

# Loss and Meaning

I'm sitting in a 747 on a flight via Johannesburg to Tel Aviv. I've been watching one of the saddest films I've ever seen, *Goodbye Christopher Robin*.

I grew up listening to the stories of Winne-the-Pooh and the marvellous poems about Christopher Robin, and then I had the joy of reading them to my younger siblings and later to our own children – soon to our grandchildren.

This is a film about loss; “goodbyes” to innocence, love, childhood, and much more. Living in the aftermath of WWI Alan A Milne comments, “We lost men ... We lost more ...” The opening sequence shows A A Milne’s “pretty” wife, Daphne, picking roses in their garden. She cannot fathom her husband who in 1918 has returned from the Western Front, traumatised by his experiences.

In a painful birth their son, known as Billy Moon (his childish pronunciation of Milne), enters the world. Absorbed in her own world of triviality and privilege she does not connect with her husband nor with her son whom she gives into the care and love of a nanny. Her husband isolated

in a world of horrific memories, amongst people, none of whom understand, looks to make sense of it all, and finding himself in demand as a Vaudeville comedian, he quits, “I've had enough of making people laugh, I want to make them see.”

Reaching out to his son, trying to connect with him, they enter a world of animals, and stories that he, as a writer, makes up to surround them.

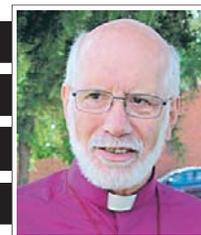
***Survivors of abuse have lost so much. For us to pay redress to them means the loss of things we have valued. This is always hard, but ultimately possessions are meaningless.***

This world of insight and wisdom, deep feeling and unanswered questions that we, “Pooh-lovers” enjoy so much, touches the lives of millions. But the real Christopher Robin is used, exploited and left longing just to be simply Billy Moon – the child of his father and absent mother. He is lost through the world created about him and used unscrupulously by people who lack empathy for this real young man growing up and trying to be himself. Later he disclosed to his father, “Childhood was wonderful; growing up was hard.”

The film was so sad because it touches that nerve in me, the experience of loss in life.

I was reminded of the Book of Ecclesiastes which starts, “Vanity of vanities, all is vanity,” says the preacher.’ (1:1 KJV) Other translations replace “vanity” with “useless” or “meaningless”, but literally the Hebrew is havel meaning “breath”, the shallow, fragile breath of life that can

BY  
BISHOP  
IAN  
PALMER



be extinguished in a moment. The theme of the Book is that all is ephemeral, so do not set too much store in those things that are so transient. The preacher observes life as he has experienced it between the horizons of birth and death. This is life within the boundaries of our visible world. He sees how transient it is, and without that deeper sense of purpose, which comes from God, all is vanity.

Wisdom and meaning come from God alone – as God’s gift of insight (2:26). This is the “eternity” which God has placed in the human heart (3:11 NIV). It is this that leads to happiness. A city can be saved by wisdom, even if the words of the wise are later forgotten. (9:12) Only wisdom will endure and therefore it overcomes disappointment and loss. (3:12-14).

This “wisdom is a shelter”, says the writer, and unlike money, “wisdom preserves those who have it.” (7:12) So the climax of this unique book comes in the opening of the last chapter, “Remember now your Creator in the days of your youth.” (12:1) Meaninglessness is not the last word; for the final word is with God for all is known to God and in the fear of God alone is true wisdom (see Psalm 111:10).

We and our Diocese have faced great losses over the past several years because of pride and financial mismanagement. Now we will experience more loss of property and land. We have to, in some little way, repay the great loss suffered by those who have been abused by clergy and lay people connected with our Diocese.

These immoral and evil acts of men (mostly but not entirely) have stolen life from people.

Survivors of abuse have lost so much. For us to pay redress to them means the loss of things we have valued. This is always hard, but ultimately possessions are meaningless. There is only one deep wisdom and that is to be found in the gift of God to us – and we are to live in that graciousness. As Christians we have the joy and hope of this eternal wisdom.

“The fear of the Lord – that is wisdom; and to shun evil, is understanding.” (see Job 28:23,28)





*The great commission is a verb*  
 – Acts and the early church

It's great to have Rev. Neville Naden opening up the early chapters of Acts for us this year. Neville is the National Indigenous Ministry Officer with BCA.

What are you standing around  
 looking into the sky for?  
 Luke 1:11



**Fellowship | Discussion | Worship | Free Time | Great Meals | Saturday Night Spectacular | Adults | Kids | Youth | Saturday afternoon forums | Fun | Refreshment**

**Registrations available from parishes, by emailing [ntachurch@bigpond.com](mailto:ntachurch@bigpond.com) or by calling Rev Phil Howes 0411 281 915**

**Everyone welcome**

Saturday Sampler is on again. If you can't make it the whole time, share fellowship for the day on Saturday. See rego form for details.