

## 25<sup>th</sup> October REFLECTION IN FIVE PARTS MATTHEW 22: 34-46

Today we have an explanation, a word, an action a picture and a story

**The explanation is the auto antonym or Janus word.**

Words that have two opposite meanings such as “dust” (which can mean both “to add a light layer” as in “I dusted the cake with powdered sugar,” and “to remove dust,” as in “I dusted the table before everyone came over for dinner,”) are called Janus words because the god Janus is usually shown with two faces looking in opposite directions, and that “oppositeness” represents the opposite word meanings.



January gets its name from the same Roman god because as the god of doorways and archways, he's also thought of as looking into the past and the future and representing transitions such as the transition from the old year to the new year.

**The word *cleave*** (*an autoantonym*) is what I want to hold on to as we consider our Gospel passage. The interaction between Jesus and the Pharisees about the greatest commandment. Jesus was being challenged and the Pharisees in a scheme of entrapment attempted to challenge him at their own game- interpretation of the Law in particular as to its relevance to the people. They saw the purity laws as evidence of their love of God ( Deuteronomy 6:5) If Jesus agrees then they were right all along, if he disagrees then they will accuse him of sacrilege.

**Cleave,” meaning ‘to cling to or adhere,’ “Cleave,” with the contrary meaning ‘to split or sever (something), ‘ as you might **do** with a cleaver, Jesus begins with the greatest commandment but inextricably intertwined is the second Love your neighbour as yourself (Leviticus 19:18). The two commandments cannot be separated and we are invited to cleave to them as if they are one.**

If we think of the Janus image the Roman God of doorways and archways moving from the old year to the new, this is essentially what Jesus is doing allowing a doorway from the God of Deuteronomy and the God enfleshed in Jesus. The rule and the outworking of it.

### CLEAVE

To hold together and to split apart  
at one and the same time,  
like the shock of being born,  
breathing in this world

while lamenting for the one we've left.<sup>1</sup>

Jesus was holding together in the face of being split apart, he was clinging, adhering to the core of his good news, within the law and relevant to the people. There is another cleaving in this explanation of the law and the prophets, loving neighbour and loving self. Giving from a full cup. The image of the word cleave is holding on for all we are worth as though your life depended on it and the opposite meaning has a violence of the sword to sever ruthlessly.

The Janus image holds another expression to me – Two faced.....perhaps not its intended meaning but relevant to this context. In cleaving to what is true Jesus fails to be separated from what is of God highlighting the difference between the literal and the real outworking of the law as it applies to those who most need the kindness of strangers.

**Our action** The sign of the cross is an outworking of this – our vertical relationship with God and our horizontal relationship with one another.

While we are talking about action today we today hold the image of Martin Luther who was challenging the hypocrisy of the church who would sell indulgences and he hammered up his 95 theses on the church door at Wittenberg. He wanted us to have faith grace and scripture alone. FAITH – Martin believed that we are put right with God simply by trusting in Christ. Yancy says of grace THERE IS NOTHING WE CAN DO TO MAKE GOD LOVE US MORE. Thirdly scripture alone " A SIMPLE LAYMAN ARMED WITH SCRIPTURE IS TO BE BELIEVED ABOVE THE POPE OR A CARDINAL WITHOUT IT. This speaks fully into our text today reformation is a state of being. Let us not be the stuffed shirts but the pink t shirts which stand up to the bullying of vulnerable people. Let us watch our gossip and cleave to what is good and true.

I do not wish to dwell on the second part of the passage but Matthew's emphasis seems not to be about Jesus Davidic descent but how Jesus can be son of David and David's Lord.

I want to show you a **picture**. What can you see? Just take a moment and in your mind construct a story.



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<sup>1</sup> DAVID WHYTE

This is an award winning image from the National Geographic

Above, **Rachel Lloyd** comforts her husband **Paul** after he had a flashback. The scent of a candle in a Utah supermarket had reminded him of the shampoo he'd been using in the shower in Army basic training, where he had been beaten and raped by another recruit. Suddenly his hands were over his face, and he sank to the floor, sobbing. "It's hell, and there's no escape from it,"

This is a profoundly shocking example of how the body keeps the score when someone has experienced trauma . Look at his wife ...is she not the embodiment of love your neighbour as yourself. This is what Jesus was shining a torch at , this is what we are about, the ministry of turning up, being there, sitting with ..

I bet there is not one of us who have not had moments like these. Jesus speaks into the very heart and soul of this as he was being challenged by the stuffed shirts. But are we up to it.....not on our own.... But with trusting in Christ and knowing we are cherished and that book by our bedside we are up to being there for the other.

Now for the **story**.....

Pooh woke up that morning, and, for reasons that he didn't entirely understand, couldn't stop the tears from coming. He sat there in bed, his little body shaking, and he cried, and cried, and cried.

Amidst his sobs, the phone rang.

It was Piglet.

"Oh Piglet," said Pooh, between sobs, in response to his friend's gentle enquiry as to how he was doing. "I just feel so Sad. So, so, Sad, almost like I might not ever be happy again. And I know that I shouldn't be feeling like this. I know there are so many people who have it worse off than me, and so I really have no right to be crying, with my lovely house, and my lovely garden, and the lovely woods all around me. But oh, Piglet: I am just SO Sad."

Piglet was silent for a while, as Pooh's ragged sobbing filled the space between them. Then, as the sobs turned to gasps, he said, kindly: "You know, it isn't a competition."

"What isn't a competition?" asked a confused sounding Pooh.

"Sadness. Fear. Grief," said Piglet. "It's a mistake we often make, all of us. To think that, because there are people who are worse off than us, that that somehow invalidates how we are feeling. But that simply isn't true. You have as much right to feel unhappy as the next person; and, Pooh - and this is the really important bit - you also have just as much right to get the help that you need."

"Help? What help?" asked Pooh. "I don't need help, Piglet."

"Do I?"

Pooh and Piglet talked for a long time, and Piglet suggested to Pooh some people that he might be able to call to talk to, because when you are feeling Sad, one of the most important things is not to let all of the Sad become trapped inside you, but instead to make sure that you have someone who can help you, who can talk through with you how the Sad is making you feeling, and some of the things that might be able to be done to support you with that.

What's more, Piglet reminded Pooh that this support is there for absolutely everyone, that there isn't a minimum level of Sad that you have to be feeling before you qualify to speak to someone.

Finally, Piglet asked Pooh to open his window and look up at the sky, and Pooh did so.

"You see that sky?" Piglet asked his friend. "Do you see the blues and the golds and that big fluffy cloud that looks like a sheep eating a carrot?"

Pooh looked, and he could indeed see the blues and the golds and the big fluffy cloud that looked like a sheep eating a carrot.

"You and I," continued Piglet, "we are both under that same sky. And so, whenever the Sad comes, I want you to look up at that sky, and know that, however far apart we might be physically...we are also, at the same time, together. Perhaps, more together than we have ever been before."

"Do you think this pandemic will ever end?" asked Pooh in a small voice.

"This too shall pass," confirmed Piglet. "And I promise you, one day, you and I shall once again sit together, close enough to touch...under that blue gold sky."

We all need a piglet in our lives. [#worldmentalhealthday2020](#)

KAY

