

The coming of the Kingdom: revolution, not revolt (Mark 13: 3-37)

“When will they be? What’s the sign?”

3 When he was sitting on the Mount of Olives opposite the temple, Peter, James, John, and Andrew asked him privately, ⁴‘Tell us, when will this be, and what will be the sign that all these things are about to be accomplished?’ ⁵Then Jesus began to say to them, ‘Beware that no one leads you astray. ⁶Many will come in my name and say, “I am he!” and they will lead many astray. ⁷When you hear of wars and rumours of wars, do not be alarmed; this must take place, but the end is still to come. ⁸For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom; there will be earthquakes in various places; there will be famines. This is but the beginning of the birth pangs.

Persecution Foretold

9 ‘As for yourselves, beware; for they will hand you over to councils; and you will be beaten in synagogues; and you will stand before governors and kings because of me, as a testimony to them. ¹⁰And the good news must first be proclaimed to all nations. ¹¹When they bring you to trial and hand you over, do not worry beforehand about what you are to say; but say whatever is given you at that time, for it is not you who speak, but the Holy Spirit. ¹²Brother will betray brother to death, and a father his child, and children will rise against parents and have them put to death; ¹³and you will be hated by all because of my name. But the one who endures to the end will be saved.

The Desolating Sacrilege

14 ‘But when you see the desolating sacrilege set up where it ought not to be (let the reader understand), then those in Judea must flee to the mountains; ¹⁵someone on the housetop must not go down or enter the house to take anything away; ¹⁶someone in the field must not turn back to get a coat. ¹⁷Woe to those who are pregnant and to those who are nursing infants in those days! ¹⁸Pray that it may not be in winter. ¹⁹For in those days there will be suffering, such as has not been from the beginning of the creation that God created until now, no, and never will be. ²⁰And if the Lord had not cut short those days, no one would be saved; but for the sake of the elect, whom he chose, he has cut short those days. ²¹And if anyone says to you at that time, “Look! Here is the Messiah!” or “Look! There he is!”—do not believe it. ²²False messiahs and false prophets will appear and produce signs and omens, to lead astray, if possible, the elect. ²³But be alert; I have already told you everything.

The Coming of the Son of Man

*24 ‘But in those days, after that suffering, the sun will be darkened,
and the moon will not give its light,
²⁵ and the stars will be falling from heaven,
and the powers in the heavens will be shaken.
²⁶Then they will see “the Son of Man coming in clouds” with great power and glory.*

²⁷Then he will send out the angels, and gather his elect from the four winds, from the ends of the earth to the ends of heaven.

The Lesson of the Fig Tree

28 'From the fig tree learn its lesson: as soon as its branch becomes tender and puts forth its leaves, you know that summer is near. ²⁹So also, when you see these things taking place, you know that he is near, at the very gates. ³⁰Truly I tell you, this generation will not pass away until all these things have taken place. ³¹Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away.

The Necessity for Watchfulness

32 'But about that day or hour no one knows, neither the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father. ³³Beware, keep alert; for you do not know when the time will come. ³⁴It is like a man going on a journey, when he leaves home and puts his slaves in charge, each with his work, and commands the doorkeeper to be on the watch. ³⁵Therefore, keep awake—for you do not know when the master of the house will come, in the evening, or at midnight, or at cockcrow, or at dawn, ³⁶or else he may find you asleep when he comes suddenly. ³⁷And what I say to you I say to all: Keep awake.'

(Translation © Lawrence Moore, *Mark for Missional Disciples*, Walking the Walk Publications, 2018)

Jesus' prophetic announcement of the complete destruction of the temple provokes the double question from Peter, James, John and Andrew: "When will these things happen?" and "What is the sign that signals that all these things are about to be accomplished?" Jesus' answer is absolutely crucial. Scholars have called this chapter of Mark's gospel the "mini apocalypse". How we read and understand it is key to how we interpret Mark's purpose in writing his gospel as a "manual for discipleship", rather than as Jesus' version of "the end of time and history".

The Lectionary sets 13: 24-37 (the coming of the Son of Man) as the reading for the first week in Advent. It signals that Advent (the run-up to Christmas) ought to be a time of preparation for the Second Coming. On this reading, God will wind up human history by destroying the world, and Jesus will come again to rescue "his elect" – presumably to live forever in heaven (13: 26-27).

This reading presents the Advent preacher with two obvious headaches:

1. Jesus has apparently abandoned his central message of the Kingdom: the world will not become the place God intended, but will be annihilated.
2. Jesus gets his eschatological calendar badly wrong: he goes on clearly to tell his disciples, "This will happen in your lifetimes!" (13:310-31).

Judging between competing interpretations

Recognising that there are different possible interpretations is not the same thing as saying that interpretation is simply a matter of opinion – that all interpretations are

therefore equally valid. They're not. Some are much better than others; others are wrong to the point of being nonsensical. So how might we judge whether an interpretation is good, likely or valid?

A good interpretation – one that is likely, or valid – is one that illuminates the whole story that Mark tells. It does justice to Mark as a storyteller. It helps the narrative to hang together as a whole, makes good sense of the most important points in the story, and sheds new light on passages that have seemed opaque, disjointed or difficult.

Reading Mark as a “manual discipleship” assumes that Mark’s purpose in telling the story of Jesus is to enable to his own community to follow Jesus faithfully in their own context. Very specifically, it enables them to navigate the crisis of the Great Revolt. And his fundamental point in chapter 13 is that the revolt is *not* the Kingdom.

Jesus, the temple and the Great Revolt (13: 1-7)

Mark could not be clearer: the disciples’ double question is provoked by Jesus’ pronouncement that the temple will be razed to the ground (13:2). The location is significant: Jesus and his disciples are sitting on the Mount of Olives, looking across the Kidron valley to the fortified city and the temple (13:3).

Jesus’ reply begins with a warning: “Take care that no one deceives you!” He immediately goes on to make clear how the disciples might possibly be deceived: there will be “many” claiming to be the messiah (13: 6); they will falsely interpret “wars and rumours of wars” as “the end” (13:7).

This is the situation in 69CE. The Great Revolt is in full swing. There have been initial Jewish successes – the rebels have occupied Jerusalem. “Victory coins” have been minted to replace the hated denarius – the Poll Tax coin that paid for the Occupation. But Roman legions are advancing toward Jerusalem from the Galilee in the north, crushing the Revolt in the countryside. The crosses of the crucified rebels mark their progress. The focus of the Revolt is now on the defence of Jerusalem. Rebel recruiters are working desperately to persuade every loyal Jew to come to Jerusalem’s aid.

Their message is clear: this is a Holy War. Jerusalem is faced with destruction. The temple itself – Yahweh’s dwelling place – is under threat. Jerusalem and the temple were the guarantee of Yahweh’s blessing. The fall of Jerusalem and the destruction of the temple is the very worst possible disaster that could befall them. Not only would it be a military disaster, it would also be the most heinous act of desecration – the contemporary equivalent of the time when the Greek Antiochus Epiphanes IV had attacked Jerusalem in 168 BCE during the Maccabean Revolt and had erected a statue to himself in the Holy of Holies. This even was remembered with horror as the “desolating sacrilege” or “abomination of desolation” (cf 13:14).

The Maccabees had been victorious. They had ritually cleansed the temple and re-

established worship. During the Great Revolt nearly 200 years later, the rebels were making the protection of the temple the centrepiece of their call to take up arms and defend Jerusalem against the advancing Roman legions. This was no ordinary fight, though: it was the Final Battle – the messianic war to free Judea from foreign occupation once and for all. Mark’s community, the rebels proclaimed, was witnessing The End – the fulfillment of God’s purposes for Israel. The temple guaranteed not only God’s blessing, but was the assurance that God was on their side.

Mark’s point is that this was precisely the “deception” against which Jesus had warned. Jesus, he has been at pains to point out, had rejected the role of Davidic royal liberator. The temple was not the guarantee of God’s presence, blessing and victory, but had become a sign of corruption. It was the centre of resistance to Jesus, God’s messiah, and would be destroyed. “The End” was not the liberation of Judea through an armed revolt, but the establishment of the Kingdom of God; it would be accomplished through the events of Easter, not the Great Revolt.

“Stay awake! The revolt is not the Kingdom” (13: 8-37)

1. “This is not the end but the beginning ...” (13:8):

Jesus echoes the apocalyptic language of the rebel recruiters in order to deny their interpretation: “These are signs of The End”. Apocalyptic language belongs within a vision that equates events on earth with events “in the heavens” - ie sees human events within history as a mirror of God’s purposes “in heaven”. The rebels pointed to “wars, rumours of wars, earthquakes and famines” as signs that God was bringing about The End. Jesus says, “Yes, I see those events too. And they are signs of God’s intentions. But that’s the wrong reading: they’re not signs of The End, but of The Beginning!”

The beginning of what? Jesus calls them “birth pangs”. This has the double sense of “the birth of the New World” (ie the Kingdom) and of suffering. For Jesus, the Kingdom will come, not through revolt, but through suffering and sacrifice. The messiah will not establish the Kingdom by leading a victorious army, but by dying and rising. The “sign” for which the disciples ask will be Easter (13: 24-27).

2. “Non-aligned, non-violent resistance and suffering” (13: 9-13):

Like the rebels, Jesus has told his disciples that discipleship entails “denying themselves, taking up their cross and following him”. It is about “saving their life by losing it for the sake of Jesus and the gospel” (8: 34-35). Unlike the rebels, this is not about joining the Great Revolt – or any armed revolution. Jesus refuses to align himself with the revolutionary politics of Davidic kingship/messiahship, or the accommodationist politics of the Sadducees and temple moderates. The Kingdom will come about like a seed planted in fertile soil that yields a rich harvest (4: 1-9). The seed must necessarily “die and be buried” in order for the harvest to be realized; the seed will prove to be none other than Jesus himself.

This is what will happen as Jesus brings his mission to Jerusalem. And this is what

following Jesus means: sharing in the Kingdom-producing process of dying and rising.

Jesus now warns his disciples that this will be the pattern of their own lives, if they follow faithfully. It is also Mark's message to his own community: God is calling them to sacrifice and suffering, but through non-aligned, non-violent resistance, not by signing up as armed revolutionaries.

This is what "preaching the Good News" means concretely in the context of the Great Revolt. Jesus warns that their loyalty to him and to The Way will not spare them from suffering, but mean the opposite: standing against the Revolt brings down the wrath of both sides. Their refusal to join the rebels means that they will be pursued and persecuted by every religious and legal means possible (13:9). Additionally, they will face huge pressure from the Roman authorities to save their lives by selling out their companions (13:12). "Enduring to the end" means taking these consequences ("taking up their cross"), even if it means death; that, ironically, is the means by which they will be "saved" (13:13) as Jesus had promised (8:35).

3. *"Time to run" (13:14-23):*

What is the "desolating sacrilege"? Mark's editorial comment ("let the reader understand") suggests that (a) it will remind the reader of the desecration during the Maccabean Revolt and (b) its meaning will be absolutely clear to his readers when they see it.

Jesus clearly believes that a messianic revolt is imminent in the near future, and will not succeed. Jerusalem will be overrun and the temple will be destroyed. Those who see this as the Final Battle will believe that the hour of greatest threat is the moment at which God will intervene to save the city. They will see themselves as God-appointed messiahs (13:21-23) and call on people to lose their lives in what will prove a futile and tragic defence of Jerusalem, because God is not going to save the city. That future revolt is happening in Mark's own time.

Jesus' message is therefore, "When you see the Roman legions inside the Holy City (ie the "desecrating sacrilege"), this isn't the moment to expect God's intervention; it's time to run for the hills!"

4. *Easter – the sign of the coming Kingdom (13:24-26):*

Easter, and not the Great Revolt, is the means by which God will establish the Kingdom. This imminent event in Jesus' own life has cosmic significance in God's saving purposes. Jesus couches this in the apocalyptic language of a darkened sun, a failing moon, falling stars and the "shaking of powers in the heavens" (13: 24-25).

Apocalyptic language signals a fundamental conflict about world order – a "battle for the universe". It pits the "old order" against the "new heavens and the new earth". Mark presents Jesus as God's Liberator – the bringer of the Kingdom. He is not a reformer or repairer of the world: he is a revolutionary. The old order has to

be completely overthrown – it has to die – in order for the new world of God’s Kingdom to be born. Jesus’ call to discipleship is a call to take sides in that struggle – to align one’s self either with the old order (the way things are presently) or to begin to live already in the new world that is in the process of being born. As the rich young would-be disciple discovered, you can’t have it both ways!

We ought therefore to understand Jesus as referring to his crucifixion in these verses, rather than to a literal destruction of the universe. The symbolism of the darkened sun, failing moon and falling stars is rich. It means that fabric of the universe is being altered. It signals disaster: Jesus’ death is a disastrous end for him personally, but also for the world, because it is a rejection of the salvation he offers (the Kingdom). In Mark’s story of the crucifixion, the light (the first creative act of God) fails; darkness settles over the whole land in the final three hours it takes Jesus to die (15:33). Jesus’ death cry is a cry of utter despair that properly belongs to the whole world: “My God, my God, why have you abandoned me?” The darkness could not be more complete.

But there is hope, too. Mark presents Jesus’ crucifixion as Rome’s triumph. Caesar has apparently won; the world order has remained intact. Mark’s community knows the Easter story. The God who can bring light out of the cosmic chaos and darkness at creation is the same God who can bring life to a dead Jesus and a dead world. This is the Resurrection God, whose loving purposes for life and human flourishing cannot ultimately be defeated by any agency or power – human or demonic.

The “power and great glory” of 13:26 is surely a reference to Jesus’ resurrection and its cosmic consequences. Jesus invokes again Daniel’s Son of Man (the “Human One”), which is his chosen self-description. The term “son of man” is literally a Hebrew colloquialism for “human being”. Calling himself “the son of man” is, on first reading, the equivalent of Jesus saying, “I as a bloke”. By invoking the Daniel vision (Daniel 7: 13-14), Jesus emphasizes his role as God’s agent and universal king. The resurrection of the crucified Jesus of Nazareth is nothing less than the birth of the New Creation.

We will see how Mark presents Jesus’ resurrection as the third call to follow – the new start for the disciples who slept through Gethsemane and abandoned him at his arrest. The resurrected Jesus is the one who will send out the angels to “gather his elect” (disciples) from every place on earth. This is the gospel of the Kingdom for the whole world.

5. *“The fig tree again – learn the lesson!” (13:28-31)*

Once more, Jesus uses the fig tree as a parable. He cursed the unfruitful fig tree that bore only leaves on his arrival in Jerusalem (11: 12-14) in what seemed an unreasonable fit of hunger-fuelled pique: it was, after all, not the season for figs.

But if, as we saw, the fig tree is a symbol of Israel’s faithfulness, and Jesus’ point is that Israel was unready for God’s *kairos* (ie God’s saving appearance in Jesus), then

13: 28-31 makes clear sense. When Jesus cursed the fig, he said, “May no one ever eat fruit from you again!” (11:14). Now he points to the tree which is in leaf (ie just before fruiting) and tells his disciples, “Learn the lesson I’m trying to teach you! These events are just around the corner! There isn’t time for the tree to bear fruit!” The rebel message is that God is going to save Israel by the people being faithful and signing up to the Great revolt. Jesus says, “No, that is not what faithfulness (fruit) entails! Israel *will* be saved – but not through their own faithfulness. That tree will never fruit. Instead, it will be saved by *my* faithfulness – enduring the events that are just around the corner for me at Passover!”

6. “Keep awake!” (13:32-37)

The disciples had effectively asked, “When will the Kingdom come?” Jesus has given the sign (Easter) in answer to the second of their questions. The first (“when will these things happen?”) hasn’t been addressed: Jesus has spent his time telling them why the forthcoming so-called messianic war isn’t it!

Now Jesus answers them: “Only God knows: I don’t!” He characterizes faithfulness in this waiting time of unknown duration as “Keep watch! Keep awake!” In his parable, the disciples are urged to keep watch through the 4 watches of the Roman military night: evening, midnight, cockcrow, and dawn.

As we get to Mark’s Easter, we realize the echoes of the Gethsemane story. The disciples sleep through the evening of Jesus’ wrestling; Jesus is tried through the night; Peter denies Jesus at cockcrow; dawn brings torture, crucifixion and death.

Jesus is not talking about the end of the world and human history. He is telling his disciples what living faithfully as part of history entails. Jesus’ point is that wakeful watchfulness and faithful longing for the Kingdom are always and everywhere to be the attitude and actions of a church that has joined the Final Battle for the life and soul of the world on the side of the risen Jesus. This is what true revolution means.

Going deeper into the text (Mark 13: 3-37)

For reflection:

The world is changing for Mark's readers. He is convinced that his community needs to look to Jesus in order to discover what faithful discipleship entails in the context of the tumultuous events of the Great Revolt. Jesus calls them to walk a very difficult path: the path of non-aligned non-violence. It is a path that is no less revolutionary than the Revolt. It isn't about non-involvement; it's about the *way* in which his followers ought to be involved. It is the call to take on the mantle of suffering that is a consequence of Jesus' own confrontation with the powers and follow the Way of the Cross.

Our own context is very different, but perhaps no less tumultuous and

bewildering. There are certainly no easy answers! What might it mean for us to "Keep watch and stay awake"?

1. In what ways do the changes taking place in our own world face us with difficult choices about how to respond in a "Jesus-shaped" way?
2. What are our own equivalents of armed revolt, accommodation to the system or of buying into a triumphalist theology of divine protection?
3. In what ways might we be viewed as "traitors to the cause", or be tempted to sell out our brothers and sisters in return for our own safety/quality of life?

All age worship ideas (Mark 13: 3-37)

One of the keys to good all age worship is to keep it simple and relatively short. Ideally aim for a service of 45-50 minutes. That's not to say a service can't be longer but if you are thinking of 1hr30+ think carefully about your use of space and above all else be creative, take risks and have fun – partying is integral to the kingdom but we'll leave that for a year on Luke...

Reflection – At the heart of these verses is the call to 'crack on' with living out the good news of Jesus. The world will tear itself apart, false prophets, world leaders, teachers, media moguls, even those closest to us may claim to know the truth but Jesus urges his friends to trust in him, his teachings and example, and the Spirit he sends to be their helper. They are not to argue there way out of a situation but trust in God's Spirit to help them stay true to what Jesus has imparted to them in their short time together. Hard times come for everyone but no matter what we face globally or personally the truth of Jesus, his example of transforming love and perfect justice prevail and are the only 'weapons' that can stand against the tide of persecution. It reminds us why discipleship is so important – we don't simply obey a set of teachings – Jesus becomes our identity as we follow him and imitate him in everything as the Spirit gives us power to do. To live this Jesus-shaped life is the only way to be ready and watchful.

Activity – 'Fake' news! Play a game of true or false with some stories from the news – get some newspapers from the week before and find some strange stories. Alongside that either make up some others stories or, if you have internet then search for stories that were presented as truth by media but turned out to be false. One example might be – 10% of the world's refugees and asylum seekers currently live or are seeking entry to the UK. True or False? The answer is actually false. Even taking into account generous estimates for those people who manage to pass the authorities unchecked the UK still only receives less than 1%! In many countries where there is oppression and injustice Christians and others are persecuted for daring to speak truth, they may be tortured, imprisoned, told to leave

or their families will suffer, many are killed. Being disciples of Jesus means that wherever people are seeking to live out their faith with integrity they are our sisters and brothers. We are not called to speak over them but alongside them. To join our voices and challenge what they challenge, and in our own context to speak truth when we see the world tearing itself apart as Jesus predicted. The church that so often has been bad news needs to live faithfully in the light of Jesus and be a reminder that the kingdom is good news for all.

Prayer – make prayer stations using maps of nations where people who speak for truth are persecuted. Also have stations for our own nation and those that have the most power. Have pens, paper, post its and invite people to write their prayers and to sit/stand as they pray quietly.

Guide people to move amongst the stations and to join their voices with those of the poor and oppressed. As they move towards the powerful nations, pray against the people and systems that spread lies to retain power as well as those who create a hostile environment where the refugees are demonized and the poor are abandoned.

Liturgies and hymns Mark 2: 1-12

This is where you can find hymn suggestions and liturgies for use with this week's text.

HYMNS

WATCH TED TALK ON STARTING A MOVEMENT

https://www.ted.com/talks/derek_sivers_how_to_start_a_movement

How can we become a revolutionary movement for Jesus?

Call to Worship

Where crooked roads need straightening

Prepare the Way for the Lord

Where people walk in darkness

Prepare the Way for the Lord

Where busy lives need stilling

Prepare the Way for the Lord

And now, in this place and among your people gathered

O Come, O Come Emmanuel

Into this broken world we call planet earth

O Come, O Come Emmanuel

Into this busy place that we call home

O Come, O Come Emmanuel

Into this fragile group of your people

O Come, O Come Emmanuel

Into cold hearts and dulled minds

O Come, O Come Emmanuel

Where there is no peace

O Come, O Come Emmanuel

Where people shout in the wilderness

O Come, O Come Emmanuel

Where people walk in darkness

O Come, O Come Emmanuel

O Come Lord Jesus and help us find room for you in our hearts. Amen.

written by Phil White. Posted on the Church of Scotland's [Starters for Sunday](#) website.

Praying that we may be ready

(based on Matthew 24:1-14, Mark 13:1-13, Luke 21:5-19)

When the skies grow dark and buildings fall, then hear us:

have mercy on us, Lord.

When deceivers come and the nations rise in anger, then hear us:

have mercy on us, Lord.

When famines begin,

and when the earth shakes to bring the future to birth, then hear us:

have mercy on us, Lord.

When we take our stand to witness to your truth,

when our people are arrested and betrayed, then hear us:

have mercy on us, Lord.

When the sun is darkened and the moon fails to give us light,

and when the stars fall from the sky, then hear us:

have mercy on us, Lord.

When you come in your great power and glory with your angels from heaven:

Then, Lord,

gather us from the four winds—

from the ends of the earth,

to be with you for ever and ever. Amen.

~ written by Michael Perry. Posted on the [Error! Hyperlink reference not valid.](#) website.

Prayer of Petition and Intercession

(inspired by Isaiah 12:1-6, Luke 21, Mark 13, Revelation 21:1-5)

We are glad and rejoice forever in you, O God.
With joy we draw deeply from your well of salvation
and pray that even as we have sung, you may fulfill our story—
the story of your love.

Though the world has been gripped by trouble since early days,
and life has often been short and tormented,
you have given us a vision of a day beyond the terrors:
a day when the heavens and earth will be new again,
a day when the sound of weeping will give way to delight,
a time when all creation will live in peace
and people will long enjoy the fruits of their labours.
Help us to hold to that vision when the temples about us are falling,
and our world is shaken.

Strengthen us for the telling of your truth
and for keeping to your path,
that we might not weary in doing what is right,
but through endurance may gain our souls,
even as you desire for us to do.

Lord, hear our prayer....

As we pray for a new heaven and a new earth this day,
we especially are aware of those among us
and those beyond these doors who are in deep need of your peace,
of your healing touch, of your just and bounteous kingdom.

We pray those who dwell in places of strife, need, and want....

Lord, hear our prayer....

We pray for those who have been bereaved in the past week....

Lord, hear our prayer....

We pray for those who are unemployed and those fear layoff or termination
and all those struggling with a burden in the workplace and the marketplace....

Lord, hear our prayer....

And finally, we pray for today for those of our brothers and sisters
who face persecution because of their faith.

For those who are deprived of their basic human rights,
and those who are deprived of their lives
because of their desire to worship and serve you...

Lord, hear our prayer....

Let us give thanks to the one to whom we pray,
the one who brings both the snow and the sun;
the one who heals this troubled world;

the sick; and those who turn to Him in faith;
the one who grants new life not only to us,
but to the creation itself....

Lord, hear our prayer....

Gracious God,
we pray to you in the name of the one who came to show us the way,
he who is our Lord and our Redeemer, our brother and our friend.
We pray to you as one family, even as he taught us, saying...

Our Father....

~ written by Rev. Richard J. Fairchild, and posted on [Kir-shalom](#).

Affirmation: The Coming Kingdom

Here's a 20th century South African creed. It was posted on the *Long Green Valley Church of the Brethren* website.

Affirming our Faith

Jesus taught us to speak of hope as the coming of God's kingdom.
We believe that God is at work in our world
turning hopeless and evil situations into good.
We believe that goodness and justice
will triumph in the end
and that tyranny and oppression cannot last forever.
One day all tears will be wiped away;
the lamb will lie down with the lion,
and justice will roll down like a mighty stream.
True peace and true reconciliation are not only desired,
they are assured and guaranteed in Christ.
This is our faith.
This is our hope.

Affirmation: The Love-Kingdom of God

A Creed: The Mini-Parables of Jesus

We believe in the love-kingdom of God,
through Christ upon us, within us, beyond us.

We believe the love-kingdom is like a mustard seed;
sown in apparent insignificance,
growing into magnificence for the greening of the world.
We believe the love-kingdom is like yeast;
inserted in humble insignificance into the dough of life,
expanding into enough bread for the world.

We believe the love-kingdom of God is like a treasure;
lost and rendered insignificant under the ground,
now found with joy and thanksgiving.
We believe the love-kingdom of God is like pearls;
all others become insignificant
when the largest, most beautiful pearl of all is found.
We believe the love-kingdom of God is like a net full of fish;
where even insignificant sardines are saved
but worm-ridden barracouta are thrown away.

We believe in the love-kingdom of God,
through Christ upon us, within us, beyond us;
where the meek and the poor, the merciful and the hungry,
rejoice with the angels of God.

Loving God, we believe; scatter our unbelief.

Hymn suggestion

CMP 151 For I'm building a people of power
CMP 32 An army of ordinary people

Take up your cross and follow me!

© Graham Adams (2014)

Suggested tune: Gonfalon royal

Take up your cross and follow me!
Dare risk upsetting powers-that-be –
the forces shaping life and thought;
expose the webs in which we're caught.

Take up your cross at one with those
whose role as scapegoats grows and grows;
so love 'the least', who give, give, give –
those asked to die before they live.

Take up your cross – the Empire's tool –
though it may make you seem a fool;
but not to bless the fear it spreads,
instead to drain its poisoned threads:

Denounce the lie that 'might is right';
that says the poor deserve their plight.
Take up your cross and follow me:
the kingdom's truth shall set you free!
Amen.