

Goodbye Christopher Robin

This week I had the joy of watching the film *Goodbye Christopher Robin*. It is a beautiful but at times tragic film about A. A. Milne the writer of Winnie-the-Pooh and it largely circulated around the relationship he had with his son.

Alan Alexander Milne was born in 1882 and served in the first world war. While this year we remember the great war poets of the first world war, I would argue that A A Milne is the best war poet of all time. He managed to transform so much pain and anguish into wonderful children's books for all to enjoy. However much of the film *Goodbye Christopher Robin* narrates the frustration of Christopher Milne (A. A. Milne's Son), that while Milne wrote children's stories for children the world over, he forgot Christopher Milne by replacing him with the fictional character Christopher Robin. It is a real tear jerker of a film! A story of love and loss, and of a family learning about each other and growing together over time.

There is a particularly sad but striking scene where Christopher Milne talks to his nanny. Christopher is frustrated by his bear having been adopted by children all over the world and said:

"why does everyone like *my* bear - can't they get a bear of their own?"

And his nanny explains that, "after the war there was so much sadness but Winnie the Pooh was like a tap, you twisted it and happiness came out"

A.A. Milne took the imagination of a child, bottled it and gave the world a little bit of hope. Winnie-the-pooh is filled with wonderful one-line philosophies, one of my favourites being "It is more fun to talk with someone who doesn't use long, difficult words but rather short, easy words like "What about lunch?""

The film of *Goodbye Christopher Robin* references A.A. Milne's war history, and then sees the trauma of a family sending their only son to war. After fighting in the First World War - scared beyond belief - A A Milne sends his son into the Second World War. The Milne family receive the all too familiar telegram "missing in action, presumed dead" however in a heart lifting, moment Christopher appears with military issue rucksack in hand and he is alive and well. A family reunited - the tap is twisted once more, and happiness pours out. Winnie the pooh is born out of the trauma of the first world war and is the comfort of those who endured the second world war. Winnie-the-pooh is a living and active text, which transformed the feeling of a nation, and captured people hearts that felt so far gone.

In our text from Hebrews this morning, we are reminded that the "Word of God is living and active". I prefer to read this text in light of John's gospel where we hear that "the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us" The word of God or the Logos of God is indeed living and active. The word Logos is a fascinating word in ancient Greek and we often translate it to mean word. The logos was made flesh and dwelt among us. However, lexis is probably closer to our understanding of a grammatical word. Logos however means something deeper, it goes to a sense of something that is indeed alive, a living word or premise. A word that speaks rather than a word that is written, it is uttered rather than seen. To quote Winnie-the-pooh again, when piglet asks "How do you spell 'love'?" pooh replies "You don't spell it...you feel it."

The letter to the Hebrews is reminding us this morning, that the word became flesh and dwelt among us, and so God has an understanding of our pain and our love, not just how it is spelt, but how it feels. But we also hear from Job this morning, crying in anguish "Oh, that I knew where I might find God, that I might come even to his dwelling! I would lay my case before him, and fill my mouth with

arguments” We have all been there. And of course Winnie-the-pooh is written with that in mind. While A.A. Milne walks alongside Job shouting “I wish to lay my case before god!” he also sees the joyous imagination of his son, and journeys with him in order to find some peace with the world again.

This morning as we consider the word of God who dwelt among us, Job’s anguish, the imagination of a small child and the war torn-anguish of his father, we see a common thread; an honest raw emotion that pulses through us all. Hebrews reminds us that this raw emotion is also found in the sacred, we do not have an understanding of an unfeeling rock, but an understanding of the sacred that encompasses the best and the worst of our emotions. Whether that be joining Job and A.A. Milne in their anguish, or helping to turn on the tap with Christopher Robin, to let all the happiness pour out. And of course, it is the job of the church to be there in both the good and the bad. So often we are there to walk alongside, to cry with and to laugh with, but every now and then, can be there for people like job, when they need someone to be angry at. I am sure that we all encounter this, however, with a collar, you sometimes find people in a moment in life when they really need to laugh, to cry or even to shout at you, and it is always so important to allow that, whether it feels comfortable or not. We are here, to be honest, to express and to walk with people, where ever we find them and they take us.

Our job in life is to remember, that while the church can so often use long words to talk about things which are so much more sublime in the simple “It is more fun to talk with someone who doesn’t use long, difficult words but rather short, easy words like “What about lunch?””