it?

[65 : 02] Often, maybe most of the time. Anyway, the effect of man's sin, again, is not just on himself, but on the whole world. There's comedy to anyone who accepts the offer of redemption.

That person is restored. And the effect of sin is undone in their life. Although, slowly, at first, again, we've got the slow theme.

I mean, we've got some Christians in the room, right? Are you perfect? Are you perfect? There's a sense in which you are. Not in and of yourself, but when God looks at you, if you are in Christ, what are you?

Your sin has been taken away. And when he looks at you, he sees not you and your gruesomeness. He sees Christ and his beauty. It's a sense in which you are perfect.

But then there's a very, very real, daily, moment-by-moment sense in which you are anything but perfect. how many mistakes do you make?

[66:11] How many times do you say or do or think the wrong thing? On a daily basis. You know, too many for myself for me to even count.

You know, I think I'm pretty convinced that most of the things that I do wrong, I'm not even aware of. That's how calloused I am.

Where I, I said, I'm convinced that a majority of the things that I do wrong, I'm not even aware that I've done them. I'm not even aware that I've committed a sin.

If I was sensitive to things like righteousness and sin, you know, I would at least know, maybe I'd still trip and fall, but I'd at least notice. But you know, I'm so callous to that, that I don't even notice. But there's the promise, the comedic promise that slowly but surely, I am being made. Perfect. And that I will be restored in the end to what I should have been from the first.

[67:13] Epic. After we accept the offer of redemption, we just live lives as we always have, right? God does the work, we do nothing, we just kind of, you know, sit back and relax, have a beer, all works out.

No, we're called to change our lives. We're called to be different, not just to pretend to be different, but to be different. We're called to live different lives, to model ourselves after Christ, our Savior hero, and live as he lived.

That's epic. He's the superhero. And we are actually specifically, literally called to be like he is. You are supposed to be a superhero.

And you know what? if you are in Christ, then you are slowly being made in one. Not that you can do all, you know, what does Paul say? I can do all things through Christ's strength.

He's saying, whatever I decide to do, I can do, I'm powerful, I can do anything. No, he's saying, the more Christ-like I am, the more of Christ-like power I have to do, and not to be like him in the divine sense of creating universes, but to do what I'm called to do.

[68:29] Finally, eventually, I will be able to fulfill what I have been created to do. And then in the end is the lyric. The promised result of following the savior hero is eventually we will return to the garden.

And this time the garden can never be undone. This time there's no sin option. That's the promise that the Bible gives. That's what we found our hope on. It's the fact that not only will I someday be perfect, someday I will live in a world that is perfect.

The four stories reflect Jesus' work. This is where it all comes to the crossroads, the crux of the matter. That's why we say that because it's about the cross.

We use the word crux. The epic. Is anything more awe-inspiring than imagine that the eternal, infinite God becomes temporal, finite man?

Is there anything that could boggle your mind any more than that? Because if there is, don't tell me about it because I'm already boggled enough. It's nothing, I mean, I don't know.

[69:39] Wrap your mind around that. The lyric, Christ's life, was a life of what? Love. It's a life of loving, self-sacrificing ministry to the poor and rejected.

Then there's the tragedy. He substituted himself. And that's a crucial word, substituted. He substituted himself for his people by allowing himself to be treated as if he was the worst of sinners, namely by dying on the cross to pay the penalty for their sin, even though he was perfectly sinless. And here's what happens. It's a substitution, it's a transaction. It's a trade. I think it's the best way to picture it, it's a trade. Here's me with my sin, here's Christ with his perfection.

He takes the sin, I'm given the perfection. So when God looks at me, what does he see? Perfection. I'm counted as righteous, even though I myself am not.

And there's comedy. And the end, the end of the story of Christ is that he rose from the dead in triumph. If you were here for Phil's talk last week, last Saturday night, you would have heard about the resurrection. If you weren't, I'm not going to go into it in great detail now, but I really encourage you to listen to that.

[70:55] It's on the web, it's www.calvary-brighton.org.uk and it's right there under Be Thinking Talks and you should listen to it. It's all about the resurrection. In doing so, in rising from the dead, Jesus conquered man's greatest enemy, sin, and he transformed the souls of men from spiritual death to spiritual life.

The four stories are eternal and each one is in the end sort of made complete. It's made in its final, perfect, permanent form.

Tragedy. Those who reject Jesus' work will experience a perfect, permanent tragedy. That's what the Bible teaches. Comedy.

The recipients of his grace are transformed from corrupt to perfect and become the royal bride of Christ. That's the imagery that the New Testament uses.

It's royalty and of a bride. And I don't for a moment think that's accidental. I think it's teaching us something, using a story. Epic.

[72 : 03] Jesus has been made the ruler of all things and he will return to make this world's story complete. Only this time he will come as a conquering hero.

He came the first time in humility, in service. He comes the second time in power and as a king.

Both, by the way, revealing between the two of them the whole of who he is.

Revealing the power and the humility, the might, the judgment even and the love. Lyric. At that time, he will usher in a new heavens and earth, which will be a garden even greater than the first.

This is the last, we'll finish with this. The four stories as a meta-narrative. This is picking up directly on what Steve and Phil talked about last term. Right here, if you can get the MP3s of their talk and you're interested in this, you should listen.

Because here, they elaborated on this very clearly. Our culture teaches that there is no meta-narrative. A meta-narrative is a story that makes sense of all other stories.

[73 : 19] It's a story that explains everything. And our culture says there is no meta-narrative. You have your way of interpreting things and seeing everything come together and you just understand it to happen that way.

I've got my story and we can't decide who's right. There's no right. It's just you do what's best for you and I do what's best for me and we just have to leave each other alone. The Bible, and even all of life, teaches that there is a meta-narrative.

The patterns of our world and the desires and the fears of our souls are fashioned to reflect this four-part story that we've just looked at. The meta-narrative.

The story of all things. The story that is the Christian faith. Only when we begin to understand this story and our place in it, will we be able to make sense of our world and ourselves.

So, that's the end of it. Do you have any questions? I'll sit down and fire away. Whatever you got. I'll do my best. Thank you. The meter, the form, the images, the patterns are all very complicated.

[74 : 52] It's, um... So, why should you be able to be those in the need of contentment of the world? Oh, because it's beautiful.

And the more you deal with it, it's kind of, it's really, it's the closest, I think, that humanity can come to the Bible. Because the more you deal with it, the more you see, the more sense it makes, the more the images, you notice the patterns.

And you see how there's so many things, like, it's not subtle, it's very subtle, it's not, it's not very, it's not right up in front of your face like modern, modern movie plots, they've got all these things happening, but they're really at the surface and you see it all happen.

This stuff's really subtle, you see there's all these threads and stuff working their way through it that you don't notice at first. The more you read it, like if you were to read the Odyssey ten times, you would pick up a ton of stuff.

And that's why I'm just, I mean, what I'm doing, you know, the way I'm picking up on a lot of this is not because I'm some mystical expert and all this stuff, it's because I've dealt with and I've got some stuff in my bag that I use in preparation for this.

[76 : 14] I've read the work of a lot of people who have spent their entire life, like some people who've read the Odyssey way more than ten times, for example. That's what they do.

They're classicists or whatever. What, anything else? Yeah, it's hard for me to say.

I mean, there's so many different meters, and you know, by a meter I mean the shape that the actual verses of poetry take and the number of beats and ideas that are communicated in every line, the number of lines in each section, the number of sections in each book.

Some of it becomes very, it's a very, it can be a very fixed format. And the more fixed the format, the harder it is to write because you have to sort of conform to all the conventions, and that just makes it very difficult to do well.

what else? Steve. I think the point you make quite very strongly is you should understand that the Bible is written in the story.

[77 : 26] I was trying to think before the end of my talk to try to move towards that position. I was thinking that it's kind of holographic, you know, you can't, in a sense, any part of the Bible contains all of it, but by having more of it, you can see the picture more clearly.

And, you know, there must be a reason why God chose to do that rather than something dictating the circle. Yeah. And I'm sure what you say partly is right because of the way that we are made up and we think it is in this way.

But did he give us the stories because we're made that way or did he make us that way so that we would relate to him a certain way? Yeah. Christina, did you have something?

Answer. Can you clarify, you said tragedy results in catharsis. What does that mean? Yeah, catharsis is a purgation of the soul.

It's something that makes, this is the idea behind it. It's like if I was to sear your wound with a hot iron. It would hurt like heck. But in the end, your wound would be sterilized.

[78 : 49] That's the idea of catharsis. It's something that burns you but leaves you in a better place. Lonnie, did you have a question? Anthony.

Some people I guess have tried to think to the Bible as a sort of human construct. What you said sort of fits in with that.

So if the human heart has these stories running around and if it's part of you and they should try and make a kind of myth to fit yourself into, to explain everything, then, you know, could people argue that the Bible is just the type of human being?

They do all the time. Yeah, they do all the time. They do all the time. And the Christian responds really by saying, nothing else comes close to this.

Nothing else comes even remotely close in terms of complexity, integration, themes running, not through just a book or and authors writings, but coming across dozens upon dozens of authors writings coming over millennia of writing time.

[80 : 03] There's something, even there's been some recent structural analysis done of different books that show a structure that is so, if Greek poetry has a complex structure, I mean, I'm not kidding you to say that the Bible's sort of internal structure at times is dozens of times more complicated than Greek poetry.

And there's something that so supersedes what humanity has done or could do, that it testifies to being divine. Now, Christian would respond to the talk of, well, this is a myth among other myths, by saying, well, how do we know that all other myths are not distortions of?

or, you know, sort of faint echoes of? This myth, and I'll use an example of that. I told you earlier that there were two stories that are in every single culture on the face of the earth.

One is the flood. But not all the flood stories on every single culture on the face of the earth are the same. Some of them tend to be very radically different. if we assume, just for sake of argument, that the Bible's flood narrative is the true one, what we have in the other ones are echoes that are to some degree or another distorted of the real story.

As it's passed down through the generations, things change. The Cinderella story is the same. You know, I've read papers, I've heard people talk about how the story of us is Cinderella.

[81 : 41] We are Cinderella. Our beauty, the beauty God gave us when he created us, made in the image of God, is marred, is covered by ashes. And we're stuck in that and there's no way out.

There's nothing we can do until the prince comes and seeks after us and says, that's mine, that's mine, and that's the one. And they'll settle for nothing less than that one as my bride.

All the other variations that come through all the other cultures, the story takes different permutations and forms. If the Christian Cinderella story of Christ and his church, Christ and his bride, is the true one.

We assume that for a moment, and the other ones must be distortions to one degree or another. Does that make sense? it evidences divine authorship because it exceeds anything that any human or any collection of humans could ever do.

something evidences itself of being beyond human creation. There must be something greater than humanity that it is creating.

[82 : 58] So we can't argue that way. There are other arguments for the Bible being divine, but we can argue this way as well. Any other questions? questions? Yes.

I was thinking about the era that we live in now, and it's just got quicker even the last decade. I would say most people in their different spheres of operation would say that the visual is the most influential or powerful now.

and it's becoming more and more sophisticated and lighter. But is that not because of the way that particularly more recent generations have been trained to think, I mean not even English?

Whereas for me, for instance, I love language, I love words, and it seems to me that the visual aspect, although it does come across a power, I believe you can see some of the ethics now on TV or whatever else.

It does do something. And yet, when we look back at the form of communication using language and words, literature, whatever, some of the ways that they're put across, even as you've shown, you know, Greek writers coming somewhere close to how to be effective Bible, reminds you really of how much more influential words are.

[84 : 30] I think they are stronger than the visual. Bearing in mind that he produced it at the beginning of time, the first thing that was a spoken word. It was a speech, it was a word. Yeah.

I think that the educational theorists would rightly be able to point out to you that education has a lot to do with this. That, you know, certain cultures, certain times, certain situations, people see more things than they hear and they become more visual than auditory.

And, you know, that's true. And then there's a certain factor that psychologists would tell you that different people have different learning styles. And some people really pick things up while reading. And other people just don't. They just don't. They can't, you know, they read, they don't have a high retention level of what they've read. And they may be more visual or auditory learners or tactile learners.

They learn by using their hands, doing things. So there's a sense in which I think that's probably true too. But then there would be people and probably the more sort of philosophically oriented they are, the more they would say that words at the end of the day change the world.

[85 : 43] But is that, you know, is that only because words have the power to create images? And is it the image that then changes the world? You know, there's an old saying that says armies march because of books.

you know, the world, you know, governments are changed, overthrown because of something somebody wrote. And I think that's true.

You see that in 17th century England. You see that in 18th century America. Thomas Paine, John Adams, they write, the nations are born.

So is it the images? Is it, I don't know what it is. You know, I'm not an expert. I couldn't comment so much on that. But I know that there's a lot of factors going into that. There's a lot that's been said about that too.

He uses words.

[86 : 51] He uses words. He gives us a written book. He doesn't give us pictures. But he gives us words that give us pictures. No, it's really complex. The words started off at the beginning of time. The words that we use have power.

It changed. We can use words now that just have meanings, but then have power. But then you can use words that actually have power. Yeah, words can be used powerfully.

I think there's truth in that. Katie? No? Brian, we want to thank you very, very much.

Thank you very much.

such care. The way you've made us. The plans you have for us. The story out there and the story of our lives. And we thank you that because of Jesus Christ, we have a hope.

[88 : 10] we know something of what it is to belong to you and to have a real hope and a future which is full of joy of purpose and direction and we do sad, we're sad also for the tragedy that many people are living in their lives right now and in this city even tonight and we ask Father that you'd help us to have the same sort of compassion and concern that the Lord Jesus Christ had that we might be epic in the way that we reach out to those in this city, we thank you for setting us in this place at such a time as this and we pray that we will be good followers put soldiers for you willing to serve you in every possible way and we thank you so much that all this is possible because of your great grace to us in Jesus Christ Amen carry on the conversation thank you thank you everybody for coming very much thank you