

ALWAYS YOU AND ME

Marriage of Patrick Wood and Gemma Jones

Saturday December 12th 2015

St. Michael, Cornhill

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Any of us who were brought up on Christopher Robin will have our own favourite lines from the Winnie the Pooh stories. I always liked the notice that Christopher Robin put on his door when he was out for a walk: ‘Gone out, Backson.’ Thereafter all the animals wondered what a *Backson* looked like! Was it another menacing animal? Or, there was the terrible storm when *Wol’s* house, that is the owl’s house in the side of the tree, was turned upside down. The tree in the Hundred Acre Wood had blown down

In a moment we’re to be treated to another of my favourite pieces. It’s Christopher Robin and Pooh Bear. It begins:

‘Wherever I am, there’s always Pooh, There’s always Pooh and Me, Whatever I do he wants to do, “Where are we going today?” says Pooh: “Well, that’s very odd cos I was too.” “Let’s go together”, says Pooh, says he. “Let’s go together”, says Pooh.’

It’s a marvellous piece and is written in a metrical rhythm – it bounces along. It’s interesting, however, to think that all this tender writing for children came from a rather cool, even cold and highly sceptical journalist, in the person of A.A. Milne. Many years ago we were fortunate enough to host Christopher Milne for a night – that is we hosted ‘a late middle-aged Christopher Robin’. He was a gentle and quiet person and both his comments then and his reflections in his brief memoir of his own life, suggested a real loneliness.

However, this marvellous passage that Patrick and Gemma have chosen represents the very opposite of that. It’s about togetherness, and about love in a really deep relationship. It’s about a proper dependence upon each other. It speaks volumes about the real riches offered by a good marriage. Marriage begins, as the preface to today’s service suggests, with the deepest of friendship. First and foremost, husband and wife must be each other’s ‘best friend’. ‘Wherever I am, there’s always you - there’s always you and me’, to bowdlerise A. A. Milne.

But there is also one thing more. For marriage is not just a *nuclear* relationship – two people turned entirely in on themselves. It is something shaped by and sustained in community, or even in *communion*. That’s why we read *Banns*, and that’s why I was bidden to ask those questions at the start of our service, questions to everyone gathered here

The reading from St. Paul we’ve just heard captures this perfectly. It sets human life in communion with God, first of all. We are all ‘God’s chosen ones’. Then, it offers a pattern of life, stemming from that –rooted in the peace of Jesus Christ, rooted in the pattern seen in Christ. But that entire passage also sets life – and that, of course, includes marriage, in the context of community. That’s why *we’re all here* today – to share Gemma and Patrick’s joy and to support them in their life together. So, Patrick and Gemma, you’ll say to each other, I hope very frequently throughout your lives:

‘Wherever I am there’s always you – there’s always you and me.’ We all respond yes – and there’s all of us too – always here to offer love and support and receive the love from the marriage you are to share.

Readings:

Colossians 3. 12-17.

Pooh Bear