**Happy Endings**

A few years ago I gave my son, who was 12 at the time, a rather unusual Christmas present. He got a year’s membership to the Goode Boys Film Club – each month I would buy him a different DVD, trying to hit most of the major classics and genres over the twelve month period. It was also an excuse for me to revisit some of my favourite films and share them with him.

What would you include? It makes for an interesting pub conversation. Try it now. Turn to the person in the seat next to you and ask them. You have another five minutes before Semper Fidelis and the Argyle Angels’ funny little dance so just time for a quick chat.

As so often happens this was a gift more for me than him, and I don’t think he really appreciated it as much as I’d hoped he would, but there were some interesting discoveries. Laurel and Hardy for instance. I was so excited taking off the cellophane wrapper, remembering how hilarious it all was, but when we got to watching it we found it so slow and rather obvious. These chaps were pioneers of their genre, and worth a watch on that basis alone, but the films don’t compare well to the face-paced and very clever slapstick we get now.

Ferris Bueller’s Day Off went down brilliantly and for all the right reasons. That was a happy afternoon’s viewing to be sure, and I even caught him watching it again later. The 15 certificate was for the occasional rude word but I doubt it would be given a 12A now.

And the first offering was a classic war film. There are many to choose from. I went for The Great Escape. And do you know what I discovered? Young boys aged twelve have not, on the whole, had exposure to many sad endings. The boy always gets the girl, the baddy gets put away and the sad nerd with no friends and no self-esteem realises that it’s what’s inside him that counts, not what everyone else thinks, and soon after that revelation everyone thinks he’s amazing and wants to be his friend, including the extremely dishy girl who he has a crush on.

If you’ve seen The Great Escape you will know that it doesn’t quite end like that. And my lad was gutted. Come to think of it maybe that’s why he didn’t love my film club as much as I thought he would – I should have saved this one for August perhaps. Or maybe December.

Disney, Pixar et al don’t do our kids any favours in preparing them for the rough knocks of real life, but then they are children and happy endings are appropriate at that age. What troubles me is that the children don’t always grow up. Adults go around looking for happy endings because this is all they get fed: films, magazines, Facebook – look at my great life and this could happen to you too! How many Facebook posts wished you health and happiness this new year? Happiness is dependent on things that happen, and health, despite being a national obsession, is an uncertain thing. Let our focus be developing joy in all circumstances rather than hoping for something illusive that we can’t control.

Jesus was known as the suffering servant, and had a very realistic approach to life’s difficulties that had little to do with the ‘look good; feel great’ message of many churches nowadays. Indeed, he became a man and gave his life for us out of compassion for us and the messy situation mankind finds itself in today, and our hope is not based on simplistic assurances but the reality that you are not alone in your difficulties, and there is an ultimate happy ending in eternity: peace with God in heaven.

And what of the happy ending to the Plymouth Argyle season that we are all hoping for? It’s been a great season so far, full of quality football and not short of drama. And the drama - what we most love about football yet also sometimes hate with equal measure – is only going to increase as May approaches, but right now I would gladly settle for being six points clear at the top come the last game and a very boring, meaningless away game to Shrewsbury with the other chaps gearing up for play offs. What about you? What script would you like written?