

July 8<sup>th</sup> 2018

*So, off he went, walking backwards into the forest, whistling merrily to himself, happy now that his hat was a hat and that it was pointing in the right direction.*

*Bump! "Ouch!" cried Pooh as he bumped into a large oak tree. Clunk!Crash!" "Oh, dear!" moaned Pooh as he fell backwards over a fence. "Bother!" complained Pooh as he tripped backwards over the root of an old Elm.*

*And so it went on. As Pooh went on his way, he mused over the difficulty of going about and around and along in the direction of a hat that knew where it was going. **"It might very well be forwards for the hat, but it is most certainly backwards for Pooh!"** he moaned to himself. "It certainly is not something I would like to..." Plop! Plonk! Crump! Crash. Clump! And Pooh was upside down and rolling down into a dell covered fortunately in soft, springy moss. Following head over hooves was Eyeore whom Pooh had happened to back into just as he was taking a Gloomy, Standing Doze. Both Bear and Donkey ended in a heap of yellow and grey at the bottom of the dell.*

*"I AM very sorry, Eyeore. I think I must have missed you there on the path."*

*"Missed me? Missed ME ? "grumbled Eyeore. "I really don't think so. No one ever misses me. Besides, I think you most surely hit me. Still, I suppose it is, after all, not such a bad*

*idea to go backwards. Then you have to say goodbye to all of the things you've just said hello to, and you can't really see what is up ahead, because it is really behind you !"*

So here we have Marks congregation 30,40,50 years after the death and resurrection of Jesus and Mark is trying to make sense of Jesus Ministry and the call of Jesus on the lives of those who choose to follow. Here Marks congregation is looking back, but the hat they are wearing is pointing forward. The congregation are looking back trying to make sense of their current situation. Mark recalls the stories to encourage his congregation through an episode of, we are not quite sure what. Possibly the era of reasonable harmony with Jewish authorities is coming to an end. The golden age of Hebrew and 'People of the Way' worshipping together in the synagogues is coming to an end, there seem to be ongoing arguments between the Hebrews and the people of the Way in regards to Jesus being or not being the Christ. They were getting to a place where there was no common ground. There were also other difficulties for both faith communities in that the ability to live within the Roman occupation and the social injustices of the regime, the empire is coming to a conclusion. The temple was destroyed by Rome in around 70AD leaving people of faith distraught, vulnerable and questioning where their future lay.

*"There really must be a way that I could wear a hat that is pointing in the direction that it wants to go AND for me to be able to point there as well!"*

*"Oh dear." sighed Eyeore. "You really do want to go forward?"*

*"Boldly forwards" announced Pooh. "Most definitely, most sincerely, most positively forwards."*

*"Then," began Eyeore, "You will have to turn yourself around – one hundred and eighty degrees."*

*"Will I?" asked Pooh.*

*Eyore sighed a long sigh. "I am afraid so. I am sorry to be the one to tell you. I mean, I wouldn't expect you... I wouldn't expect anyone to listen to a suggestion from me, a mere Ass. But I might as well suggest it... it does pass the time ... and I think it is going to rain. You need to turn around Pooh. Hold onto your hat and ... turn around. But it probably won't work anyway."*

*So, heeding the advice of his friend, Pooh took hold of his hat, leapt into the air and spun around, a full hundred and eighty degrees. He gripped the blue cap tightly, so that, though it was a Bear of Very Little Brain who turned about one way, the Blue Hat spun about in precisely the opposite direction!*

*Pooh breathed a huge sigh of relief.*

*"Thank you, Eeyore," said Pooh, and he set off into the Wood.*

*"Bother! Bother! Bother!" said Pooh a few moments later, as Eyeore appeared to become smaller, for Pooh was once again following the direction of his hat. "it doesn't seem to have made any difference at all. Goodbye Eyeore."*

So our story, Marks story from Chapter 6 is another story to help the Marken community get moving in the right direction. It is not a happy story, it is one of name calling at its worst, and further assurances or lack of assurance to disciples called to go and minister in Jesus name. The assurance is that life will not be comfortable, ministry in Christ's name is filled with difficulties.

Can you see the sticks and stones?

- Where did this man get these things?
- What's this wisdom that has been given him?
- What are these remarkable miracles he is performing?

These are not humble inquires or appreciative questions.

What of that of the name calling?

- Isn't this the carpenter?
- Isn't this Mary's son and the brother James?

I guess at this stage, you might be asking, what is insulting about those questions? And I would say you mean about Jesus parentage?

Have you not heard, did you not know ... now those are put down questions, insinuating, are you a bit slow of mind?

Better for me to say, well there was talk there is talk that Jesus was born out of wedlock. Worse still the people of Jesus hometown more than likely saw him as a 'mamzer', meaning born out of adultery, incest, rape ... we have a modern vernacular, more commonly used than should be, I won't repeat it.

Name calling is one of the lowest of insults, and is more about the insulter than the insulted. But when we insult others, sadly, it can have the desired effects, one of putdown, marginalisation, knocking confidence, belittling people. And it is not necessarily that we go out of our way to insult, it is the way we talk to people or talk at people, that becomes the belittling, the put-down, marginalisation, which in turn can say, you're dumb, what do you know, I know best!

Can you identify the times personally in your own lives being hurt in this way?

Can you identify how you have hurt others in this way?

By way of highlighting these difficulties, this polemic, these insults Mark is encouraging his community to have faith, they are doing the right thing, God is with them, God is not silent and if we do not call out these stones surely will.

They were at their wit's end and needing wisdom to find the way to go.

Mark acknowledges that things are bad and so tells them this story, reminds them that even for their Lord, people were not agreeable toward him, even in his own hometown?

*Several bashes, crashes, smashes and several bumps later, Pooh firmly decided that it was time to seek out Owl. "Now what is it that I can do for you, Pooh, in the fine new blue hat that you are wearing Back to Front ?"*

*"That's it !" cried Pooh. "That is just it! My hat is Back to Front which means that, for it to be a hat I have to go in the direction it wants to go which is Front to Back. Which is no good at all. I am tired, and I am dizzy. I am wary of everything I leave behind getting smaller, and I am tired of bumping into things. Piglet was no help. Rabbit was no help. And Eyeore was no help. Owl, I am at my wit's end! I need your wisdom."*

*Owl smiled to himself. He did like it when people needed his wisdom.*

"Well Pooh," he finally began. "The problem is this: you are wearing your hat Back to Front. But for a hat to be a hat, it must point in the right direction, which is most certainly not backwards but forwards.

"Now, Rabbit told you that a hat is not a hat unless it is facing in the right direction. That is true. But a hat is really only a hat if it is facing in the direction that you, the wearer of the hat want to go. A hat, so to speak does not want to go anywhere. It merely sits upon your head and waits for you, Pooh Bear, to decide where it is that YOU want to go."

"Ah, I see". said Pooh, not seeing at all.

"Eyeore suggested you needed to turn around in order to face the right direction – the direction of your hat. But it was not you that needed to turn around to meet your hat, it was your hat that needed to turn around to meet YOU. I think we are now clear and have solved the problem."

Owl breathed out a sigh of satisfaction at his logic and wisdom.

"Are we? Have we ?" asked Pooh, who was now getting rather hungry.

"Pooh," said Owl. "Now I want you to do exactly as I tell you. Stand very still. Take hold of your hat by the brim with your left Paw. I shall count to three. On "three" I want you to turn

the hat around and, whatever you do, do not turn yourself around. Am I making myself clear?"

Pooh summoned up all of the thinking he could, and said: "Perfectly clear, Owl."

"Very well then. Take hold of the brim with your left paw."

Pooh followed Owl's instructions.

"On my mark – one, two, three – TURN !"

Pooh took hold of the brim of the blue cap and turned it around.

"And stop!" Owl said finally. "There, one hat facing in the right direction, and one Pooh Bear facing in the right direction."

"Thank you, Owl," said Pooh, thankfully, "You truly are a very wise bird."

"Goodbye, Owl" replied Pooh and set off gaily in search of his house, a jar of honey and an afternoon snooze.

Then he stopped for a moment and thought which, for a Bear of Very Little Brain, he did remarkably often. "Yes indeed, he said, "Forwards is much more agreeable. But I have had a marvellous adventure today. And I suppose I



never would have had such a wonderful adventure if I hadn't been going backwards!"

The End