

Ecclesiastes 1-6: Into the Dark

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[0 : 00] Thank you very much, Joe, for your introduction. It would be anticlimactic for me now to say I'm glad to be here, but in fact I am.

This all started, let me tell you, with my revealing to somebody, I don't remember whom, but one of you here, I remember saying that Ecclesiastes was my favourite book of the Bible.

And back came the question, why? And one thing led to another, and in these two talks I am hoping to share with all of you the reason why.

And to share with you something of the gladness, yes, gladness in my heart, that I can answer the question in the positive terms, in which I'm going to present the book and share it with you in these two talks.

It hasn't been possible for us to provide you all with Bibles. Don't panic.

[1 : 28] I shall be reading the sections of Ecclesiastes that I want you to brood on with me. And the lack of a Bible in your lap to turn to and follow along with is not, I think, going to be a problem for anyone.

May we start by asking the Lord to give light as we turn to his word. Gracious Heavenly Father, we thank you for the written word.

We thank you for the book of Ecclesiastes, which is part of that word. We thank you for the Holy Spirit, who gave the word through your servant, and now interprets the word to us, your servants. And we pray that we may know the fullness of the Spirit's ministry, doing just that this very morning as we turn to Ecclesiastes together.

Granted, Father, we pray in the name of Jesus our Lord. Amen. Why should Ecclesiastes be my favorite book of the Bible?

[2 : 50] As indeed it has been for well over 60 years. Answer, in a sentence, he and I are tamed cynics.

They say it takes one to know one. Well, that's what I think I know about the writer of Ecclesiastes, and that is why.

Let's have no misunderstanding. What is a cynic? I turned to the most modern dictionary that we have in our home.

It's the Canadian Oxford Dictionary, dated 1998. Cynic is defined in the Canadian Oxford Dictionary as, quote, A person with little faith in human goodness, who sarcastically doubts or despises sincerity and merit.

Yes, and you knew that, of course. The word cynic is a familiar one, and we've all of us picked up a general notion, which that definition from the dictionary simply crystallizes.

[4 : 23] Hear it again. A person with little faith in human goodness, who sarcastically doubts or despises sincerity and merit.

Cynicism is the attitude to life which the cynic maintains. Are cynics nice to know?

You may answer the question for yourself. Some people think that the writer of Ecclesiastes is an untamed cynic.

They think that it was a later author, or perhaps a couple of later authors, who inserted into the book the positive teaching about godliness, which it actually contains.

They think that if the writer, the original writer, had put those sentiments on paper, it would have been insincere platitudes on his part.

[5 : 42] Deep down, he's a cynic, and he's nothing else. Well, what is a cynic, and where do cynics come from? Understand, brothers and sisters, that a cynic becomes a cynic because the world in which he lives, or she lives, has hurt, and disappointed, and disillusioned, and bored them.

And that mood of resentment at the way things are becomes their chosen attitude to life.

They stand on the edge of the abyss of despair, and after looking hard into the abyss and thinking a bit about it, they jump.

They commit themselves, in other words, to live their lives as hurt, resentful people. Life has become bitter to them.

It's scratched them, as we might say, and they are resolved now to scratch back and become bitter to everybody else. We have a phrase for this.

[7 : 09] They choose to take it out of us. They've been hurt, and now they're resolved to hurt other people in return. It's not a very noble ambition, but it's the heart of the cynic.

And this is what cynics do. They do it by their behavior, by their speech, by their writing, and we very soon find that they are people to avoid because they are a pain.

But as far as I'm concerned, the writer of Ecclesiastes, though he stood on the edge of the abyss of despair, never jumped.

No, he has a positive message based on reflection about the abyss that he's been looking into.

He is, in other words, a tamed cynic. And so, brothers and sisters, am I, and that's the only thing about myself that I'm going to tell you in this talk.

[8 : 20] But it does mean that I'm in a position to resonate with the way that this writer's mind works. And I think I can tell you from the inside what it is that he's doing, what it is that he's sharing with us in this book of his.

And as you know, it's spilled over into two talks. One of them, this one this morning, titled Into the Dark, which is piling up the grim elements in the view from the lip of the abyss.

And then next week, the talk is going to be titled Into the Light, because that, in fact, is where the second half of the book of Ecclesiastes leaves us.

Leads us, I should say. So, that's the agenda, that's the perspective, that's the message, or at least, that's the frame of the message.

And I'll tell you now, the message is going to be a message about living for God in a godly way, living in a bitter world without getting bitter about it.

[9 : 57] It's, this book of Ecclesiastes is one of five wisdom books in the Old Testament, and the neatest and clearest thing that I've ever run across said about those five books, said by Oswald Chambers, as a matter of fact, though others, I believe, have said it too, is that, well, this is what the five books all about living, in a broad sense, are affirming.

the Psalms are telling us, showing us how to pray, the Proverbs, Book of Proverbs, shows us how to behave, the Book of Job shows us how to suffer, as sooner or later all of us have to do, and the Song of Solomon teaches us how to love, and then at the end of the line comes the Book of Ecclesiastes, which simply tells us what attitude to take to life, how to live in that broad sense, how to react to the way that things are around us, and it's a big picture book, you see, and rather than think of the writer as a pessimist, which is what practicing cynics, of course, are, they're all pessimists, nothing good can happen, don't be foolish enough to suppose that anything good can happen, it can't, but no, the writer of the book is actually a realist who has become aware that pessimism is not the right reaction because it's not the realistic reaction, it doesn't reckon with God as he is, it doesn't express godliness, as godliness is, no, he's a realist, he is marked by the quality which we sometimes call poise, he doesn't lose his balance, even though life deals him, rough blows from time to time, he keeps his balance, and speaks to us out of the wisdom that he's learned, that keeps him balanced, upright, positive in his attitudes, and going forward with God. in chapter two, verse three of the book, he says that he was inquiring till I might see what was good for the children of man to do under heaven during the few days of their life.

life. And what he's giving us in the book is what he has come to see, that he's good for the children of man to do.

[13 : 30] And whatever life serves him, in the way of difficulties and pains and problems, he speaks to us as one who knows what's good for the children of man to do under heaven during the few days of their life.

In other words, how to react to things, how to handle things, and how to live to God in face of all the puzzles and enigmas and perplexities and disappointments of the life that we live.

Well, I make three preliminary points now to focus some of that and to ensure that we are on wavelength for what the first six chapters of the book are going to set before us.

Preliminary point number one, the writer's identity. You may know the Hebrew title for the book is koaleth.

Ecclesiastes is a Greek title. Both words are somewhat elusive in their exact meaning.

[14:58] Both of them can mean a preacher, a teacher, a philosopher, a philosopher, a wise acre, an instructor of a class or gathering of people, and an observer of life around him.

How are we going to put that in a single word? It's more than I can do. The writer himself introduces himself as Solomon.

I won't go into the arguments pro and con. I think I'll simply tell you that Solomon is role play by this writer.

He does personate Solomon in order to make some points that Solomon with Solomon's history was in a better position to make than most people.

But I think that at the end of the day the arguments for treating the identification of him as Solomon in person are role play arguments.

[16:20] I think of a journal that I read in which a guy regularly advertises himself as G.K.

Chesterton he will offer himself for an evening's entertainment in which he'll be dressed as Chesterton and he will be pontificating with Chesterton ideas in a Chestertonian way.

Well, all right, we understand that and role play of that sort is perfectly permissible and can be illuminating as I think it is here.

If you have a different view, I mean, if you think that it's Solomon in person, wish to argue for that, I'm not going to spend time debating with you, I'm just telling you my view and I go on now from there.

He's a role player, I think, this writer. There are three things I want to say about him on the basis of the book itself. He is most certainly a poet.

[17:33] Now, being a Jew, he writes his poetry in Hebrew and Hebrew poetry is a puzzle to scholars.

I don't know whether you knew this, but it's true. It doesn't rhyme, it doesn't scan, you can only recognize it by the balance between pairs of statements that you find in Hebrew poetry where a point is made twice over by balanced statements or a balanced statement is achieved by saying the two things that form the two halves of the verse.

You've got plenty of that in the Psalms, which are all poems. You've got plenty of it in the Proverbs, a great deal of which is Hebrew poetry.

And you've got a certain amount of it here. Now, what's the point of poetry? poetry, I urge, concentrates perception.

Poets have a gift of focusing things that you would hardly see as you looked at them, unless you tune into the poem, which enables you to see them, those things, much more clearly, and to perceive what I may call the worth of them, the value of them, the preciousness of them, the, well, I could go on, but perhaps I shouldn't.

[19:27] Poetry enables you to feel the quality of things, the things about which the poet writes, in a way that you wouldn't do if you were simply operating casually in prose.

This man's a poet, a poet, and he writes his book alternating between poetry and prose. The prose is all matter of fact, as we shall see, but the poetry gives you the sense of depth and worth value of things that he's talking about in a rather special way.

And that's his intention, of course. So he's a poet. At the same time, he's a pundit. When I was a kid, I remember, in the daily paper which we used to take back in England, it's called the Daily Mail, you may have heard of it, still exists.

There was a regular feature by a chap who, we call him a columnist nowadays, I think, but he was introduced as the man, I mean, the headline title, introduced him as the man who sees.

And that's what the pundit is, a man who sees things that other folk don't notice. all the wisdom writers of the Bible, the Old Testament, are men who see and give us insight into realities of life which otherwise we might not see.

[21:18] So, that's the special quality of insight that this writer brings to his task.

He's a poet and he's a pundit. And with that he's a stylist. I, I, I, I, I'm a writer and to be honest I try to be a stylist.

And I've got my own way of saying things and I aim at a sort of clarity and intimacy which, well, I just want people to feel as coming from me to them.

I want to communicate with them in a simple, straightforward, intimate way. Whether I succeed is neither here nor there.

But that's what I mean when I say a stylist. You know what effect your way of writing things is intended to produce. Right at the end of this book there's a comment from someone, not the writer himself, which tells us that he is a stylist.

[22 : 34] Let me just read the words of chapter 12, verse 9 through to verse 11. Besides being wise, the preacher also, the preacher by the way is the word that the King James and then after the King James the RSV and after the RSV the ESV used to translate Coaleth and Ecclesiastes, preacher.

Beside being wise, the preacher also taught the people knowledge, weighing and studying and arranging many proverbs with great care.

The preacher sought to find words of delight. In other words, sought to write in a way that would please the reader.

He sought to find words of delight and uprightly he wrote words of truth. Truth for substance and pleasure for style.

and then the person attesting the book goes on, the words of the wiser like goads, like nails firmly fixed, are the collected sayings they are given by one shepherd.

[23 : 59] word. In other words, successful style makes things stick.

And here is someone telling us that the style of this writer makes things stick. And if you read Ecclesiastes two or three times you'll know what he means.

Well, all right, that's what I wanted to say about the writer's identity. He's a poet, he's a pundit, he's a stylist, and he is teaching us the wise attitude to life, however tough life they be.

And that leads to the second preliminary thing, which can be dealt with much more briefly, the writer's standpoint. There's a phrase that he uses a dozen and more times to indicate his standpoint.

It's the phrase, under the sun. He looks at life the way that life appears to us, the way things actually are around us.

[25 : 17] In the very first chapter, which is a somber poem, which you'll see that in a minute, he uses phrase a number of times to make it stick in our minds and realize that this is the standpoint from which he's talking.

Chapter 1, verse 3. What does man gain by all the toil at which he toils under the sun? verse 5 tells us about the sun in case we didn't know, though it's not very likely that we didn't.

The sun rises, the sun goes down and hastens to the place where it rises, day follows day, sunrise follows sunrise, sunset follows sunset, sunset, doesn't seem to be going anywhere.

But under the sun, I look at life and talk about life as I see it. That's the Ecclesiastes standpoint. So again, you've got it in verse 9 where he says, there is nothing new under the sun.

And you've got it once more in verse 14 of the chapter. I've seen everything that is done under the sun. And behold, all is vanity and the striving after wind.

[26 : 46] Okay, that's his standpoint and that last phrase takes us to the third preliminary point, the writer's verdict, his verdict about life.

It's all vanity, he says. Now, that word vanity, has the scholars scratching their head, they don't really know how to translate it in an adequate way.

It's a Hebrew word that signifies fog and mist and vapor. A room full of steam would be vapor, you see.

vanity, and this is the Hebrew word that would be used to express that. One of the modern translations renders vanity as meaningless or meaninglessness.

That foreshortens the thought that the vanity of vanities, says the preacher, vanity of vanities, all is vanity.

[28 : 00] That's chapter 1, verse 2. Vanity is his conclusion rather than his initial perception.

His initial perception, like everybody else's initial perception, is that life is going to make sense. And then he lives and thinks about the life he's living, and realizes that it doesn't make sense in the way he thought it was going to.

It's a fog. It's a mist. It's like a room full of steam where you can't see a cross because of the steam. If I had to offer a word to render this Hebrew term vanity, with all its overtones and associations, I would offer the word fuzziness.

Life is fuzziness. You can call that meaningless if you like. That's the cynics way of concluding what life's about.

[29 : 13] But what the writer is saying is that it's all fuzzy. And what we're confronted with, again and again, is the enigma of God's providence whereby we simply don't know what it's all about.

We're not in a position to know that it's meaningless. All we can say is that we don't know what it's all about. And when the writer uses the word vanity, that's the thought that he's concerned to bring to our community or communicate with our minds.

He has another phrase that he sometimes links with it, and in chapter 1, verse 14, you've got the linkage. Says the writer, I've seen everything that's done under the sun, and behold, all is vanity, all is fuzzy, I can't see to the fullness of its meaning, all is vanity, and, here's the new phrase, a striving after wind.

I said he's a poet, and this is an elusive phrase, where again the commentators are not quite sure what to make of it. You can translate it, striving after wind, and understand the picture in terms of trying to catch the wind, which of course you can't do, or you can translate it as feeding on wind. well, that's a different picture, but equally a picture of frustration, you will agree. You try to feed on wind, well good gracious, there's nothing nourishing about wind.

[31 : 15] All is vanity, and a striving after wind. That's how it looks, he says, and I want to rub your noses hard in the fact that that's the way it looks, that's the way it looks, to thoughtful believers, just as it's the way it looks to thoughtless unbelievers.

That's the way it looks to all of us. Oh, well, that then is the note that he's going to strike, and the perspective that he's going to develop.

help, so we better take a deep breath and prepare for it. In chapters one through six, we're going to find him deliberately piling up the problems.

what he's doing is spelling out his feelings about the fuzziness.

We should always watch our feelings, brothers and sisters. A lot of the thoughts that we think and believe to be profound products of analysis are in reality focussings of our feelings and nothing more.

[32 : 50] You feel rotten, okay, you objectify the rotten feeling that you have, and you say life doesn't make sense, life isn't worth living, life is a pain, and so on.

The writer knows that that's what people do, but he starts with us where we are, or where he envisages his ideal reader as being, let's put it that way, namely focusing feelings and thinking that they are profound insights, and standing on the edge of the abyss and finding himself inclined to become a cynic.

because he sees that nothing is worthwhile. All right, well, that's his perspective, and he has his own reason for rubbing our nose in this perspective, and we follow him through for the rest of this talk, and we don't get beyond this perspective.

Getting beyond it is a theme for next week, and he's going to take us beyond it, but first of all, he is going to say to us, as one realist, to people who themselves ought to be realists, that's you and me, but aren't always, so you stop being a realist when you start saying in your proud way, well, life doesn't make sense, I know it doesn't, and you don't know that at all, all that you know is that you feel disappointed and frustrated and bewildered at the way things are, that's all you know, but then, as I say, you generalize and pontificate about the meaninglessness of life, as if you yourself were a profound philosopher saying the last word about the life that we're all of us living.

Oh, yes, well, this, as I said, is the focus of the first six chapters of Ecclesiastes. He piles up the problems, feelings, masquerading as negative judgments about life.

[35 : 25] Being human, he wants meaning, meaning, he wants to find meaning in life, he wants to know why things are the way they are, and he finds that he can't find meaning in that way.

So, he's got to settle for fuzziness, not knowing the meaning of things. And, in the first six chapters, he is going to strike the note of gloom about this.

He is going to express distress at it. And, just once or twice, he's going to lift the veil, but most of the time, he's rubbing our noses in the fuzziness, the bewildering aspect of life as we live it.

Okay, now, I have to rush through this. Let me do so. He starts with a poem, chapter 1, verses 2 through 11, where the fuzziness of life is celebrated in terms, well, which are expressed in verse 2, that I've already quoted.

Vanity of vanities, says the preacher, vanity of vanities, all is vanity. And, he is inviting us to agree with him that fuzziness is all that thinking about life and observing life can give us.

[37 : 11] we don't find meaning, we don't find significance in any of it. So, verse 3, what does man gain by all the toil at which he toils under the sun?

And, the rest of the poem, down to verse 11, seems to be saying he gains nothing. There's no remembrance, verse 11 is this, there's no remembrance of former things, there won't be any remembrance of later things yet to be among those who come after.

Nothing matters. That's the feeling that he's focusing. Nothing matters. Nothing makes sense. Nothing counts.

All right. Well, having focused the feeling of fuzziness in this way, he passes his comment on it in verse 8 of the poem, Ecclesiastes 1.8, all things are full of weariness, a man cannot utter it.

The eye is not satisfied with seeing, nor the ear filled with hearing. Nothing makes sense, nothing seems worthwhile. all right.

[38 : 35] And the purpose of the poem is to give us the perspective from which he's going to talk about significant things as he moves forward. So, we move forward with him from chapter 1, verse 12 to the end of chapter 2.

He is describing the frustrations of life as he's observed them and he does it in the character of Solomon and I can see a very good reason why he should choose the character of Solomon to express this.

Solomon, king over Israel and Jerusalem, was fabulously wealthy and in a position to do just about anything and experience just about everything and in this first section in which he narrates his observations of life directly, he talks about in the character of Solomon he talks about the pursuit of wisdom and pleasure and wealth and he talks about the commitment to hard work and then finally reaches the conclusion still in the person of Solomon that nothing is worth doing nothing that he's done was worth the effort everything is fuzzy everything is without significance everything is well now we can draw the conclusion meaningless so life isn't worthwhile you've got him saying these things in chapter 2 verse 11

I considered all that my hands had done and the toil I'd expended in doing it and behold all was vanity and a striving after wind and there was nothing to be gained under the sun we've met these phrases before you can see this is almost the refrain like the refrain of a poem or a hymn this is what he says over and over again all was vanity striving after wind and there was nothing to be gained under the sun and he comes back to the same thought in chapter 2 verse whoops where are we verse sorry my eye has gone astray verse 17 my eye is back in business verse 17 of chapter 2 so I hated life because what is done under the sun was grievous to me for all is vanity and a striving after wind and then in verse 21 of chapter 2 he says well he talks he talks about a person who has toiled with wisdom and knowledge and skill must leave everything to be enjoyed by someone who did not toil for it this also is vanity and a great evil ultimately you don't get the benefit of what you have done and then verse 26 the very last verse of chapter 2 there's a hint of sunlight here just a hint to the one who pleases him

God has given wisdom and knowledge and joy but to the sinner he's given the business of gathering and collecting only to give to one who pleases God this also is vanity and a striving after wind conclusion nothing was worth doing that's the testimony of Solomon who did so much and lived in luxury in so many different ways alright now what happens what happens is a poem it's chapter 3 verses 1 through 8 it's the well-known poem which says there's a time for every matter under heaven a time well yes and as we live we find ourselves aware this is the time for so and so this is a meal time this is a bed time so on and there's a whole string of times listed here as I say it's a poem time to be born time to die time to plant time to pluck up what's planted time to break down time to build up time to mourn and a time to dance yes this is a quality of life says the writer which all of us are aware of should be aware of anyway because it's there we are constantly aware that circumstances are telling us now it's time you did this it's time you did that and yes we live most of the time for most of our life with the sense now the time has come to do this now the time has come to do that well he's given us the poem which says in effect all of life is like that and the implication the surface implication is if we don't observe these inklings or admonitions which tell us it's time for this that and the other well we shall be fools we know that but if we do observe those inklings what have we achieved at the end well we've just done things who fixed the time well as the book goes on we shall find that

[45 : 13] God fixed the time but he's not telling us that here what he's telling us here rather is that life when you look at it is very much a matter of running as servant to do this that and the other for which we feel the time has come and the question is hanging in the air what's the significance of any of that and as I said he's not telling us yet about the providence of God what he's telling us about is the enslaving tyranny of time which if we think is something that we all of us know about because we all of us are ensnared in it okay now there are no more poems in the section that we're dealing with chapter three verse nine down to chapter six verse twelve might be headed further frustrations of life further matters about which negative feelings arise in our minds and hearts as we think about what's been going on further frustrations of life we are baffled by events and circumstances right left and center and what you have in this section of the book is the sources of bafflement they are set before us autobiographically in terms of what I perceived what I saw under the sun that's chapter three verse sixteen

I saw this I saw that I saw the other now I'm telling you what I've seen and if you look you'll see it too there are eight things mentioned that I have just time to tell you what they are before I must finish first of all God's arrangements chapter three verse eleven God has made everything beautiful in its time also he's put eternity into man's heart that certainly feels that certainly means he's put into our hearts a desire to know the ultimate reason of things the reason of which we can say that's it there's no more to be known no more to be explored that's the reason the reason actually as he's going to tell us later on is well it was God's arrangement but in chapter three verse eleven he tells us he's put eternity into man's heart yet so so means in such a way that he that's man cannot find out what God has done from the beginning to the end there's an ultimate enigmatic quality about the pressures of time time for this time for that there's an ultimate enigmatic quality about everything else that happens around us we don't know why particular things happen and when we say well God has done it or God has planned it we're not answering our why question we still don't know why we are only saying as much as we do know which is that it's out of our hands so eternity is in our hearts leading us to ask the why question we want to know all that God has in mind in the way that things happen and it won't come no way in which we can find it out

God's arrangements frustrate you are baffled by them then he goes secondly to talk about human wickedness where justice ought to be that's chapter three and verse sixteen I saw under the sun that in the place of justice even there was wickedness in the place of righteousness even there was wickedness I looked around and what I saw was badness of one sort or another badness here in the sense that justice is thwarted and what is right doesn't happen human wickedness destroys justice so that life appears unfair because of the way that bad people are behaving well

I saw that he says that's part of the reality we have to live with human wickedness destroying justice and then that leads thirdly to human suffering under injustice chapter four verse one I saw all the oppressions that were done under the sun and behold the tears of the oppressed and they had no want to comfort them life is full of pain and it's pathetic and I wish I could do something about it and I can't and life really is not worth living for anybody there's the conclusion of fuzziness it's all vanity I can't find any value in it at all I look at human motivation and it's the same chapter 4 verse 4 I saw that all toil and all skill in work come from a man's envy of his neighbor is that all there is to it well what the man is saying is that's what I've seen over and over again this also is vanity he says and a striving after wind human motivation isn't respectable most of the time anyway at all and human achievement is not anything very wonderful when you look at it chapter 4 verses 13 through 16 he's obviously referring to a bit of recent history which he and the folks that he wrote for knew about we don't but we can see the shape of it better was a poor wise youth than an old and foolish king who no longer knew how to take advice that's how the story started the poor wise youth went from prison to the throne marvelous there was well that youth was to stand in the king's place and he did that's what he's telling us there was no end of all the people of all of whom he led yet those who come later will not rejoice in him popularity is temporary achievement gets forgotten so what's the value of human achievement and then there's money well chapter five deals with that he he sees the idolizing of money and he asks the question what is the use of money idolized and he talks about injustice in public administration and and talks about the discontent of the rich man he who loves money will not be satisfied with money nor he who loves wealth with his income this also is vanity that's chapter five and verse ten and so human discontent is just a fact of life you meet it wherever you go and he talks about that in chapter six first six verses how people are discontented with what is and then he goes on to in chapter still in chapter six verses seven through nine to talk about the

hunger that discontent generates better is

[54 : 45] the sight of the eyes than the wandering of the appetite he says yes but all the toil of a man is for his mouth yet his appetite is not satisfied he will always want something that he hasn't got appetite will keep him from contentment whatever it is that he wants that's the way it goes says the writer so there he's talking it's chapter seven verses seven through nine that I've been dipping into there he's talking about the wealthy man the person whom the world regards as a success well his appetite isn't satisfied he wants something he hasn't got and so it continues so the conclusion he says is that everything's fuzzy everything's meaningless nothing has significance oops just a minute well that's the material that I wanted to present to you and following

Ecclesiastes example rub your nose in in this first talk I call it into the dark and you can see why he's piling up the observations of life which tend to convince us if we follow our feelings that life isn't worthwhile and that's where we leave it for today mind gleams of light have already appeared in these six chapters wisdom teaching worship that's appeared just for the moment he talks about fearing God it's the thing we have to learn to do and he's talked about talked fleetingly about God's gift of joy which wisdom brings time is gone and so I can't begin even to refer you to the passages in which he does that suffice it simply to say that he has dropped those hints that he himself has something to teach us which will not only impress us as wisdom but will become a means of unquenchable joy whatever life throws at us but we haven't got there yet let me round off by saying the purpose of the book is first to puncture pride and make us humble second to promote realism and banish unrealism about life third to induce wisdom and banish folly from our lives and fourth to channel joy into our lives and that will be the agenda for next week's presentation okay I leave you up in the air well all right so does this writer brood over this next week on the things that we've seen him highlighting for us to think about and next Sunday we go on from this point