

2010

PRAYING THE GOSPEL with LUKE

Prayers and meditations about the mission.



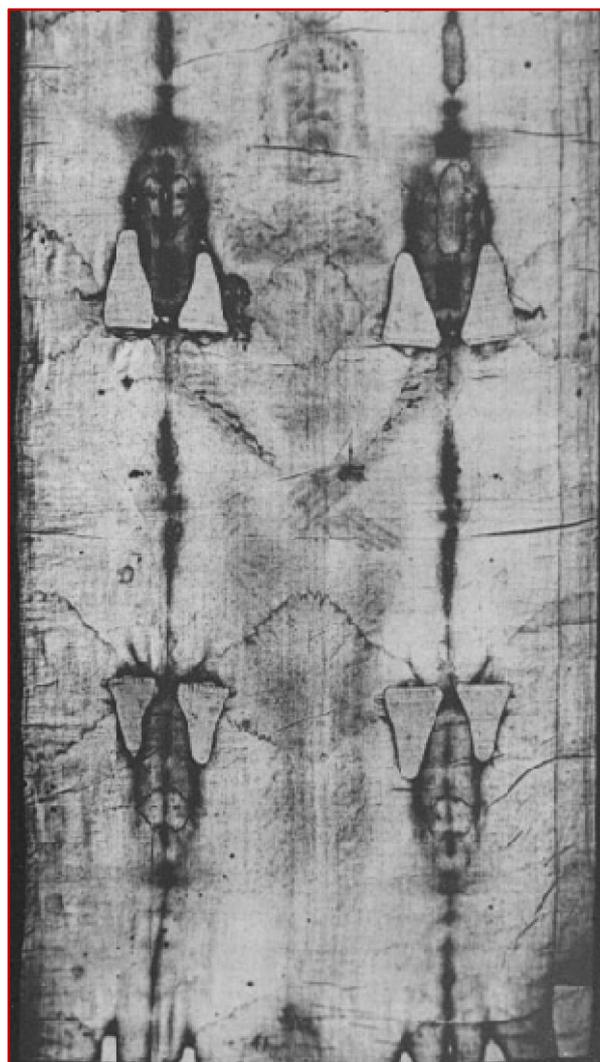
Ian Robinson

This will re-source you.
That's my prayer and my passion.
Take a few breaths. Close your eyes.
You are in Galilee, in Jerusalem, in the gospel places.
Read the gospel passage twice.
Don't skip this step. Read it.
In that light, read and dwell in the prayer/
meditation. Work it out.
Wait a while. Do it again.
When you know what God is sharing with
you, go and do it boldly.
Otherwise, stay very, very still.

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Lk 1:26-38 Another comic drama

There's a girl at our church like Mary,
a bright teenager who loves God.

If some angel had come sidling up to her
talking about babies, she would punch his
lights out quick smart. He would have had to
talk fast.

She knew enough about the birds and bees to
think he must be a bit cuckoo: "...I am a virgin,
and proud of it".

Fortunately her cousin Elizabeth was a
walking, or was it waddling, example of
miracles at the time, so Mary calmed down
and added up what this was going to do
to her career, namely ruin it.

Joseph is a dreamboat but how do you explain
this to a male who can't get his wedding day
out of his mind?

"Let God do with me whatever he wants", she
says.

We remember today, Lord,
that even in our careers,
our intimate relationships,
our thinking of crazy miraculous prayers,
you can be trusted.

You must be trusted.

We want to find this favour with you,
and in the midst

of so many pressures today,
we want to rest in Your love.

**Lk 2:8-20 Angels At Bethlehem**

All those angels singing away, God,
like a grand final chorus.

All those shepherds getting to be first in the
queue

of millions who have come to adore you.

All those improbable events lining up one
after the other,

Delivering wonder and miracle and a special
child.

No wonder we are amazed.

You manage to do wonders with our lives too.

You can bring miracle into hopeless situations.

You guarantee that each child is special,

For you have a purpose for each of our lives.

So, we are here to praise you,

And find our place in the story that you are

unfolding in our time.

In the name of heaven on earth, Jesus, Amen.

Lk 2:22-40 Grow Me Old

Grow me old like Simeon and Anna,
always waiting upon you

with expectation,

not hardened and flexless like old leather.

Make me listen to the Simeons and Annas
around me.

So many days of prayer,

so many trials and temptations,

so many stories of Your faithfulness.

Do not let me rush past their blessing.

Put onto my lips

both the praises with which their hearts were
bursting,

and their witness to the Christ

which their bones were longing to speak.

Do not let my fire burn so low

that no one can warm themselves

in Your light by my side.

Lk 2.41-52 Parents

They were not the last parents to be surprised by how their little boy had suddenly grown up.

Nor the last to watch, wait and search anxiously.

The sceptics say it couldn't have happened and it is just a pious story. But parents know it is indeed quite a likely event, and why aren't there more like it, (and Luke says he asked around Lk 1.1-4). It looks as though, among others, he has again tapped one of the store of memories of Mary herself, so strangely called to be a very down to earth mother to the Son of God.

Heavenly Father, please grant to all parents today the grace to allow you to take your rightful place as the parent of our children, to expect them to be on about their heavenly father's business, to model themselves on Jesus, and not to be anxious about whether they are going to be lost somehow. Prevent us parents and grandparents from pursuing the children's happiness at the expense of their exercise of faith.

Lk 3.7-14 Living Only One Life

With the crowds who questioned John the Baptist, From Monday to Friday we ask "What should I do?"

But just for today, we invite You to go to work on us.

We invite You to go to work with us.

We invite You to go to work in us.

What a joy that you gave us work and leisure, as a way to serve you, a way to know our calling, our purpose, our vocation, a way to experience your Reign, by Living Only One Life with integrity.

We can see the way of contentment, a stream of well-being that is not bought in a shop, but by the habit of thankfulness. What an avenue to do justice in an unjust and fallen world. What a network in which to share the faith of Christ in a pretending world.

We can see the way of creation, the song of all things is nearer to our hearts and lips, than we realized. In our hands is that song, as we co-create With the Holy Spirit at our side.

Lk 3.7-18 The Threshing Floor

Master Jesus, We find our home in you, we are your children

We wait with open eyes and open arms to see all the gifts you are giving, to see and share with those who need our support, to see all the things we can do to be holy children

And we look with joy to see your return.

Fill our mouths with thank-you songs

Lest we perish on the way.

In the name of Christ

Amen



Lk 3:15-22 What Happened?

Personable God,
 We see in Jesus that we can be at one with
 you, Abba, father.
 We see in Jesus that the barriers are down
 now, Saviour and Spirit.
 We see that we can think with more reality
 than our education provided,
 Word and Wisdom.
 Miracle-giver, you are the
 Life-force, the Cosmic Mind, the Eternal Word.

So let us live like Jesus,
 And incarnate the gospel in our own human
 frame,
 as a people who are saved and sent,
 as fully human beings.

So, let us love like Jesus,
 love Abba God with all our hearts and souls
 and minds and strength,
 and love our neighbours as ourselves,
 and love one another, and love our enemies.

And let us welcome the Spirit
 whom the risen Lord has sent forth
 to any of us who welcome him.

Lk 4.1-13 Scripture

Lord Jesus, though you were weak with
 hunger,
 flushed with the vision of glory and giddy
 with height,
 you could still fashion your will around the
 word of Scripture.
 The tests stab to the centre of your personal
 identity,
 the heart of your calling,
 the depth of your relationship with God,
 and still you are discerning truth from half
 truth.
 So fashion our minds and our wills by our
 steady study of your Word,
 that we too will be strong to live and serve and
 worship you only.

Lk 4.14-21 Back Home

You came home to Nazareth.
 It was not enough that you tour the region and
 get a following.
 If it can't be done back home in the local
 church
 it can't be real.
 You proclaim your vision of the Kingdom
 at work among the harsh realities of life –
 poverty, oppression, blindness, brokenness,
 inequality.
 And so your anointed life is fulfilled
 among the puzzling half remembered stories
 of your boyhood
 and the business life in the town.
 Remind us again, we who follow you,
 that it is in our down-home churches,
 amongst our own well worn protests,
 moving our furniture,
 interrupting our TV,
 making us get up to answer your call,
 that your vision can be lived out in full.
 For we are your body here.



The port at Capernaum where Jesus
 pushed out in a boat to speak to
 more people, like a theatre in the
 round.

Lk 4.21-30 **Proprietors**

We know there are some who want Jesus' vision of the kingdom to be thrown away.

They believe they are proprietors of the church,
and others should behave with propriety.
No new things here.

The Holy Spirit is well and truly under control.

There are some in our churches who are feeling threatened and rejected by this even now, Lord.

Show us and them when it is right to stay,
to learn humility and to stare them down,
and when it is right to walk away.

**Lk 5.1-11** **Too much too hard**

It always seems to be either too much or too hard.

Too hard to have to stop what I'm doing to entertain your interruptions.

Too hard to try again after trying all night.

Too much to handle the great gift of souls you will give us.

Too much to see you act so fully in our lives for it uncovers for us our sinfulness.

Yet, to hear your word we will do it.

And at your word of invitation we will do it.

To be "fishers of men", catching people for the kingdom,

we will do it.

Yes, All right.

And we hear you again say to us "be not afraid".

Lk 6.17-26 **Normal**

It is normal, it seems, for disciples to know poverty, hunger, tears, hatred, and rejection. Just so it is normal to want to be rich, well fed always, avoiding the pain, securing a wonderful reputation.

But at what price?

Short changed, half baked, thinly smiling, uncomfortably compromised in the silencing of God's messengers,

we can only look from a distance at the joyful company of those who have learned

to make you the turning point of their lives.

For in that place there is healing, power, and cleansing.

Sea of Galilee from Mount of Beatitude



Lk 6.27-38 It Isn't Working

It isn't working any more, Lord.
 We loved our enemies,
 And they jolly well stopped being enemies
 and became friends.
 The spiteful ones that we blessed,
 started to notice the change in their lives and
 just moved away.
 The greedy bullies turned away,
 Shamed by our non-retaliation,
 To see the full evil in what they did.
 And the ones we shared our last dollar with,
 well they became long term allies
 which saw us through every thick and thin
 for the rest of our lives.
 There were some really strange people
 That we learned to accept without judgement
 (not easy at first, mind you).
 They turned out to be real messengers from
 you, later - we would never have seen it.
 That's what we mean, Lord,
 We can't see enemies anymore,
 we don't keep holding the grudges and the
 purse strings anymore.
 Don't know what to do next!

Lk 7.36 - 8.3 Dress Casual

Simon and the others make dinner party
 conversations, veiling their fears and
 questions.
 This woman comes openly in love and
 devotion, costly in money and costly in scorn.
 The other women, too, so varied on the social
 scale also pour costly love into Jesus and the
 mission.
 And you, Lord, you allow yourself to be
 supported by women,
 to be publically embarrassed among the men,
 to take their side and set them free
 and welcome their devotion.
 Forgiveness knows to sound a clear welcome.
 Forgiveness carries the cost as an honour.
 Love knows the good news of the Kingdom
 is good news for everyone – together.

Lk 8.26-39 What a Mess

Now everyone is upset.
 The herdsmen are upset that business has
 been ruined.

They had long since stopped caring about the
 possessed man.
 The demons are upset because they were
 tipped into the Abyss
 by the Son of the Most High God.
 The people who came out to look at the man,
 see him cured,
 and instead of partying into the night they are
 afraid,
 shut down, seized up.
 Pretty soon, the whole region is on edge.
 No wonder the man begs to go with Jesus.
 I would want to get out of there too, Lord.
 But you sent him back.
 He has to stay in the tension and the mess and
 tell what God has done for him.
 Sometimes, Lord, it is harder to stay home
 than to make the great sacrifice
 and leave for somewhere else.
 Give us today the gladness which remembers
 how much you have done,
 how deep your forgiveness,
 and how high your love.
 Send us home.

Lk 9. 28-36 How to Explain

I'm pretty sure I wouldn't be telling anybody
 either. Who would believe it?
 How would you describe the appearance of
 Moses and Elijah?
 "Oh by the way, Mum, I met Moses and Elijah
 today."

How would you describe the voice?
 "Hello, darling, had a nice day?" "Oh we did a
 bit of climbing, walking, talking, heard the
 voice of the Almighty. Bit cloudy though."

How to comprehend the glistening
 shimmering whiteness of the spiritual glory
 unveiled so temporarily?
 "Jesus had a lovely outfit on today, a bolt of
 lightning actually."

And how to explain what you did about it all?
 "Well, I was asleep through most of it."

What did I do next at the point of such outstanding revelation of the love and glory of God?

"I offered to help by setting up a building project." Yes, it happens a lot, that one.

Thank you, Lord, that since the day of your resurrection, all this fits into place, and we can now open our mouths in adoration and proclamation.

Lk 9.51-62 Follow

The temptations to be distracted from following, proclaiming and serving are coming from all sides.

We are too much afraid of those who might reject us.

We are too self righteous under pressure.

We like too much our sense of place and a pillow for our heads.

We are emotionally controlled by unfinished business with our father or mother.

We are brought to bow to the obligations of family and culture – an ancient idolatry.

None of this was easy for you to say to us, for you knew all these attachments.

But the Kingdom of God will accomplish its ends, You faced resolutely the road to Jerusalem.

We follow you, we proclaim you, we serve you again now, Lord Jesus.

Lk 10.1-20 Can you See?

If only we could see the harvest for what it is, plentiful and heavy in every town, we might see the job to do and become the labourers ourselves (1-2).

If only we did not think the wolves will win in the end, we could be like lambs who bite their noises in the battles (3)!

You trained your disciples with your principles of "no visible means of support but some mighty good invisible ones",

but we want to jump that lesson in our discipleship (4-8).

You reassured the disciples that the Gospel of the Kingdom really is the cutting edge of what you are doing when you are at work in the world.

We prefer blanket approval instead of the justice of judgement, so no wonder we cannot discern where the healings and the freedoms are happening.(9-17).

If only we knew that it is in the delight of knowing you that all of this holds together. Not in powers or battles or struggles, but in your sure welcome at our journey's end. Then we might find our way into the harvest.

Lk 10.21 Revealed

We confess and sing that all eternity, all history and all of the vast cosmos, are framed by this simple confession - a Something that is not too far from any child, a Something that no fashion of science can supplant -

Jesus Christ is Lord,
To the Glory of God the Father.
Yes, Jesus Christ is Lord,
To the Glory of God the Father.
Yes! Jesus Christ is Lord,
To the Glory of God the Father.
Amen



Lk 10.25-37 All the Colours

We are not in control of who gets eternal life and who doesn't.

The expert in the Law thought he had it covered,

but you pulled that illusion off him.

Nor are we in control of who will be our neighbour

and who isn't.

You pulled that little set of blinkers off our eyes –

neighbour-love is seen as much in receiving grace as in giving it out.

Instead of such peace-coloured glasses of religious and racial pride,

we ask you to give us eyes which see all the colours of light and grace.

And then go and do likewise.

Lk 10.38-42 The Seat of Mary

They tell us that since the invention of labour saving devices, the amount of women's housework has doubled.

Since the return in recent decades to a culture of women in employment, the tasks that fall to many women have doubled again.

What a Martha generation!

And when we see in the rocketing house prices, that women must have employment for the family to survive, we have to ask – what system has taken the seat of Mary from so many?

With no opportunity to sit, to wait, to listen to you, the Master,

we are witnessing a most destructive and anti-spiritual consumerism.

Help us all, men and women, please Lord,

to find the spaces and make the spaces, and take the little steps which will gather some momentum eventually,

so that the quiet space at your feet is normal, so that we and our families will be blessed, so that our nation will be made whole.

Lk 11.1 Teach Us How To Pray

Master, teach us how to pray?

(Silence)

Do you want an answer to that question? Do you really want to go there?

(Silence)

Amen

Lk 11.1-13 Prayers

You know, Lord, I lead in prayer sometimes,

And I am too often more concerned

with how beautifully I say it,

than how beautifully I obey it.

Does that leave you cold?

Lk 12.13-21 Leave the Ledger Open

We cover ourselves

by pointing to those who have more than we do.(13)

We justify ourselves

by pointing to those who do worse injustice to get their pile of cash.(14)

We put aside one sort of greed

only to fall headlong into the next one.(15).

We waste our lives on the treadmill of growth economics, hoping it'll get easier some day, and we lose everything (19).

We actually believe ourselves

when we claim we are only doing it to leave something for the children(20).

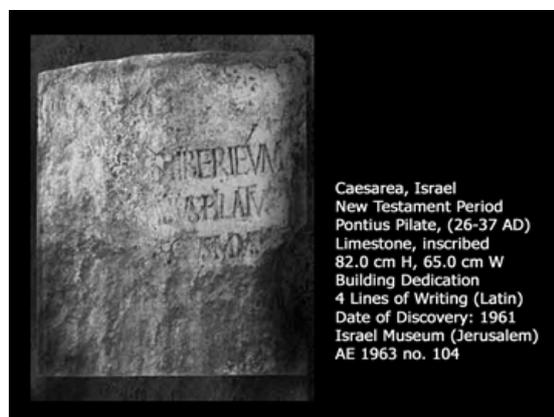
But we are rich fools.

Make us guard our hearts from greed,

and leave the ledgers open.

Make us rich toward God

with generous hands, and unworried spirits.

**Lk 11.1 Teach Us How To Pray**

Master, teach us how to pray?

(Silence)



Lk 12.32-40 Security

No, Lord, we have to invest in our future,
and in our nation.
We want to worry,
and the more we worry the more we have to
build up our security.
The more security we need,
the more we have to attack the limited assets
of the world for our share.
Pity about the poor and their share,
but they don't need much for their standard of
living, do they!

And what with the way moth and rust and
thieves dwindle the pile,
Well, we just have to keep going along this
track don't we!
One day we will get down
to doing it your way,
of resting in you, of sharing generously,
but for now...
Master, back so soon!?

Lk 12.49-56 Inclinations

With a deep and powerful inclination,
we yearn for peace on earth.
With deeper and more powerful inclinations,
we lean towards our families in unity and
solidarity in all circumstances.
We feel such natural judgements are
absolutely right.
But you say not.
You say they hide a hypocrisy
that puts us to the wrong side of the Kingdom.
For our natural judgements about the signs of
the weather are so right,
but we do not think the same about the affairs
of the Kingdom of God.
We do not want to see
the signs of the times.
We do not want to hear
the cries of the suffering.
We do not want to see
our complicity in your crucifixion.
We hate to think we are other than
affectionate and normal and right.
Not so, is it, Lord?
It is only out of your fire,
your baptism,
that people can be healed.

Lk 13.1-5 A Prayer When God Seems Silent

Hear our cries, God.
 We have uttered sore syllables of pain,
 Sought for signs and begged for deliverance,
 But you did not answer.
 Have you heard us?
 We did not pray just for ourselves,
 but you seemed to lack even
 our level of concern.
 Did you ignore the situation?
 We were moved by pain and death, ongoing
 fear and stress.
 What were you *doing*?
 Yes, *what* were you doing?
 Did you cry for justice and were ignored?
 Did you address the nation's leaders
 But they just counted the surplus?
 Did you hold up your Son
 as THE model of leadership
 while they preferred heroes?
 Did you speak the Word afresh and
 send new prophets
 but they were buried alive?
 Did you send people who refused to go?

We remember that
 This lasting peace that you promised
 Can not be done on earth as it is heaven
 If you keep making sudden interventions.
 We know that we would just take you more
 and more for granted.

We remember that
 This lasting love you promised
 Can only come from building connections
 Between people of love and justice.
 Already we have been given
 more than enough.

Now, we are wondering,
 Was it us you were sending?
 Was it us who had to move?
 to share? To learn? To listen?
 Did you seek faith-living persons but found
 lifestyle-lovers?
 We had other noises in our ears,
 The call to wealth, to be seen to 'be sensible',
 the call to self-fulfillment,
 the call to rational control,
 the call to worldly status,

the attraction of pride and possession,
 the deadly appetites that we dress up
 with the word 'passions',
 and, oh yes, simple greed and stupidity.
 Tune our ears to you.
 Make us less 'sensible' and more 'sendable'
 In the name of Christ, Amen

Lk 13.1-9 Worth the Wait

It is no easy waiting game, this era of ours.
 Atrocities like that committed by Pilate,
 are more common now than then.
 Accidents like the Siloam Tower,
 are reported daily wherever earthquake, storm
 or accident squash out human lives.
 No game, but such a work of waiting,
 like a farmer waiting for a crop.
 Working and caring and tending and tilling,
 yet waiting until the harvest is in,
 that's how you engage with
 the world of good and evil,
 right and wrong,
 in serious and potent mixtures.
 So many disappointments!
 Therefore, today we look again at our lives
 to search for the signs of repentance
 and the signs of fruitfulness.
 You reckon that is worth the wait.

Lk 13.10-17 The Weight

Under such a weight of indignation (14) ,
 no wonder she was bent over and crippled for
 all those years.
 What sort of spirit afflicted her?
 It is not named, but is here associated with
 legalism,
 which Jesus calls the bondage work of Satan.
 We too insist on this and that being done in
 church,
 this and that not being done,
 not being worn, not being talked about,
 this or that not quite, you know, not quite "us".
 Are there illnesses in people around us
 that testify to our burdensome spirit?
 Ours the cause and ours the cure.
 Show us in our own hands the power of touch
 to heal (13).

Hear our words that affirm the daughters of Sarah
and the sons of Abraham.
We who are so proud of our church,
may need a touch of humiliation,
before we see the wonders of your work.(17).

Lk 13.31-35 Shoo!

You saw the steady plan of God
marching step by step towards Jerusalem.
You would not be shooed along the path
by the threats of a little fox.
Instead, you would walk and work
steady in that power, day by day.
You would not be shooed away
by the murderous appetite of Jerusalem
for stoning Word-bearers.
Instead, in tune with the love of God
now moving to centre stage,
you want to mother them,
gather them into your heart,
and sorrow over their coming desolation.
Your steps take you to your goal –
your victory, begun in Jerusalem at the end of
this road,
and completed when we shall all shout with
joy to see you,
finally arriving through the clouds,
"Blessed is he who comes in the name of the
Lord."
Gather us in to such resolute loving,
expectantly walking.

Lk 14.1,7 - 14 Hospitality

If I were to follow you Lord,
I would accept to go to the houses of people
who are not my sort.
If I were to follow you,
I would sit in humbler seats, and talk with
humbler folk.
If I were to follow you,
I would give hospitality for the love of it,
not for the gain that might come.
Please, Lord Jesus, show me someone
to whom I can open my home this week,
not so that I can be the big giver in the
situation,
but so that we can find our hearts together.

Lk 14. 25-33 The Cost of Following Jesus

There is something to be built here,
and its foundations must be securely laid.
There is something to be encountered here,
and the costs must be counted.
You want to be first in our lives, Lord,
and you want a clear distance before second or
third place.
No family, no possessions, not even our life.
This is not the time to comfort us
with the promise that they will be given back
somehow later.
This is the time for decisions –
disciple or spectator?

Lk 15.1-10 Looking for the Lost

Inspire us to the task, Lord, of looking.
Not waiting, like the Father awaiting his
prodigal (v11-31),
but the sense of something wrong,
the tireless seeking, and the celebration of
finding.
Give us attitudes in evangelism which are full
of such joy,
such sacrifice, and such sensitivity.
Remove our tendency to sit with the flock,
to meet the needs of the already-saved,
to be deterred from seeking
by the complaining bleats of the ninety nine.
Open our ears to hear the cries of the lost
above the noise of our own conversations.
Open our eyes to notice the newcomer,
to see those who are not
here
yet.



Nazareth

Lk 15.1-3, 11-32 Sacrifices

Two kinds of sacrifice are made daily in our lives.

Like the errant son,
we sacrifice good things to generate the style
of life we think we deserve.
Where we are self indulgent,
someone in the world is paying the price.
And like the waiting father,
people also sacrifice fattened calves
in order to cherish those
who deserve none of it.
Desperate for any kind of
attention from someone,
all hope gone, there are people to whom we
can give hope and dignity
by our actions towards them.

Two kinds of holding on are practised daily
also.

Holding on to slender hope,
with a faith buoyed up by love,
we can be like the father,
waiting and watching,
and noticing at a distance
the first sign of a welcome change.
And then the elder brother waits at a distance
and holds on to his place, his pride, his
privilege and his passionate indignation
at the rank injustice
that is committed in every act of forgiveness
and cherishing.

Today we make our choices.

Lk 16.1-13 God and Mammon

Jesus, you sure know how to affront your
hearers.

That guy was a real snake,
so dishonest and sneaky
about his master's affairs,
yet his shrewdness in winning friends in such
a dirty business deal
seems to get your approval.
Then you say the goal of all this
are friends in the eternal home (v9).
Is this it - we are to work and do business
in such a way
that we invest in relationships?

Every one of these dealings is a person,
and every one of these persons are important
to you?

They may not register on Mammon's statistical
scale, but they register with you?

I can see that happening in personal
relationships, at home, at church,
but I cannot see how we do that in business
relationships?

Lord, suddenly I'm frightened,
for if I cannot see the way forward,
Does this mean, I wonder, that I am one
Who is serving two masters ?

Lk 16. 19-31 Who's going to listen?

Of course, in this information age
he had kept abreast of public opinion,
informed himself of religious trends
and knew that the pillars of the community
were, after all, the church.
He had sought to give charity
where it was deserved,
and to clean up the community,
make it a fit place for decent people.
Funny how his name escapes us for the
moment.

The poor man, sickened and sickening,
begging at the gate, unsettling in his pain,
he it is whom we remember today, Lazarus.
We could picture him there with you, Lord,
among the Living.

We also picture, though it is appalling,
the anguish of Hades on the other side,
the look of self-loathing on the faces of all
who finally admit that they chose to turn away
and they always knew.

It is not the absence of a messenger
that they can blame.

They had Moses, prophets,
and the One who rose from the dead,
but still, no, nope, nothing, don't bother me.

We who are rich have had our rewards,
despite all that this information age is
providing, it cannot provide anyone
with the ability
to listen.

Lk 17.5-10 Who's got faith?

Sorry, Master, that we have stood here
 asking you to increase our faith,
 or stood wishing that the minister
 would preach the hell out of us,
 or that the church would come and
 meet our needs,
 or that if only they had the brains
 they would get their act together
 and...

A little mustard seed, small as it is,
 if it had been employed to the task,
 would have done it all.
 Funny how faith grows the way muscles do –
 first they are given, but then they must be
 used in order to grow.
 Funny also that the exercise of even such
 miraculous faith
 is not our bonny little act of brilliance
 which should impress you.
 It is the normal act of a servant of God
 to go and exercise such a faith,
 and not sit down behind
 our baggage and our obstacles.

Lk 17.11-19 Who thanks Jesus?

If it weren't for the fact that I routinely
 take for granted
 every one I love the most,
 I would feel very self righteous about
 those nine ingrate ex-lepers
 dancing back home
 with a whole new future ahead of them.
 And if I'm honest, I'm part of a society
 that is blessed beyond imagining with good
 things,
 and yet so wantonly addicted to the
 acquisition of more,
 probably because we can't face being humble
 enough to stop and give thanks.

And if grumbles did not so readily jump
 on to my lips
 and pollute the ears of those around me,
 I might venture a bit of indignation
 on your behalf.

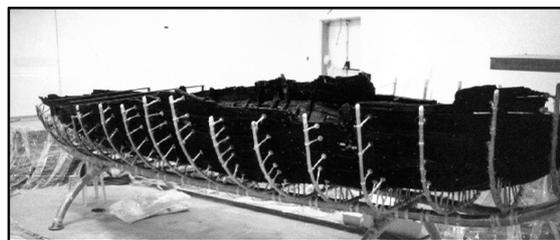
If you healed that community,

90% unresponsive even to you,
 maybe I can be more patient,
 more hopeful,
 and try again nine more times.

Lk 18. 1-8 Don't lose heart

We are weary from holding in our tears for
 Bosnians and Rwandans,
 Haitians and Afghanis,
 For victims of abuse,
 and young people destroying themselves.
 The plight of the poor children in the Two
 Thirds world, getting poorer every year,
 has us tight-jawed, grinding our teeth.
 The stupid vanity of posturing politicians
 and smarty-pants journalists
 has us switching off,
 shaking our heads in silence.

Once, we used to pray about it.
 Sometimes we say something still,
 when the media runs hot,
 but it quickly fades.
 God of compassion, Just Judge,
 prise open the silence,
 call forth the stifled cry of the victim
 from our lips,
 kiss our lips and draw out a stuttering "no"
 that might swell to a shout.
 Night and day, make us call,
 Psalms of lament,
 not just now and then.
 And then, when you hear this cry
 of actual faith,
 the kind which the Son of Man is looking for,
 and not just the wordiness of a passing
 moment of concern,
 you will act quickly.



A first-century Galilean fishing boat

Lk 18. 9-14 Don't look down

We thank you, Lord Jesus, that we have seen
the welcome in our church
to those who are misfits.
We are glad to have seen the smile given to the
socially awkward,
and the firm handshake to the jobbo clothed
in hopelessness at the door.
Thank you that we all begin our services with
our confession of sin
and hold no one exempt from admitting our
status as Sinners Anonymous.
It is good to remember the haughty being
turned aside from their ambitions in a
meeting,
and the whole community elevated together
instead.
Though they do not know it,
we have noticed the good works behind the
scenes of some of our folk,
humble to a fault.
Yes Lord, you are shaping us.
Yes, Lord, we are yours thus far.
Yes, yes, carry on with us so.

Lk 19.1-10 Compelled

One divine necessity meets another.
You were compelled in some way
to see one of Jericho's richest and loneliest
men, Zacchaeus, king rat, fat cat.
You were compelled to go
to his house to stay that day.
Something must have happened
for soon there is another necessity played out.
His repentance is clear as
he returns to honest dealing, restitution,
and sharing his wealth with the poor.

Have we repented?
Is our wealth OK?
Is there a sycamore tree near us where we can
get a proper view of these things?
Please take us to it, Lord,
and meet us there.

Lk 19.28-40 Palm Sunday

The sky is reflected in a window as you pass.
This little event is reflecting
the day of your Coming.
Their shouts reflect the singing of the stars
at the Day of Great Peace.
The Mount of Olives where the crowd are
shuffling their feet
is soon to be your place
of Ascension and Return.
You ride in triumph
without need for stallion or armour.
You foreknew about the colt,
and foreshadow all these things.
But the Pharisees can only see
reflections in a window.
They live a shrunken life.
Meanwhile, we are invited to the party,
where we will dance
under the whole beautiful sky.



Excavations at the City of David, Jerusalem.

Lk 20.27-40 Exercise our Imaginations

There is an afterlife of which we know so little.
Our minds are blighted by medieval pictures
of heaven and hell which do not bear witness
to your revealed Word.

Our minds drift to Greek philosophic ideas
of little souls inside our chest sliding out.
Or the materialistic idea that death is the end,
or whatever.

Shape our minds to know you,
the God of the Living,
who resurrects his own into
a new order of unlimited life.
Exercise our imaginations
to dwell upon this wonder
with glad expectancy
and intellectual humility,
so that we are looking forward
to its adventures
and its purity,
at last.



A boat out on Lake Galilee

Lk 21.5-19 The Firm

May we not be Sign-Watchers,
abandoning the dirty work of the Kingdom in
order to plan your return.
May we be Firm-Standers,
gaining life by giving it away right to the end,
under every circumstance
any evil, any pressure, every trial.
Let us see the opportunity to bear witness
which is being given
with every false Messiah,
as we paint the colours of truth

exactly how they are.

In every anxiety there lingers the offer
to discover true trust, and a deeper freedom
than political freedom can ever fathom.

Come Lord Jesus, come.



A model of the Temple at Jesus' time

Lk 22.27 The Humility Of Christ

Humble Holy Jesus, this is not about me,
it's about us.

With humility, keep us connected.

We want to live in the pattern you laid down -
agape-love.

Into humility, keep shaping us.

Living loving Jesus, we want to see and find
and give life.

With humility, we lay down our lives
in order to find them again,
along the road ahead,
after you have polished its gems.

In the name of Christ, Amen

Site of the palace of Pontius Pilate at Caesarea



Luke 23.33-43 Jesus, Remember Me

REFRAIN: Jesus, Remember me when you come into your kingdom.

(maybe sing the Taize chant)

Lord Jesus, you would be a total failure at our Shopping Centre.

You give yourself away, no bargains, no warranty, no guarantees that any of us would really understand that when you died, we died.

REFRAIN: Jesus, Remember me when you come into your kingdom

You would be a failure at a society party.

You are not choosy about who you are seen with.

Rich or poor, nerds or sparks, jocks or socialites, artists or criminals – you love each one of us in the way we need, perfect.

REFRAIN: Jesus, Remember me when you come into your kingdom

You don't seem to carry yourself like a king. You play with the children, comfort the outcast, confront the corrupt, and you show you are not a self-made man by praying all night.

REFRAIN: Jesus, Remember me when you come into your kingdom

You don't seem to mind what brand of sinner we are – tricky ones who never got caught, clever ones who use the system, silly ones who have been embarrassed in the past, corrupt ones who know we have been compromised somewhere, desperate ones who can't see any way to cope, brazen ones who deny our conscience while we can, foolish ones who just don't know how we can do better than we do. Bankers and boozers, gossips and murderers, lazy Christians and rigid religious bigots, those with sharp words and those with hard fists – You call us all to the same repentance.

REFRAIN: Jesus, Remember me when you come into your kingdom

You don't seem to mind who we are or what we have done .

But you do mind where we are.

So you call us to follow you.

To follow you from where we are now to the place of your choosing, by the way of your making.

God's call in God's ways.

REFRAIN: Jesus, Remember me when you come into your kingdom

We know where we are.

We are ankle deep in polluted land and water.

We are centuries deep in Imperial disruption of aborigines' lives.

We are involved in yet another war.

Our young people are disrespectful and desperately unhappy.

Our old people are lonely and afraid to go out.

Our neighbours don't know each other.

Our media deceives us into a soft focus soporific soap opera view of the world.

The church has forgotten how to pray.

The bible lies neglected.

Please Lord, call to us again to follow you.

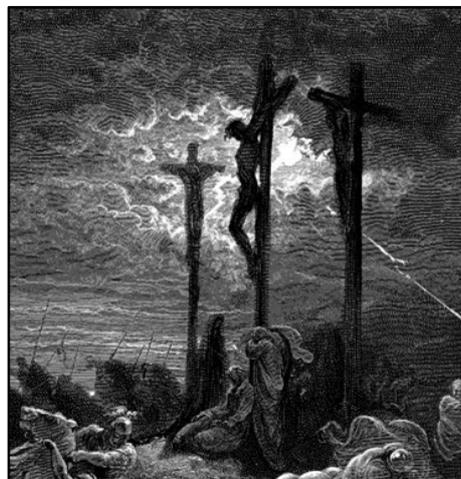
Thank you for coming to our world.

Thank you for being here.

But please, we cannot stay here.

We are following you.

REFRAIN: Jesus, Remember me when you come into your kingdom



Lk 23.33-43 Who holds the strength?

In this scene, it is
 the weak dying betrayed innocent
 who holds the strength.
 All others are afraid of him,
 pinned down he is,
 hurling insults still.
 What makes you so strong?
 I confess that in my life, in the cut and thrust
 of life in this community,
 I hear too loudly the call to "save yourself".
 I back away.
 Do I feel forgotten,
 when you tell the thief that you will certainly
 remember?
 Was I self righteous and
 wanting to find blame,
 while you said "Father forgive them, they
 don't understand"?

Hold me to the cross that I do so wish to carry,
 in order that I may be your person
 in this world,
 in order that I, weak and out of sorts,
 may declare that you are indeed
 strong to save.

Lk 24.13-35 Easter at Emmaus

Because you have saved us
 so openly and so strongly,
 We are confident to bring to you our
 disappointments.
 We bring to you our culture-bound
 commitment to decency.
 And we ask that your Kingdom-purposes
 might be seen in us.

Because you have loved us so completely,
 We can bring to you our fears of hurt,
 our doubts that you might give us
 less than the best.
 We welcome the New Life that
 you prepared for us.

Because you have conquered death,
 We can put aside the fear of suffering
 and the bitter sting of death.
 We ask you to gently take apart
 our inner defences, and set us free.

Open up new spaces inside our hearts,
 for integrity, generosity, kindness, peace.

Because you walk with us, Jesus,
 and show us freedom from failure,
 We can give and receive both
 forgiveness and love.
 We can find ourselves in serving others.
 We can make peace with justice.
 We can know, more deep than breathing,
 communion with a living God.

Oh, the riches of the love
 which you have lavished on us!
 Hallelujah! Christ is Risen.

Lk 24:36-53 What happened?

Some see this as only symbolic of the enduring
 power of Life lived with love.
 Like the memory of my parents,
 anyone in history could have given us that
 sort of message.

Some see your story as a "spiritual event",
 a sign that there is hope of life after death.
 But any ghost, any "resuscitated" story could
 have told us that.

What else is there? We are left with a picture
 of a group of Jewish women and men,
 who rise above their fearful alarm
 with a pervasive power,
 who move their holy sabbath
 from Saturday to Sunday,
 who call their Nazareth friend
 by the most unmentionable name
 in heaven and earth, and
 who speak to the whole world about
 a new Israel and a new Creation, no less.
 Their message was about repentance and
 eternal forgiveness, nothing less.
 What could have happened for such a change?
 The centre of the story is... You
 eating a piece of cooked fish.
 Alive and alive. No less.
 Put us into the message again,
 Risen Lord Jesus.

STORY TIME

When Jesus got out of bed, some people would say it was still dark. But that's because they were asleep. On the path, Jesus saw the stars spinning their bright way west, the moon stood by, and there was the hint of a sunrise, like a silver blush. Jesus could also see that the Kingdom of God was dawning upon the world.

He steered along the paths that led past the baker, past the gambling den, through the market square, around the synagogue, diagonally across the park and out of the village. His whole life had steered him towards these days. Yesterday, he had seen God heal people, under his hand, lots of them. It had never happened before. He had been teaching about God and people were getting it, thrilled to know at last, lives transformed. No one knew where it would lead. This stony track should lead me to the top of that hill.

It was surprisingly hard to climb. Over these first weeks, a number of disciples had joined him at their cost and at enormous risk. And some of the religious people and government people just wanted arguments. Always arguments – why do people not welcome the Father's Son and God's word and God's tender power?

The birds were out as he walked around the hilltop. They were singing the praises of Him who cares for them, chattering, spacking, cluck and dive and whistle, playing chasey, preening for the girl-birds to see, strutting for the boy-birds to see, singing praises. Into this choir, Jesus walked and waited, to pray with his heavenly father, who in his language he called 'abba' which means 'dad'. Jesus and God were very close, as close as whispering. The bushes stood breathless.

As he prayed in the silence, there was a lot going on. It was love being shared, back and forth across the darkling world, such love pouring from the Abba to his child, praise and love given straight back. If you had ears to hear, the stars sang praises. The wind hummed along. The trees clapped their hands. The hills hymned. The lake below played the bass. If you have ears, you can hear. The whole planet and all the stars were awash with love, like winter waves rushing up the beach at high tide. Love tossed in the winds of the Spirit. All in the space of utter silence.

Back at the village, someone was like a grey shadow moving around the darkened house. This

room that room courtyard backyard, shook his head, and put his hands on his hips. He moved quickly. He was excited about all the healings yesterday, and what might he see today. So many people! What a success! Still he couldn't find what he was searching for, and outside, with a glance at the sky, walked around the corners and across the park, still searching.

No one else had yet got up and said 'what time is it' and gone to work or gone to make a cup of tea. In the quiet of his place, Jesus knew what time it was – it was the beginning. He had begun to win the whole world for the Reign of God. 'Dad, show me the next step, the right time. What are the right words to use today when teaching, and when arguing? Give those men and women with me some courage and stickability? I don't even know if they want it, but I so want it for them. Don't please let them retreat into their own ghetto, that would be so sad. Dad, like you do for me, when they enter the hard places and dark spaces of a broken world, may they keep the vision, may they be kept safe from the evil one.'

Out of the dark bushes behind Jesus came a huffing and puffing. Someone paused, then walked a bit, paused, wandered about a bit more. Jesus recognised the muttering. The sun was almost here now. The eastern hilltops were on fire with bright promise. Farmers were moving into their fields. Mums made breakfast for school children.

Simon Peter suddenly loomed up and nearly fell on him. 'Oh! here you are. I've been looking everywhere for you. Have you eaten yet? We are all starving. Aren't you cold sitting here? We've lit the fire. I've brought three text messages for you, there are four suspicious officials at the gate and five people in the courtyard who need healing, sad cases some of them. There'll be a big crowd today, I reckon, we are on a roll! You praying? How long do you want?' He started back the way he came.

'We're not going that way!' Jesus called out. 'We're going this way, to the other villages. People are waiting there too, they just don't know it yet.' Simon wanted to argue. 'As far as I can see, we are having a great impact for God right here. There is a great need. Maybe revival has broken out.' 'As far as you can see, did you say?' asked Jesus, and continued down in the other direction.

Peter had been asleep. Peter just didn't get it yet, about prayer. Do you get it?