

The Song Of Luke
A Verse Rendering
Of
The Gospel According To St. Luke

By

Jabez L. Van Cleef

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About the Text

The text of this work is adapted from “The Song Of Luke” first appearing in the book *Gospels In Verse, A Text Resource for Musicians and Composers*, (0712-VANC, Xlibris Corporation, www.Xlibris.com). It has been changed as follows:

1. I have attempted to remove from the story all false and sinful condemnations of Jews which have historically contributed to the practice of eliminationist anti-semitism. The crucifixion of Jesus is shown as the assertion of Roman power, with the collusion of certain religious authorities, within the context of a cosmopolitan and polyglot community.
2. The conventional notion that Jesus was followed by a band of twelve men has been modified to include occasional references to women among his followers. Because Judas is often considered to be a personification of the supposed betrayal of Christ by Jews, some references to Judas have been deleted. The group referred to as “disciples” is construed to include both women and men.
3. Narrative which includes masculine pronouns and other gender-specific terms has often been modified to allow interpretation as descriptive of either sex.
4. References to God or Jesus which would favor one form of human government over another, e.g. ‘king’, have often been deleted.

In all other I have attempted to create a text for singing that is “congruent” with holy scripture, as advised in *The Book of Common Prayer* (pg. 14). I welcome any suggestions to change the text in accordance with the above guidelines if a reader discovers the need for such alterations.

Send all inquiries to jabez.vanCleef@verizon.net or visit <http://www.spiritsongtext.com>

1.

Many have tried to tell this tale
And many died in the telling;
These words have passed among us all
As sermon, or pray'r, or singing;

My spirit said that I should try
To tell this story truthfully,
So you who love Jesus should see
Written down, his song and story.

In Judea, when Herod ruled,
Among the chosen people lived
Zachariah, with his wife, called
Elizabeth, in bonds of love.

They both obeyed the Lord's command,
And people said good things of them;
Yet they were childless, and didn't
Expect a child, for she was barren.

One day the priest Zachariah
Burned some incense before the Lord,
While all the faithful worshipers
Waited for him to come outside.

And there appeared a bright angel,
Standing next to the high altar.
The priest Zachariah trembled
When he saw the angel's splendor.

The angel comforted his fears,
And said, "Zachariah, rejoice;
God has answered for you your pray'r.
Be glad, for God has heard your voice.

Elizabeth will bear your son,
And John will be his earthly name;
And when the will of God is known,
All the people will welcome him.

He shall prophesy things to come,
He shall fast and not drink of wine.
And even from his mother's womb
He shall declare the Holy One.

He shall bring the Jews back to God,
All of them will increase their faith;
He shall walk as Elijah did,
And guide them to follow his path.

And even those who've disobeyed
Will hear the wisdom of his word;
He will exhort them all, arrayed
In light, to stand before the Lord.”

In wonder, Zachariah said,
“I know not how to know these things;
My wife and I are nearly dead.”
The angel spoke, shaking his wings:

“I, Gabriel, come down from God!
Hear me! I stand and speak to you!
I bring to you His holy Word!
So how else would you have it be?

Behold, you will not speak a word
Until my promise comes to pass,
For you did not believe the Lord
Such pow'r and glory could possess.”

All the people waited outside
To see when the priest would come out;
And when they saw him, they perceived
He had incurred the wrath of God.

He came back again to his home.
There, he and his wife hid inside –
They were afraid to show their shame
For what the people thought they did.

Six months Elizabeth waited,
And then the angel came again,
Now to Mary of Nazareth,
To whom Elizabeth was kin.

Mary, a virgin, was to wed
Joseph, of David's house the son.
The angel spoke to her and said,
“Hail, Mary; O thou favored one,

The Lord be with you.” But when she
Considered well who spoke to her,
What sort of greeting this might be,
She found only confusion there.

The angel spoke to her again,
“Mary, do not be afraid now,
You have God's favor, without sin,
And God will do great things for you:

With God you will conceive a son,
And Jesus will be his giv'n name,
By all the world he will be known
As Son of that God whence he came.

And God will give him David's throne,
To be the king of all the Jews.
Forever after he will reign;
He will be blest in all he does.”

But Mary said, "How can this be?
Because I have no husband now."
And so the angel answered her,
"Listen, and I will tell you how:

The Holy Spirit will come down,
The pow'r of God will embrace you,
God's substance will become your Son,
Through you the pow'r of God will flow.

Though she is old, Elizabeth
Will bear a son and call him John;
The pow'r of our God is so great
That impossible things are done!"

Then, to the angel, Mary said,
"Behold, I am the Lord's handmaid,
This is according to your word."
And then the angel disappeared.

Mary went to Elizabeth,
And from the gate called out her name,
"Elizabeth!" with bated breath,
Who felt her own babe in her womb;

She felt the Holy Spirit's flame,
And answered Mary, "Blest art thou!
Blest be the baby in thy womb!
Such gift is mine, I know not how,

That God's own mother visits me!
When I first heard thee call my name,
The babe inside me leapt for joy,
And greater wonders yet will come!

So thou art blest now to believe
All that was told thee by the Lord,
That in thy womb thou wouldst conceive
His Son, the everlasting Word."

"My whole being praises the Lord,"
Mary sang with tears in her eyes,
"My spirit rejoices in God,
Who treasures my humilities;

So now throughout all future time
People will know this mystery:
Holy and mighty is God's name
Who has done all these things for me.

God's mercy flows from age to age,
With a strong arm God's will is done,
God scatters the proud in their rage,
Their heart's imagination gone.

God overthrows these mortal kings,
Exalting those of low degree;
God fills the hungry with good things,
And sends the rich empty away.

As God protects all believers,
May we remember the mercy
That God has showed to our forebears,
And keep God's faith eternally."

Then Mary stayed three months beside
Her kinswoman Elizabeth;
And both of them rejoiced in God,
Till Mary took her homeward path.

Elizabeth then bore a son,
And all of her neighbors rejoiced,
But when she tried to name him John,
Not one of them approved this choice;

They asked what Zachariah thought,
"What name do you want for your son?"
And, speechless, on a slate he wrote,
"The baby shall be known as John."

Then they protested all alike
That this was not a family name,
But marveled when they heard him speak,
And saw God had forgiven him:

His tongue was loosed, and the words came,
And the good news reached ev'ryone,
And all of them rejoiced with him,
And they wondered what it would mean.

So Zachariah prophesied:
"Blest be the God of Israel,
Who comes now to redeem the world,
And brings salvation for us all;

As he made words out of the breath
Of all the holy ones of old:
That each of us would not taste death,
His might and pow'r would be our shield;

That God would now come among us,
We would see his deeds of mercy;
The oath he swore to our fathers,
That we should be his progeny,

Delivered from our enemies,
To serve God without any fear,
And be led to have righteousness,
As each of us is God's creature.

My child will be a clarion,
Making way for the one who comes;
All people will find Salvation
In the forgiv'ness of their sins;

As when God's tender mercy comes,
Like the day springing up on high,
Shedding light, while the darkness dims,
Granting peace, leading us to see."

In the fullness of time John came
Out in the wilderness to dwell,
Until his spirit could proclaim
The Word, before all Israel.

2.

The worldly ruler in that day,
Augustus, Emperor of Rome,
Declared there would be tax to pay,
And each would be enrolled at home.

So through the vast empire they came,
All the people, humble and high;
Slow or fast, ev'ry one went home.
So Joseph came to Galilee,

And he, with his wife Mary, went
To David's city, Bethlehem,
For he from David claimed descent,
And there the law said he must come.

When they came into Bethlehem,
Mary's first pains of labor came.
There was no house or inn for them,
So she lay down with ox and lamb,

In a dark stable bare and cold,
And there she saw her first-born son,
In a rough cloth, fold upon fold:
And in this way God's will was done.

Nearby, some shepherds watched at night
Out underneath the starlit sky,
And a bright angel cloth'd in light
Appeared before them suddenly.

The glory of the Lord blazed out,
And all the shepherds shook with fright,
But then the angel said, "Fear not,
I bring you all good news tonight:

Your savior has been born today,
And you will find him in the straw;
Look where all the animals pray,
And where the lowest make the law.

A host of angels filled the sky,
Prais'd God, and sang a mighty hymn,
"All glory be to God on high,
And on the earth, peace to all men!"

Then when the angels went away,
The shepherds came and saw the child,
Wrapped in a cloth as rough as hay,
And by his mother gently held,

And ev'ryone they saw, they told
What the angels had said to them,
That all should come and see the child,
And all bow down to worship him.

In eight more days it came to pass
They gave him Jesus for his name:
The angel had commanded this
Before he entered Mary's womb.

They brought him to Jerusalem
To be presented as the Lord's,
And make a sacrifice for him,
As law decreed, by killing birds.

And in the temple, Simeon,
An old man, righteous and devout,
Led by the Holy Spirit's plan,
Came there to seek the baby out.

God's messenger had promised him
He'd see the Christ before he died,
And when he saw this fam'ly come,
He took up Jesus and he cried,

“O Lord, now let me die in peace,
According to thy promised word,
For here I see before my eyes,
The savior whom thou hast prepared,

Which in thy word thou dost foretell:
The light of nations is revealed,
The glory of all Israel
Now rises with this little child!”

When they saw and heard Simeon,
Mary and Joseph were amazed.
He gave them all his blessing then:
“Our destiny is realized:

Many shall rise, and many fall,
Many oppose his mastery;
Yet he brings pow'r that conquers all,
For he sees all the sinner's ways;

And ev'ry wish, and ev'ry care
Will by this infant God be known:
Should some secret still linger there
His tide of truth will wash it clean.”

A prophetess called Anna came,
Who had also answered God's call;
She praised God and she said to them
“He will redeem all Israel.”

Mary and Joseph then went back
To Nazareth in Galilee,
And there the boy grew strong and quick,
And thus they were a family.

When he was twelve, at the Passover,
They went up to Jerusalem;
And when the festival was over,
Their money spent, back home they came.

On their journey back home, they saw
Jesus was missing, but they thought
He traveled with some others who
They would meet again in Naz'reth.

They searched for him among their kin,
But he was gone, so back they went,
And three days later found him in
The temple, deep in argument

With rabbi, priest and Pharisee.
And all who heard him were amazed
To see how much he seemed to know;
His parents were greatly surprised,

And Mary said, "How can you be
So thoughtless of us, staying here,
While we with such anxiety
Have searched the country, ev'rywhere?"

And Jesus asked her, "*Why would you
Search through the countryside for me?
How can it be, you did not know
My Father's house is where I'd be?*"

But Mary did not understand
The words he spoke, nor what he did.
They went to Nazareth again
And she hid these things in her heart.

So Jesus obeyed from then on,
Increased in wisdom as in age,
And knew the love of God, and man,
And beast, and simpleton, and sage.

3.

When Jesus reached his thirti'th year
Tiberius was emperor,
And in Judea, where they were,
Pontius Pilate was governor,

Herod held pow'r in Galilee
At the behest of the Romans;
Annas and Cai'phas authority
Over the approved religion.

John came forth from the wilderness:
He stood by the River Jordan,
Baptizing with his forgiveness
All those who repented their sin.

He brought to life the words of old:
Isaiah's vision came to pass.
It was God's truth the people heard,
Echoing from the wilderness—

That the valleys would be filled in,
And the high mountain peaks brought down;
And all flesh would find salvation
On a great, wide and fruitful plain.

John stood athwart the sinner's path,
And railed, "You brood of vipers, who
Counseled you to escape God's wrath?
Did some other prophet warn you?"

Now bear fruit worthy of remorse,
Do not be proud and innocent;
Your blood will not soften this curse,
For you are curs'd till you repent!

And you may say, 'But Abraham
Will show us all that's right, and good;'
But I tell you, 'From stone and tomb
God raises up Israel's brood,'

For even now the ax will strike:
It cuts the root of ev'ry tree;
The wood God chooses not to take
Will feed the fire on the last day!"

"What should we sinners do?" said they.
And John the Baptist told them, "Share.
Do you have clothes? Give them away
To those who have no clothes to wear.

Do you have food? Then do likewise:
Share food with a hungry person.
For God is watching, and this is
How you should repent for your sin.

Tax collectors, do not be greedy—
Take no more tribute than you should;
Soldiers, do not deprive the needy,
Lest you also suffer from need."

The people, restless with desire,
Began to question in their hearts:
"Is this one, John, the true Messiah?
Or is he one of the prophets?"

John said, "I baptize with water;
Yet One who has more pow'r than I
Will come and be with you hereafter;
And I could not untie his shoe.

He will baptize you with his spir't,
Leaving the evil to be damned;
And those who merit being saved
Shall all be gathered in his hand.

The kernels God will salt away;
In raging fire he'll burn the chaff.
You ask, 'Am I the Messiah?'
I say, I am not, not by half."

And so with pungent exhortation
John prophesied what was to be,
Until Herod's premonition
Put John in a prison to stay.

Yet once when John made his blessing,
With water dripping from his hand,
The heav'ns opened over Jesus
So that a bright dove could descend.

The dove came down, the Holy Spir't,
To Jesus, praying on his knees,
And above them a voice called out,
"*MY SON, WITH YOU I AM WELL PLEASED.*"

And so began the fearsome story
Of all the things that Jesus did,
Till he was lifted up in glory
And in God's brightness he was hid.

Through sev'nty-five generations
The blood of God flowed on in man
And in Jesus, when he was born
To lead us home to heav'n again.

4.

Jesus, consumed with holy flame,
Wandered out into the desert.
Satan the Devil called his name
But gave him no food nor comfort;

"Jesus," Satan the Devil said,
"If you are still the son of God,
Then make this stone become your bread."
But Jesus only smiled and said,

"One does not live by bread alone."
The Devil led him up on high
So all men's kingdoms round them shone,
And said, "I give authority

To you, over these earthly kings,
Who give me all their loyalty,
And you will have their offerings,
If you bow down and worship me."

But Jesus answered, "*It is said:
Worship your God, and God alone;
All things will be revealed or hid
When all our mortal days are done.*"

Then the Devil flew with Jesus
Through the sky, to Jerusalem,
And high amid the temple spires,
He turned again and tempted him:

“If you are still the son of God,
Jump! Keep yourself safe and well!
For don’t you people claim that
You have a guardian angel?

I’ve heard it said, ‘He will command
His angels to be where you are,
And they will hold you in their hands,
So you will be safe in their care.’”

But Jesus answered, *“People say,
‘Put not your Lord and God to test.’”*
And so the Devil turned away
Leaving him in the desert waste.

Then Jesus, filled with the Spir’it’s pow’r,
Came back again to Galilee,
And people came from near and far
To be healed, and to hear and see.

He went to Nazareth, his home,
The village where his fam’ly lived,
And to the synagogue he came,
And from Isaiah’s book he read:

*“The Spirit of the Lord is here,
Because he has anointed me,
To bring good news to all the poor,
And freedom from captivity,*

*So shall the blind be led to see,
And show the favor of the Lord,
So shall both slave and bond be free,
All by the power of the Word.”*

The eyes of all who heard him read
Were on him, so he spoke again,
*“Today you hear this text fulfilled,
And so redemption comes to men.”*

They all spoke well of Jesus then
And were amazed at what he said,
And some asked, “Is this Joseph’s son?
The one with whom we shared our bread?”

*“Shall I attempt to prove my pow’r?
To do great exploits as you’ve heard?
No prophet ever got to hear
This welcome when he first appeared.*

*With Elijah, you may rememb’r,
For three long years, heav’n was shut down,
The world knew famine, plague and fev’r,
Yet, Elijah rescued just one:*

*The widow Zarephath in Sidon.
When Elisha lived among men,
Though many lepers suffered then,
He healed Naaman the Syrian."*

Then this congregation showed him
A murd'rous rage beyond belief;
They drove him out in front of them,
Threat'ning to throw him from a cliff.

But Jesus cloaked himself in Spirit
And he passed through the midst of them;
And leaving behind his birthright,
He went back to Capernaum.

Once there, he drew another crowd,
And all who heard him were amazed.
Then a man came who cried aloud,
Who was crazed by unclean spirits:

"Let us alone! Why are you here,
Jesus of Naz'reth?" the man cried.
"Your coming fills us all with fear!
We fear the Holy One of God!"

Jesus rebuked the demons then,
"Be silent! Now come out of him!"
And the demons threw the man down
And left him, free from any harm.

But those who saw the demons flee
Marveled that Jesus stood, so calm.
"He speaks with such authority;
Chastises them, and out they come."

He found Simon's mother-in-law
Racked with fever on her sickbed,
He drove her affliction away,
And, hale as ever, there she stood.

When ev'ning fell, the whole town came,
Bringing out their sick to be healed.
With his hands he healed all of them,
But asked the people not to tell.

The demons sprang out of their flesh,
Screaming, "You are the Son of God!"
Then the demons ran from Jesus
Keeping secret the things he did.

All night he drove the devils out.
At dawn he went and walked alone,
To a wide, desolate desert,
Contemplating the sand and stone.

The crowd came running after him;
They found him, and begged him to stay,
"I have work to do," he told them,
And left them, going on his way.

5.

At dawn on Gennesaret's strand,
A crowd had gathered by the lake,
Pressing so close on ev'ry hand
That Jesus had no place to speak.

He found two rowboats anchored there,
Abandoned, for the men had gone
To fix their nets and other gear.
So Jesus climbed inside of one,

Sat and surveyed the crowd, and taught.
When he'd done, he called to Simon,
*"Sailor, come out, let down your net,
Let's see if fish are still running."*

Simon said, "Lord, we fished all night,
And as you see, we've caught nothing;
But I'll row out and cast the net.
If you come, we might catch something."

And so they did. The net was filled
So full that it began to break,
And Simon called to his comrades
To come and help him with the take.

So his friends James and John came out,
Sons of the fisher Zebedee,
They caught enough to fill both boats,
Till they began to take on sea,

And with the water pouring in
Simon fell down at Jesus' feet,
And said, "O Lord, forgive my sin!
I am so small and you so great!"

And Jesus said to Simon then,
*"Fear not, come, leave these fish right here,
For I shall have you catching men
And women, when the days are fair."*

They brought their boats again to shore,
Trimmed sail, tied rope, and battened hatch,
And left that place to fish no more,
For they had hearts and souls to catch.

There in a city, down the road,
They found a man with leprous sores,
Who came to Jesus, and knelt, and said,
"Lord, make me clean, if you so choose."

Jesus reached out and touched him then,
Saying, *"I do choose. You are clean."*
And all the leprosy left him.
Jesus said to him, *"Tell no one,*

*But go and show the priests your skin,
And make an offering of thanks."
And though that leper left him then,
Still more appeared to swell the ranks,*

And Jesus touched and healed them all,
In crowds all through the dusty day;
Then he escaped, outside the wall
To a deserted place, to pray.

When he come back, th'authorities,
Enforcers of religious law,
Saw and heard of his healing ways,
And argued over what they saw.

One day some men came to the house
Where Jesus healed the sick inside.
They struggled in the crowd to pass,
Hauling a sick man on a bed;

The paralytic could not move,
So the men found a place to climb,
Carried him up atop the roof,
And lowered him down to heal him.

When Jesus saw their faith, he said,
"Friends, I forgive you all your sins."
But when th'authorities heard these words,
They came and challenged Jesus again.

"Who is this man that says all this,
That he forgives the sins of men?
He is guilty of blasphemies;
Sin is forgiv'n by God alone."

Jesus said, *"Is it blasphemy,
For me to do my Father's work?
Is it eas'er for me to say,
'Your sin's forgiv'n'? or 'Stand and walk'?"*

*So you may know the Son of Man
Chooses to forgive this man's sin,
Watch now while I do what I can
To make him free of all his pain.*

Then to the crippled man he said,
"Stand up now, and take up your bed."
And the man stood and took his bed,
And left there, glorifying God.

Amazement seized th'authorities
And all the others who saw this;
And all proclaimed in awe and praise:
"Today great things have come to pass."

Jesus said, *"Levi, follow me,
And leave your tax collecting place."*
So Levi left his property,
To collect the wages of grace;

Levi honored his conversion
And gave a banquet at his home,
And with generous compassion
He invited outcasts to come.

And when th'authorities saw this,
They all asked Jesus, "How can you
Eat and drink with such trash as these
People who defile themselves so?"

And Jesus said, *"Those who are well
Have no need for a doctor's care;
It is the sick I come to heal,
And sinners find repentance here."*

They said, "John's many followers
Fast and pray and tear at their clothes;
While you and all these rabble-rousers
Feast, and don't care who comes or goes."

Jesus said, *"Do the wedding guests
Fast when the bridegroom is at hand?
Who knows how long this wedding lasts?
Will they not fast when he is gone?"*

*A new robe is not torn in pieces
Just to patch one that is worn;
The seams would show in many places,
And still the new robe would be torn.*

*Old wineskins cannot hold new wine
For as it ages, they would burst;
Split wineskins are not fit for brine,
And spilt wine cannot slake your thirst."*

6.

Jesus walked out one Sabbath-noon
Through the wide fields of waving wheat,
And his disciples plucked the grain
And ev'ryone ate some of it.

Th'authorities who saw them eat
Said, "You've broken religious law."
But Jesus answered, *"Have you read
Of David, and his brothers too,*

*How they went in the house of God
When they were hungry, and they ate
The bread of Presence, not allowed
For any but the priests to eat?"*

*The Son of Man rules the Sabbath,
So do not stand and point your finger.
Our bodies need grain from the earth,
And heav'nly food, to stave off hunger."*

Another day, as Jesus taught,
A man showed him his wither'd hand.
Th' authorities still lay in wait,
For healing on Sabbath was banned.

He knew these priests would attack him,
But told the man, "*Come here and stand,*"
For any laws that he might break,
Would not restore the wither'd hand,

He asked the priests, "*Now, is it lawful
On Sabbath to do good, or ill?
Should I heal him, or just be careful
Not to oppose your priestly will?*"

So then the priests devised a plan
To punish Jesus in some way,
For they could see the Son of Man
Would threaten their authority.

Then Jesus went on the mountain
And there he prayed all day and night,
When morning came, he went down
And called his foll'wers to the height;

There he chose twelve, and they came down,
And they joined with the multitude,
Curing the troubled and unclean,
Sharing their spirit and their food;

To Jesus hearkened ev'ry ear,
Learning of blessing and of woe:
*"O blest are you if you are poor,
For now God's kingdom waits for you.*

*And blest are you who are hungry,
For you will all be filled again,
And blest are you who weep and cry,
For you will laugh when all is done.*

*And blest are you when they hate you,
And shun you, and revile your name;
Take delight in your blessings now,
Do not be swayed by what they do,*

*Though you may be shunned in this world,
When at last you are brought to heav'n,
You will receive your reward there
As all true prophets ever have.*

*And woe to you if you are rich!
Console yourselves now with property!
For if your appetites are stretched,
Your starvation will come presently.*

*And woe if you are laughing now!
You'll mourn and weep another day,
For now the world speaks well of you,
But they'll betray you when you die.*

*This is what you should try to do:
I tell you a new thing today:
Love the people who would curse you,
I tell you, love your enemy.*

*All those who curse you, you should bless;
For those who hurt you, say a pray'r;
And what strikes one side of your face,
For this the other side prepare.*

*And give to those who beg from you;
Take not what other people claim.
As you would not have done to you,
So must you never do to them.*

*For if you would trade love for love,
What credit can there be in it?
All those who sin are mindful of
Affections yielding benefit.*

*Likewise with gifts or good report,
If they are offered as exchange,
They can for love be sold or bought
The sinners' profits to arrange.*

*But if you love your enemy,
Do good, and give, expecting naught,
Children of God you all will be
Not souls who would be sold or bought.*

*Just as your Father cares for you
Must you be likewise merciful.
Judge not then what these others do;
Give, and you'll get back measures full.*

*Seek your forgiv'ness in your heart;
And it will come back in delight.
Always offer the greater part--
And you'll be righteous in God's sight.*

*Can a blind man lead a blind man?
Will both of them fall in the pit?
The youth may pass the teacher's span,
But each the others' needs must fit.*

*You see in someone else's eye
A tiny speck of dirt, and yet
This block of wood you cannot see
Sitting before you in plain sight?*

*When you ask the other person,
"May I now take your speck away?"
You ignore your own block again:
You can't remove what you can't see.*

*Those who can see, now listen well,
And so avoid hypocrisy:
First remove the block, then you will
See the speck in the other's eye.*

*Each tree is known by its own fruit,
Whether the fruit is sweet or sour;
Figs don't grow on a mandrake root,
Nor do grapes grow from cactus flow'rs.*

*From good hearts all good will proceeds;
Evil likewise makes more evil;
For ev'ry heart's abundance leads
The mouth to form the words it will.*

*Why then do you say 'O Lord, Lord!'
Yet do not listen when I speak?
Come now and hearken to this word:
I will tell you what you are like:*

*If you hear and do what I say,
You're like a man who builds a house,
Who digs as deep as he can go,
And on bed rock lays his first course;*

*When rain falls and the river swells,
His firm foundation is secure;
However hard the torrent falls
He heard me, and his faith is sure.*

*But if you hear and do not act
Then your house has no foundation;
When the rain falls your house will break.
I spoke and you did not listen."*

7.

Jesus went to Capernaum
With all twelve of his disciples.
Some of the townsfolk said to him,
"Come to the Centurion's place."

The Centurion thought Jesus
Might help to heal his fav'rite slave.
He lay there sick inside the house,
And might be too far gone to save.

The town elders said to Jesus,
"The Centurion's a good man.
He built the synagogue for us,
And the poor people come to him."

Jesus went there to heal the slave;
But when he came near to the house,
The Centurion's friends arrived
Bringing this message for Jesus:

"O Lord, do not bend down so low,
To enter here my humble home;
Stay pure in your nobility,
Even if my servant's death comes.

Stay there outside and speak your word,
But please, let my servant be healed,
For though my life was sometimes hard,
I had to do as others willed;

Sometimes I had authority,
And told my soldiers what to do;
So send your healing in, and stay;
Lord Jesus, I ask this of you."

When Jesus heard this, then he spoke,
"I have never seen such faith."
The centurion's friends went back
To find the slave in perfect health.

Then Jesus moved on with the crowd,
And they came near a town called Nain.
And as they all approached the gate,
People came out where they would go in.

They carried a man who had died.
He was his mother's only son,
And she, a widow, stood and cried,
Amidst the people from the town.

When Jesus saw her in her pain,
He said to her, *"Please, do not weep,"*
And touched the man, and spoke again,
"Rise!" as if he were just asleep.

And then the dead man sat upright
And he began to speak to them.
And all of them were seized with fright,
As if it happened in a dream.

Many people would testify,
"We have seen here a great prophet,
God shows his favor in this way,
To free us from the pain of death!"

Then some people brought word of him
To John the Baptist, by the sea,
And John sent out two of his men
And they saw Jesus' ministry.

They asked, "Are you the one who comes,
Or should we wait for another?"
Jesus showed them all the people,
The blind, the lame, the sick, the poor,

And said, *"Go tell John what you've seen,
How here the blind their sight restore,
How here the lepers are made clean,
And here good news is giv'n the poor;"*

*Go tell him how the deaf can hear,
The lame can walk, the dead revive;
And blest are they who do not bear
Resentment when they know my love."*

And when the messengers had gone,
Jesus began to speak of John:
*"What did you see beneath that sun?
A reed, bent over by the wind?"*

*And what did you expect to see?
A princeling dressed in something soft?
You may well find such luxury
In palaces, but not in proph'ts.*

*John is a prophet; more than that,
It has been written about him:
'See, I send my watchman out,
Who prepares the way you will come.'*

*Of ev'ry mortal that's ever been,
John is greater than anyone,
And yet, when all is said and done,
He is less than the least in heav'n.*

*And to what can I compare
The people of this godless age?
They are like children at the fair
Laughing at puppets on a stage,*

*Calling, 'We played the flute for you,
And yet you did not dance and skip,
We wailed and we lamented, too,
And yet for us you would not weep.'*

*For so John Baptist came one day,
He drank no wine and ate no bread,
And then, what did the people say?
'He has a demon in his head!'*

*Now when they see the Son of Man
Eating and drinking as he will,
They all say I am a glutton
Holding my foll'wers in a spell.*

*Yet time will show this world how wise
Or foolish any of us are;
For wisdom traces all her ways
In her dear childrens' destiny."*

Jesus dined with a Pharisee,
And as they at their dinner sat,
A woman came in misery,
And knelt down to bathe Jesus' feet.

She washed his feet with salty tears,
And dried them with disheveled hair,
And rubbed them with an ointment rare,
Poured from an alabaster jar,

And still she gave his feet her kiss
And rubbed the ointment on his skin,
And when the Pharisee saw this
He was aroused to think of sin.

The Pharisee thought to himself,
"If Jesus were really a prophet,
He would know what she's thinking of:
For she's the kind that can be bought."

Said Jesus to this Pharisee,
*"I know a certain creditor,
Two debtors owed him some money,
But one owed more than the other;*

*Neither debtor could pay his debt,
So he forgave both debts for them.
Which of these two who benefit
Will harbor greater love for him?"*

"I suppose, the one for whom
The man forgave the greater debt,"
The Pharisee ventured to him.
And Jesus answered him, "You're right."

He gazed down at the woman then,
But he spoke to the Pharisee,
*"See how great a welcome is giv'n,
As she shows her humility.*

*I came to dinner at your house;
You brought no water for my feet,
But she has bathed my feet in tears,
Her hair has dried them while we eat.*

*And I received no kiss from you,
But she is kissing my feet still,
And still she rubs this ointment too,
But you withhold your precious oil.*

*Therefore I now forgive her sin
However monstrous it may be,
For she shows love without restraint,
While you would judge too hastily."*

Then Jesus said to the woman,
*"Your sin's forgiv'n, now go in peace,
And no more may you suffer sin,
But live in charity and grace."*

8.

So Jesus went through Galilee
Spreading good news at ev'ry hand,
The crowds drew near, and ev'ry day
More men and women joined their band:

Mary, known as the Magdalene,
Who was freed from seven demons,
And Joanna, and Susanna,
And others gave money to them.

One day a great crowd gathered round
And Jesus told them a story,
Where things that happened were meant
To help them remember his way.

When later on they would recall
What he said, their faith would endure,
Temptation would not make them fail,
And their path would be safe and sure.

So Jesus spoke this parable:

*"A sower went to sow his seed,
And as he sowed, some seed would fall
Beside the path as food for birds;*

*And some fell on the rocks nearby,
But as they grew, could make no roots;
And some fell in the thorns, and they
Would choke the seedlings when they sprouted;*

*But some fell onto ready soil,
And there it stayed to germinate,
And the plants grew up straight and tall,
To yield a great golden harvest.*

*Let anyone with ears to hear
Listen now to this tale of mine!
For these secrets I tell you are
Small fragments of a grand design.*

*So now the parable is known:
The seed here is the word of God.
On the path, where some seeds are thrown,
At first they hear my holy word,*

*But evil comes and takes away
The word from their inconstant hearts;
Those that fall on the rocks will stray:
They believe at the very start,
But since they have no root nor stay,
They leave when faith begins to hurt;*

*Those that fall among the thorns
Are also quick at first to pray,
But soon their fruit is food for worms,
They choke on riches, and decay.*

*But those that fall on fertile soil
Hold the word fast within their core,
And it bears fruit for one and all
With love and faith forevermore.*

*Now tell me, if your lamp were lit,
Would you hide it inside a jar?
Or put it underneath your bed?
How then could you see where you are?*

*I have a light that may be hid,
But someday will be plain to see;
Our secrets will all be revealed,
And we will all speak openly.*

*So listen now with ear and soul:
To those who have, more will be giv'n,
Those who do not heed heav'n's call
Have emptiness instead of heav'n."*

People approached Jesus and said,
"Your family's come to visit you,
But now they can't get through the crowd,
So tell us what you want to do."

And Jesus said, *"Do not expect
Some special favor for my kin;
My family are all those who act
On my word, and repent their sin."*

Then one day Jesus and his band
Came down beside the sea to sail;
When they had cast off from the strand
Jesus lay down to sleep awhile.

And as he slept, a windstorm came
And their frail boat began to swamp,
They all shook and woke him up then,
And they began to shout and jump,

"Master! Master! We will all drown!"
So he stood up and stilled the air;
The raging of the tide calmed down,
And he made the storm disappear.

So when he asked, *"Where is your faith?"*
They were astonished and afraid.
He stopped the wind and storm, both
Had obeyed him, as if he were God.

Then when they reached the other shore,
The country of the Gerasenes,
There was a man who met them there
Who cut himself with the sharp stones

And shouted in a fearsome voice:
"Lord, what have you to do with me?
O Jesus! Son of God! O Please!
Do not torment me! Let me be!"

The man was naked, caked in mud,
And lived among the tombs, alone,
And the foul devil in his blood
Jesus commanded to be gone.

Often the devil seized him so
That people tied him up in chains
And shivering, the man would go
Crazy, breaking from their restraint

Running with wails and screams of woe
Far out across the barren plains,
And all the people saw, and knew,
Hearing the demon's vile complaint.

Now Jesus looked down at the man
And asked of him, "*What is your name?*"
"Legion," he said, for many demons
Had come from hell to enter him.

All of the demons cried and pleaded
With Jesus, not to destroy them;
Nearby there a herd of swine fed
Filling the air with squeals and grunts,
And so Jesus interceded,
And the demons jumped from the man,

And they all hopped inside the swine,
And down the hillside the swine ran,
Jumped in the water, ev'ry one,
Pigs and devils, all of them drowned.

The swineherds saw this thing happen,
And they ran off into the town;
Back from town a crowd of people
Came to see what made the pigs drown.

But there they found the naked man,
The one from whom the demons came,
Sitting with his new clothing on,
And as sane as any of them.

Seeing the man's tranquility,
The people from town were afraid,
They spoke of the calamity
That the pigs and devils had made;

The Gerasenes said Jesus should
Sail back to Galilee again;
Except the man who had been healed,
Who begged to go along with him.

Jesus sent the man on his way,
Saying, "*Return now to your home,
Show them what God has done for you.*"
And with a healed soul, he left them.

Jesus sailed back across the lake,
And a crowd came to welcome him.
A leader from the synagogue,
A man named Jairus, called his name,

And fell down before Jesus' feet,
Begged him his daughter to come see,
His only daughter, who was but
Twelve years old, was about to die.

As Jesus went, the crowd converged.
Out of the crowd a woman came,
Who suffered from a hemorrhage.
The woman followed after him,

She who was sick for twelve long years,
Now touched his robe with outstretched hand.
Her blood surged with some healing force.
Feeling this, Jesus stopped and stood.

"Who touched me?" Jesus asked the crowd,
And Peter answered him, "Master, see,
The crowd surrounds and presses us,
Why not ask them who it might be."

And Jesus said again, *"I know
Someone touched me, for then I felt
My power going out of me
And an affliction being healed."*

So then the woman who was healed
Came forward, trembling and afraid;
She knew her actions were revealed,
So there in front of him she prayed.

Jesus said to her, *"Daughter, rise,
Your faith has made you whole again,
May your works show the world your praise,
Now go in peace, and do not sin."*

And as he spoke, a servant came
From Jairus' grieving house, to say,
"The child is dead, her time was come;
Jesus, you should go on your way."

But Jesus, hearing this, replied,
*"Do not fear death; instead, believe,
And then the child will not be dead."*
But when they did finally arrive,

Jesus left the sad crowd outside.
Taking her parents and three friends,
He went into the room where died.
They wept to see her folded hands,

But Jesus told them, *"Do not weep,
I told you she would not be dead.
Can you not see she is asleep?"*
And they wept more at what he said.

So then he took her little hands,
"Child, wake up!" he called out to her,
And she woke up, and there she stood,
And Jesus gave her some dinner.

9.

Then Jesus called the twelve to him
And gave them all the pow'r to heal,
To drive out demons, all of them,
And to save bodies and souls.

As he sent them all forth, he said
*"Keep your hands free, where'er you are:
Take no staff, bag, money or bread,
Have with you only what you wear;*

*Stay wherever the folk will take you,
And leave them at the rising sun;
If the village you're in forsakes you,
Dust off your feet and travel on."*

And so the twelve of them left there
And went out into Galilee,
They took his message ev'rywhere,
They were his faithful company.

Then came word from Herod, the king,
Who had cut off the head of John,
That soldiers should bring Jesus in
If they discovered where he'd gone.

Some said that John could not be dead,
Some said Elijah had appeared,
"Who is this Jesus?" Herod said,
"I know not what he is, or where."

So when the twelve came home again,
The men told Jesus what they'd done;
They all went to Bethsaida then,
The crowd followed that afternoon.

As dusk drew down to end the day
The twelve came to him, and they said,
"We have to send this crowd away
To find themselves some food and beds."

But Jesus said, *"You give them food,"*
"Only two fish? Five loaves?" they asked.
"There will still be enough," he said,
"It's not food, but faith you should seek."

There were five thousand in that crowd,
When Jesus told his followers
To feed them all with fish and bread
Out underneath the ev'ning stars.

And so they did, and Jesus took
The loaves and fishes in his hands,
He looked up to heav'n and gave thanks
His followers gave out the food;

And from the pieces that were passed
All of the people ate their fill.
They gathered together the rest,
And still there were twelve baskets full.

Jesus went by himself to pray
Then he came back and sat with them,
And asked, "*What do the people say?
Who does the crowd say that I am?*"

They said, "John Baptist, or Elijah;
Or a new prophet in our midst."
He asked, "*What do you say of me?*"
And Peter said, "You are the Christ."

Jesus said, "*Don't talk about this.*"
He told them, "*You will live in dread,
While I die in fits of vi'lence,
Then I will come back from the dead.*"

*And if you want to come with me,
Then deny yourself, and follow,
Take up your cross, and find your way,
And the truth will set you free,*

*For if you seek to save your life
You'll end it in futility;
Don't think of keeping yourselves safe:
Ask if you are willing to die.*

*What does it profit any one
To gain the world but lose the soul?
All of them will still hunger on,
And heav'n's banquet will feed you all.*

*Brothers and sisters, keep your faith,
Do not let love be killed by pride,
For some of you will not taste death
Before you see the face of God."*

Eight days after this, Jesus went
To a place on the mountainside;
Peter, James and John were with him,
And they knelt on the ground and prayed.

As Jesus prayed, they saw his face
Change, and his robe shone dazzling white,
They saw Elijah and Moses
Calling them from a brilliant light,

A voice said his death would come soon,
When they came to Jerusalem:
They all saw and heard this, and then
Drowsiness came down upon them;

As the two prophets disappeared,
Peter said, as if from a dream,
Not knowing what he'd seen or heard,
But from the middle of a charm:

"Lord, let us build three houses here,
One for You, one for Elijah,
And one for Moses. It's better
If we leave our cares down below."

And as he spoke, a thick cloud came,
Which overshadowed all of them;
A voice across the mountain rang:
"THIS IS MY SON. LISTEN TO HIM."

When the voice had spoken to them,
Jesus appeared, now far away.
Peter, James and John did not speak
About the things they saw that day.

Then they came down from the mountain.
There at the bottom stood the crowd,
"Jesus, please come here!" said a man,
"Please heal my son, my only child!"

Teacher! I beg you! Look at him!
A spirit makes him shriek and shout!
When it's in him his mouth will foam!
Your foll'wers could not cast it out!"

Jesus said, *"Though your faith wavers,
You come to me when you need it:
It's not his fault. Bring your boy here,
And I will cast his devil out."*

As they approach'd him, the demon
Threw the trembling boy to the ground:
Jesus made him stand up again,
And he held his head with both hands.

He was healed. They were all amazed,
So Jesus said to the people
*"Let my words linger in your ears:
Soon you will see my betrayal."*

But his real meaning was concealed,
And none of them could understand,
And they were like the trembling child,
Afraid to ask him what he meant.

His disciples were all confused
By his tests of their loyalty;
So then an argument arose
Among all of them, secretly.

Jesus read their minds, and answered
By holding up a child,. He said,
*"Children should be your leaders:
In them you find the greatest good;*

*If you love them as you love me,
You welcome Him who sent me here;
If you lead with humility,
The proud will follow anywhere."*

Then John said, "Lord, today we saw
Suffering people healed by those
Who do not believe in your way:
Tell us, should we oppose their cause?"

Jesus said, *"Leave them in peace,
For they are not against you now.
They are with you, and all their ways
Will help people understand you."*

In Samar'a, there was a town
Where they met with hostility.
His twelve asked Jesus, "Should we scorn
This town for sending us away?"

Jesus rebuked them. They continued
On their way to Jerusalem.
Then some people stopped them, and said,
"Lord Jesus, at last you have come,

We'll follow wherever you go."
Jesus replied, *"Foxes have holes,
And birds have nests, but you all know
I go wherever the Lord says,*

*I have no place to lay my head,
And the Lord's will carries me on."*
And then again, one of them said,
"First I'll bury my father, then

I'll follow you." But Jesus said,
*"Let the dead bury their dead;
Come, proclaim the kingdom of God."*
To those who left their homes, he said,

*"Do not look back, nor turn your head,
When you have taken on your share,
If you look back to seek your good,
You will not find it waiting there."*

10.

Jesus sent out seventy more
To do as he would have them do,
Saying, *"The harvest holds great store,
And yet the laborers are few,*

*So go amidst the wolves as lambs,
And carry neither purse nor pence,
Do not answer another's claims,
Nor be so quick to take offence,*

*Whatever house you enter, say,
'Peace be on this house,' to them,
And those who share your peace that day
Will keep it till their time has come.*

*And if they have no peace for you,
You will always come back safe here;
And do not wander to and fro,
But where they love you, remain there.*

*Eat and drink whatever they have,
Earn your keep like a laborer;
Cure the sick and offer your love,
So God's presence will remain there.*

*If the people of any town
Shut all their shops and doors on you,
Leave that town, and when you have gone
Shake their dust off of your shoes:*

*Let them all know God's kingdom came
As they were lurking there inside,
None of them will escape the blame,
God's flame will come and scorch their pride.*

*Woe be Chorazin, Bethsaida!
Woe again to Capernaum!
To heav'n above their dreams will go,
Their souls and bodies are condemned!*

*Who hearkens to these fiends of mine,
Will hear a second time my voice;
If they don't hear, they spurn the one
Who sent me to redeem their souls."*

*The seventy returned in joy
Saying, "We drove the demons out!"
He said, "Like lightning at noonday,
So Satan falls before my word.*

*See here – you are so safe and strong
You tread on snakes and scorpions.
Nothing can ever do you wrong;
Not emperors, nor raging lions.*

*But you should not rejoice in this,
That angels follow where you go;
But rather, you should all rejoice
That heav'n is there waiting for you ."*

*Then he cried out in love and joy,
"I thank you God of heav'n and earth
That these things you have hid away
From those of high and noble birth,*

*And those of wise and knowing mind,
And have instead come to poor men,
And given vision to the blind,
To know the Spirit of your Son.*

*Blest are the eyes that see, my friends,
The fond desire of king and sage,
Who did not see or hear the sound
Of my salvation in their age."*

Then a sharp lawyer said to him,
"How do I earn eternal bliss?"
And Jesus answered, *"Have you read
How your commandments answer this?"*

He said, "They tell me, love the Lord,
With all my soul and all my heart,
And all my strength and all my mind,
And offer my neighbor his part."

Then Jesus answered, *"This is true,
Do it, and you will know true bliss."*
But still he said, "What should I do?
You tell me who my neighbor is."

Jesus said, *"There was a man
Who went down from Jerusalem,
And robbers fell upon him then,
Out on the highway as he came.*

*They stripped him and took his clothing,
Beat him and left him there for dead.
And a priest came, and look at him,
And passed by on the other side;*

*On the same road a Levite come,
And likewise turned his eyes away.
Then, a Samaritan saw him,
And pity compelled this one to stay.*

*He dressed and cared for ev'ry wound,
And brought the victim to an inn;
Found him safety, and comfort, and food,
And asked for nothing in return.*

*Now lawyer, tell me, of these three,
Which one is neighbor to this man?
The two who turn their eyes away,
Or the one who does what he can?"*

The lawyer said, "His neighbor is
The one who showed him his mercy."
"There is your answer," said Jesus,
"You should go forth and do likewise."

Now as they walked along that day,
They stopped along the way to visit,
Two sisters, Mary and Martha,
To get some rest, and food to eat.

There Mary sat at Jesus' feet,
Attending ev'ry word he spoke,
But Martha bustled in and out,
Too busy for religious talk.

Then Martha said, "Lord, don't you care
That I must come and go this way
While she just sits and listens there?
Tell her she should be helping me."

Jesus answered, *"Martha, Martha,
Though many things distract your heart,
There is need for something other:
So choose with her the better part."*

11.

Jesus was praying all alone,
And some of his disciples came
And said, "Teach us to pray, as John
Taught his foll'wers to pray with him."

Jesus said to them, *"Pray like this:
'Our Father, holy is your name.
Your spirit comes. Each day give us
Our bread to eat and a safe home.*

*Also forgive us what we owe
As we forgive each others' debts.
And let us never evil do
Nor with temptation ever meet.'*

*Suppose at midnight you should knock
At a friend's front door, to be fed,
And from inside you heard him speak,
'Go away, I have gone to bed!'*

*Yet still, you knock again and say,
'I have a hungry friend! Wake up!'
He says again, 'Please, go away!
My family is fast asleep!'*

*And still you knock, till he relents,
And lets you in, and gives you bread,
Not just to show that you are friends,
But so he can return to bed.*

*You should be stubborn when you pray:
Time and again ask what you lack,
Seek long, and you will find the way,
The door will open at your knock.*

*If your child asks you for a fish,
Would you give him a snake instead?
Or, if your children asked for eggs,
Would you put scorpions in their bed?*

*Although your evil comes to you
Quite nat'rally, you still know how
To guide your children properly
And keep them safe in what they do.*

*And God does more than this for you,
To show the pow'r of the Spirit.
You will receive more than you know,
If you will only ask for it."*

Early one day a sick man came,
Whose words within his throat would choke,
With healing hands Jesus touched him,
The demon left him; the man spoke;

And all the people were amazed.
And said Jesus was a devil,
Because the power he had used
Belonged to agents of evil.

They asked him for a sign from God
To show where his powers came from;
But he could read their thoughts, and said,
"I heal this man in my own name --

*And not for your Beelzebul,
For even he would not divide
Against itself his arsenal,
But rather has made his bargain
With you and all your retinue,
To keep your plunder safe from God;*

*But when the final trumpets blow,
Then we will divide your rank spoil,
And those who are against me shall
Perceive the choice that they have made:
To cast the spir't from their own souls,
Scattering in the final wind.*

*For when the unclean spirit strays,
It wanders through the desert waste,
And finding there no resting place,
Returns to where it was at first,*

*And though the home it left behind
Is swept and clean and orderly,
Still it will kindred spirits find
And make corruption multiply."*

And as he spoke, a woman cried,
"Blest be the womb that carried you,
And blest the teat whereon you fed!"
And Jesus told her, *"This may be,
But blest far more are those who hear
And then obey the word of God!"*

And then the crowd began to swell,
And Jesus told them, *"Evil speaks
And here today amongst you all,
You will seek for signs and omens,*

*And presently you'll find your sign:
As Jonah cried to Nineveh,
So now the Son of Man will cry
To make this people testify.*

*The Queen of Sheba will condemn
You sinners on the judgement day,
For she from farther reaches came
Solomon's wisdom to display.
I am greater than Solomon,
As all who are still there will see,*

*And Nineveh will judge you too,
All they who sat in rags and ash,
For you ignored a greater one
Than Jonah with his little fish.*

*Light you your light and place it so
All those who enter by your door
May see, and down this passage go,
To find their own forevermore.*

*Your eyes illuminate the way,
And fill your bodies with their light,
Lest you your darkness hold at bay,
Hidden away from heav'nly sight."*

After he spoke, a Pharisee
Asked him to dinner at his house,
And as they sat, was shocked to see
He did not wash his hands and face.

But Jesus said, "You Pharisees
Would wash the dish and scrub the cup,

*But inside you a froth of greed
And wickedness will bubble up!*

*Fools that you are! Did not the one
Who made your outside also make
The soul within you, stained with sin?
Reach in your purses now, and take*

*Alms for the poor, and freely give.
So will your sullied souls be clean.
Do not go calculate your tithe
Of mint and rue and cinnamon,*

*And still neglect the poor you see,
Nor denigrate their love of God!
Heed not the letter of your law
When you hear the stark voice of need!*

*I say woe to you, Pharisees!
When you sit in false honor's seat,
And love to hear the toady's voice
As in the marketplace you meet.*

*And woe to you again, I say:
Your life is like an unmarked grave,
Where people tread, and tread away,
Regardless of the wealth you have."*

And then a lawyer answered him,
"Teacher, when you say these things,
You insult us, and our good name
Is damaged by the shame it brings."

*"Again, you lawyers, woe to you
For when they come to you for help
You heap people with trouble too,
Because their pain pays for your keep.*

*And woe to you, for now you build
The tombs of prophets dead and gone.
Your ancestors had them all killed.
Now they are dead, their spirits flown,*

*And now, to magnify your state,
You recall and approve these deeds,
And build these tombs, and still forget
The prophet's words, the people's needs.*

*'These prophets I will send,' God said,
'For you to kill and persecute.'
So wash in all the blood you shed
Since God granted you these prophets;*

*Since the foundation of the earth,
From Abel to Zechariah,
Lawyers, you have shown little worth,*

And now you will be tried by fire!

*The key of knowledge in your hand,
Yet you did not open the door;
And those who waited, you restrained,
So woe to you, forevermore!"*

And when he went away that day,
Th'authorities, fraught with venom,
With rancor, and hypocrisy,
Conspired to capture and kill him.

12.

Later he spoke to a great host.
Some fell, and they were trampled on,
And Jesus said, "Beware the yeast
The Pharisees will sprinkle in --

*This means, beware hypocrisy,
For secrets feed upon themselves;
What's hidden, will be there to see,
As secrecy reveals itself.*

*Speak in darkness and they will hear
By day, when sun dispels the dark;
And what you say behind the door
We will soon tell from peak to peak.*

*Do not fear them who kill your flesh,
For only flesh is in their reach;
Rather fear God's willingness
To fling your soul down Satan's hatch!*

*Fear Satan! Even little sins,
In the sight of God, are fearsome;
Ev'ry little bird is precious.
Though pennies will buy five of them,*

*Not one of them will be forgot.
I count the hairs upon your head;
So do not be afraid of me,
But find me in your hour of need.*

*If you listen to my words here,
Then I will listen to your plea;
You'll know the mercy of the Lord
When at last you come before me.*

*If you condemn the Son of Man,
And then repent, you'll be forgiv'n;
But if you don't repent your sin
You will not ever enter heav'n.*

*And if the world's authorities
Would sit in judgment over you,
Fear not then what words you will use,*

*Your Spirit shows you what to do."
Someone said, "Please, Lord, hear my claim,
Because my brother cheated me --
He took all my inheritance --
Tell him to share it equally."*

*But Jesus answered, "Friend, tell me,
Who made me judge of your affairs?
Beneath your greed and gluttony,
Do you know what is really yours?"*

*Once a farmer, wealthy and fat,
Whose land made grain abundantly,
Wanted to store up more of it,
Taking pride in his great plenty.*

*So he said, 'I'll pull down my barn
And build myself one large enough ,
And I will store up all my grain,
Until it piles up to the roof,*

*And I will tell myself, 'My soul,
Now you have such prosperity,
Relax, eat, drink, be merry all,
So does your fortune multiply!'*

*But God says, 'Fool! This very night
The reaper cuts and binds your stalk,
Then who will eat at your banquet,*

*And fill your night with foolish talk?
So friend, with your inheritance,
Or any treasure you may guard --
You'll squander it in arrogance,
And leave no riches for your God."*

Jesus said then to all his friends,
*"Be not so prone to carp and fret
On how your bodies may be cleaned,
Or what to wear, or what to eat;*

*Life in the spir't is more than food,
Our bodies more than we put on;
The ravens fly just as they would,
And yet God gets their food for them;*

*And you, my own, are more than they,
And yet you cannot add one hour
To the whole number of your days
By thinking that you have this pow'r.*

*If you fail in this little thing,
Why do you worry on the rest?
Consider th' lilies of the field:
More beautif'ly than kings they dress,
And yet they neither toil nor spin.*

*If God will so adorn the grass
Which is killed by the fire or frost,
By how much more then will He bless
The ones that are clothed in the light
And counted with the heav'nly host?*

*O do not ask, what is the cost,
And search all day for food and drink,
Nor search in vain for what is lost,
And worry what others may think.*

*For though the nations of this world
May strive to build up all these things,
Yet thrones and crowns will all be hurled
Down there amongst the bones of kings.*

*So strive instead for heav'nly food,
The nourishment of all the blest;
And God will meet your ev'ry need
As through this mortal world you pass.*

*Be not afraid, my little flock,
For your Father has compassion.
Have done now with your box and lock,
Make do without your possessions.*

*You make an everlasting purse
Where heav'n's treasure will never fail;
No robber comes, no moth destroys,
And your whole heart obeys God's will.*

*Be ready, as your lamp may burn,
Like those who stay up late at night,
Waiting for their dear Lord's return,
With food to eat and table set.*

*If the householder knows what time
The thief will come, he takes no chance:
He locks the doors and watches them:
So you must show your vigilance --*

*The Son of Man may come to you
At any unexpected hour;
So clothe yourself in light, renew
Your spir't, and show you are prepared."*

*Peter asked, "Do you speak to us
Or to the crowd gathered out there?"
Jesus answered, "Consider this,
And then judge how you may compare:*

*If they are slaves to their own will,
And you have learned to master yours,
Then when your Master comes to call,*

*He may entrust to you his cares,
But if you let your will run free
Because your Master's been delayed,
And you are ripe with revelry,
Then it will be just as I said:*

*Your Master comes by accident,
And gauges then your readiness,
And reckons how you came and went,
And chooses then which ones to bless.*

*From each to whom much has been giv'n
So much will therefore be required,
For greater trust will come in heav'n
When you are face to face with God.*

*I come to kindle fire on earth,
And how I wish now it would blaze!
The universe strains to give birth
In ev'ry instant of these days!*

*So you may seek some place serene
And dream my ministry is peace,
But no! There is a God between --
Dividing 'gainst itself each house.*

*So three on two, and two on one,
They will take sides against themselves,
Moth'r and daughter, father and son,*

They will deploy all their weapons.

*You see the clouds rise in the west,
And think of rain; so, it will fall;
The wind turns south; you shed your vest,
Now the air swelters, and grows still.*

*You hypocrites! You know each sign
That weather and the seasons tell;
But you are blind to your own sin
And God will send you all to hell!*

*If you were hauled before a judge
And your accuser offered you
The chance to settle, and his pledge
To end the matter thus and so,*

*Would you refuse, and go to jail,
Where you would haggle over it?
So will you flaunt your barter'd soul
When you come to dwell in that pit."*

13.

There were some men of Galilee
Killed by the Roman Governor,
And bled, before they went to die,

An off'ring to the god of war,
Jesus said to th'authorities,
"You think their sin caused this bloodshed,
So they were made a sacrifice
To satisfy a Roman God?"

*No, I tell you! They did no sin
Greater or less than anyone,
And if a tow'r fell down on them,
You would likewise accuse the stones.*

*You will die unless you repent,
Your blood dishonored just as theirs,
And Roman priests will find omens
Inside your outspread cadavers.*

*How would you show your repentance?
Think of the man who raises figs:
He comes to check his tree, but finds
It's barren, so he stands and nags,*

*'Gard'ner, gard'ner, here, look at this!
Three years, and no fruit from this tree!
Cut the tree down! Let's stop this waste!
Come and plant here another tree!'*

*But then we hear from the gard'ner,
Let us give it just one more year,
It will display its fruit and flow'r*

If I just dig and spread manure."
In synagogue one afternoon,
There came a woman, bent and stiff,
Bearing eighteen years affliction,
And she had never found relief.

Then Jesus touched her, and he said,
"Now be set free from this your bond,"
So there she stood, gave thanks to God,
And ev'ryone there saw her stand.

But the leader of the school
Said, "Keep the Sabbath free from toil!
Go do your work where'er you will,
But on the Sabbath, do not heal!"

But Jesus said, *"You hypocrite!
On Sabbath do you feed your ox?
Or help it get to its water?
Fetch hay and grain for your donkeys?*

*And yet you would deny this soul
Relief from eighteen years of pain.
Because the Sabbath has its rules,
The letter of the law pertains.*

And to exalt humility
Jesus held out a mustard seed,
And said to all of them, *"Now see,*

*This seed is like the pow'r of God,
If I take it and plant it now,
Soon it will grow up strong and high,
Like yeast in flour, so it will grow,
And not by any husbandry.*

*So you escape the pit of hell,
Know them all by the fruits they make,
For if you seek to save your soul,
It is your pride you must forsake."*

They asked, "Will you save just a few?"
And he said, *"Seek the narrow door,
Many will try to wriggle through,
And they will shout and knock yet more,*

*But while outside they make demands,
The Lord calls out, 'I know you not,'
And when they say, 'You came to dine,
You knew the people in our street.'*

*The Lord will answer, 'I did not!
You strangers, get away from here!
Behold our bliss from there without;
And weep, and gnash your teeth in fear!'*

*From north and south and east and west
Will come all souls, the blest, the curst,
Some now are first who will be last,*

And others last, who will be first."

And then there came some Pharisees,
And they warned Jesus, "Get away!
Herod sends his mercenaries!"
But Jesus said, "*Here I will stay,*

*Now go and tell that fox for me
That in three days I'll come to him,
And he knows right where I will be
Till I come to Jerusalem.*

*No need to send your soldiers out,
Your crowd can have me when I come.
They stone the one who speaks the truth,
Then build their walls with stones of shame.*

*How I wish you, Jerusalem,
Could rest beneath God's outstretched wing!
Not so! Dishonor is your name,
And hypocrisy is your king.'*

14.

Then a man came whose body swelled
With water that he could not pass;
When Jesus touched him, he was healed.

Then Jesus asked the Pharisees,
*"If a child or an ox fell down
On Sabbath, inside a deep pit,
Wouldn't you make your neighbors come
With you and help you get them out?"*

Then Jesus with these Pharisees
Went in to eat the Sabbath meal,
And when he saw them choose their seats
He told another parable:

*"Do not try to take the best seats,
When you come to a wedding feast,
For there may be a greater guest,
Who would sit closer to your host,*

*Making you take the lowest place,
And there in your shame you would sit;
But you wouldn't know such disgrace
If you first took the lower seat.*

*Then your host would soon come and say,
'Friend, move up higher, here by me.'
The proud will know humility,
The poor ones will be raised on high."*

Jesus said to the Pharisee
*"When you invite your friends to eat,
Dispensing hospitality,*

*You should not ask the grand and great,
As you are, rich familiars;
For they, by obligation, have
Regaled themselves with what is yours,
To your custom they have been slaves;*

*This is not giving, but exchange:
And you expect them to repay
Ev'ry occasion you would arrange.
Your list of guests instead should be*

*The blind, the lame, the sick, the poor:
Ask them and you are truly blest --
They cannot give you any more
Than their eternal righteousness."*

And a dinner guest said to him,
"Blest are all they who eat the bread
Of God throughout all time to come!"
With this parable, Jesus said:

*"There was a man who gave a feast,
And when the time came, sent his slave
To the guests who were on his list;
Saying, 'All is in readiness.'*

*But all the guests sent their regrets:
One said, 'Now I must sow my field.'
Another, 'I must feed my ox,'*

*Another, 'I have just been wed.'
And so the slave returned alone,
And the master, beset with shame,
Said, 'Go into the street and lanes,
And ask the poor and blind and lame.'*

*The slave did this; and he returned,
And said, 'Lord, there is still more room',
But now the master's anger burned;
He said, 'Go, make the beggars come,*

*For I tell you, none of them all,
Whom I called first, will pass this door;
Go and prepare the banquet hall
For them that I shut out before."*

As they walked on, so did the crowd
Follow behind where he had been,
And they heard his voice, clear and loud,
As they stopped in the dusty town.

*"Who comes with me and mine must hate
Father and mother, wife and child,
The thing you love, you must leave it --
Or your faith can be bought and sold.*

*Forsake all ties of family,
Your home, and domesticity,
Take up your cross and follow me*

*If you would join this company,
If you planned to build up a tow'r,
Wouldn't you first estimate
Stones and mortar, time and labor,
So your tower would be complete?*

*And if you laid your foundation
But could not build it to the top,
Wouldn't the people say with scorn,
'This tower has a mighty shape!'*

*If you were king, and could wage war,
Would you not think to calculate
How your ten thousand might compare
With other forces twice as great?*

*And if you were not sure to win,
You'd send your emissaries out,
With your enemies to bargain,
And ask them to negotiate.*

*I think that such compromises
Drive wedges between you and me,
So you must despise your former ways,
And be my foll'wer completely.*

*Your salt is good, but if its taste
Is lost, how can it be brought back?
Flavorless salt has gone to waste --*

Hear well now, these words that I speak!"

15.

Many followers of Jesus
Were outcasts of society:
Sinners and cheats. But by God's grace
He offered them all his mercy.

Seeing this, the authorities
Grumbled, and said, "He's just like them.
They eat and drink just as they please.
Who knows where these people are from?"

So Jesus told a them story:
*"If you herded a hundred sheep,
And from your fold, one got away,
Even though only one escaped,*

*Wouldn't you look till it was found?
And when you found it, you would lift
This sheep tenderly with both hands,
Praising God for his gen'rous gift!*

*You would call your friends and neighbors,
And say to them, 'Rejoice with me!
I looked for this sheep ev'rywhere,*

*And we should celebrate today!
And there will be more joy in heav'n
Over one sinner who repents
Than for ninety-nine righteous ones,
Who need no sinners' recompense.*

*And if a woman had ten coins,
And lost one, then shouldn't she search?
Light the lamp, and sweep, and clean,
Until that coin came in her reach?*

*When she found it, she would also
Get together with all her friends
And say, 'Rejoice with me!' Just so,
Will angels greet the repentant."*

*Then Jesus said, "There was a man;
He had two sons; and when they'd grown,
He shared all his goods between them.
And soon the younger one left home,*

*And he went to a distant land
And squandered his inheritance,
With servants waiting by his hand
To please his flesh and stroke his wants;*

*When his money had disappeared,
This is the poor life that he found:
Feeding the pigs of a farmer,*

*Sleeping ev'ry night on the ground.
The pigs ate husks and roots and pods,
Which he shared, when there was enough,
But pigs are hungry, and he had
No strength to fight them at the trough.*

*Then one day he came to himself,
And said, 'My father's own hired hands
Have more to eat than I, by half,
So I will leave these foreigners,*

*And I will go to my father
And say, 'O Father, I have sinned
Against heav'n, and rejected you,
So make me now your hired hand.'*

*As he wandered back home again,
His father spied him far away,
And the man's heart felt pity then,
He ran to his prodigal boy.*

*The son said, 'Father, I have sinned
Against heav'n and you also;
Call me no more your younger son;
Anything you ask, I will do.'*

*But then the father cried, 'Come all!
Bring robes and rings and golden plates,
For now the fatted calf we kill!*

*Now let us feast and celebrate!
For see, this wayward son of mine
Was lost, and yet now he is found,
Was dead, and is alive again,
And stands before us, safe and sound!"*

*The older son worked in the field,
And when he looked and saw the crowd,
He asked a servant if he could
Tell him for whom the feast was laid.*

*The servant said, 'Your brother came!
Your father killed the fatted calf!
Because God has been good to him
By bringing your brother home safe.'*

*The older son stayed there outside,
His righteous anger slowly burned,
'Come and sit here!' His father pleaded,
Rejoice! Your brother has returned!"*

*But he said, 'Father, till this day
I have obeyed your ev'ry wish,
Yet you have never honored me
With slice of goat, or piece of fish.*

*But this one! He who has devoured
Your property with vile harlots,
For him you spill the family hoard,*

For him you make this wanton feast.'

*His father spoke then from his heart,
'My son, all that is mine is yours,
And you will always have your part.
But in your brother we rejoice,*

*For we all thought that he was dead,
And now he has come back to life.
He was lost, and now is found,
And is at home again, and safe.'*

16.

*To his disciples, Jesus said,
"A farmer once employed a man
To manage his pastures and herds,
And this man was accused by some*

*Of cheating people in his trade.
So the farmer said to the man,
'Take inventory of my goods,
And find a new job if you can.'*

*The manager then asked himself,
'What can I do without this job?
For labor I'm too weak and stiff,*

*So, shall I plot to steal and bribe?
He sat and thought, and then called in
The farmer's debtors one by one;
They made the record fraudulent,
Then they concealed what they had done.*

*So, if a hundred coins were owed,
Fifty, the record would report.
And yet the farmer judged him shrewd
For his false dealing in his plight.*

*And so the child of this crass age
Seems shrewder than the child of light;
But do not scorn corruption's wage
Till you come under heav'n's tent.*

*As faith in little things will lead
To faith in the things that are great,
So their dishonesty will spread
From seed, to sheaf, to vast estate;*

*For if they heap dishonesty
In barns and empires through this world,
Then who can trust the things they do
With the true riches God has giv'n?*

*And if you squander what God gave,
Who then has any more to give?
Two masters cannot have one slave,*

*Nor you both God and mammon serve."
Th'authorities loved possessions,
And money held them in its thrall;
When Jesus said they were in chains
They held him up to ridicule,*

*And he replied, "You justify
Yourselves by human estimate,
But God sees with a knowing eye,
And knows what makes you fawn and dote.*

*The law and prophets ruled the Jews
Until John came, with human voice,
Proclaiming to us all 'Good news!
God's pow'r now comes to rule this place!
But you are still chained by your laws,
Struggling to discover grace.*

*So heav'n and earth may pass away
Before you alter any stroke
Of any lett'r in any law,
Or new interpretation make;*

*You choose which laws you will obey:
As men and wom'n may shun divorce
But then they try adultery.
Redemption comes by choice, not force.*

*Now once there was a wealthy man,
Drest in purple, with fine linen,
By his front gate a beggar came,
An old man; Laz'rus was his name.*

*And Laz'rus would offend the folk
Who came and went there by the door,
For his old skin was wealed and cracked,
And dogs would sniff and lick his sores.*

*And Laz'rus longed to satisfy
His hunger with some table scraps,
But the rich man still passed him by
As sand that through the hourglass slips.*

*Laz'rus died, and the angels came
To bring him up to Abraham;
The rich man died, and they took him
To Hades, there to dwell in flame.*

*And he looked up, and far away,
Saw Abraham with Laz'rus there,
And called out, 'Abr'ham, pity me!
Send Laz'rus down to help me here.*

*In water may his finger dip,
And hold it here, above my tongue,
That on it just one drop may drip,*

*For such refreshment now I long.'
But Abr'ham said to the rich man,
'My child, remember your estate:
You found no charity for him
When he lay there beside your gate;*

*So now you must embrace your flame,
While Laz'rus finds his comfort here,
And also see, the greater chasm,
Which divides us from each other.*

*For he and I cannot cross there
No matter what your pain may be,
Nor can you come up with us here;
And so we stay, eternally.'*

*Then the rich man said, 'Father, send
Warning while my brothers still live;
Let Laz'rus go there and save them
From the torment they will receive.'*

*Abraham said, 'Your brothers have
The law and prophets to obey;
So they should all do this, and save
Their souls and flesh from misery.'*

*'No, Father Abraham,' he said,
'They won't obey unless someone
Comes back to them from being dead;*

Then they will confess all their sin.'

*But Abraham again replied,
If they shunned the law and prophets,
Even someone ris 'n from the dead
Would not soften their selfishness.'"*

17.

*Jesus said to his disciples,
"We are bound to trip and fall down,
But we will only find trouble
If we corrupt the innocent.*

*Better a millstone should be tied
Around your neck, and you be thrown
Into the sea, than that you would
Lead others down the path of sin.*

*Be on your guard! And if you sin
Then tell someone the sin you've done;
When absolution has been giv'n,
Then you should keep your spirit clean.*

*If you sin seven times a day,
But then you truly do repent,
All your sin will be wash'd away,*

*And your spir't will be redeemed."
So then they all said to the Lord,
"Increase our faith!" and he replied,
"Faith, like a little mustard seed,
Could turn a mountain on its side;*

*Faith tears out the trees by their roots
And plants them in the raging seas;
So what can faith do, in your hearts,
If it can move mountains and trees?*

*If you had a servant, would you
Seat him at your own table's head,
And wait on him? Or would he do
His duty, bringing you your bread?*

*Wouldn't you say to your servant,
'Make me my supper, wash my feet,
And bring me all the things I want,
While I sit here and drink and eat?'*

*If your servant does as you say,
Then, do you bow and give him thanks?
Or, expect that he will obey,
Regardless of what he may think?*

*So you also, when you have been
Doing just what was expected,
Should not think, 'I have earned honor*

For doing as my Master said.'
On that road they came nearby
Samaria and Galilee,
And ten lepers came their way,
But kept their distance, carefully.

"Jesus, Master," they called to him,
"Have mercy on us in our pain!"
He said, "Go, show the priests your skin,"
And as they went, they were made clean.

And one of them, when he was healed
Turned back to offer praise to God,
At Jesus' feet he came and fell,
And thanked him, crying out aloud.

And he was a Samaritan,
So Jesus asked, "Where are the rest?
Were there not ten of you made clean?
Yet praise comes just from this outcast!"

Then he said, "Kind Samaritan,
Get up! Go healthy on your way;
Don't be afraid, and do no sin,
Your faith has made you well this day."

Then some Pharisees said to him,
"Say when God's kingdom will be here."
And Jesus said, "You cannot come

*To God and call out, 'There you are!'
God's kingdom is within you now,
It shows in all you say and do."*
And then, to his disciples, he
Foretold a time of mystery:

*"The days will come when you will long
To have the Son of Man with you,
And you will not find anything—
Search for Him ev'rywhere you go!*

*And some will say to you: 'Look there!
Look here!' But do not follow them;
Do not pursue the empty air,
Do not obscure your search for Him.*

*For as the lightning lights the sky,
And pales the distant face of night,
So will the Son of Man then be
When he comes in his blinding light.*

*And yet before that day can come,
They will bring him a world of harm,
And he'll be shunned by all of them,
Scorned in his body and his name.*

*For as it was in Noah's age,
So is it with the Son of Man:
Folk reveled, till the deep floods raged,*

*Then in the rising sea they drowned.
And likewise in the days of Lot,
They ate and drank, and spent, and sinned,
But when Lot's people had escaped
From Sodom, fire and brimstone rained!*

*On the day when the Son of Man
Is revealed to your living souls,
You will leave all these things behind
And stand up, as your Maker calls.*

*Remember then the wife of Lot:
Do not stop and turn back your head,
Lest you become a post of salt
With fire and brimstone for your bread!*

*Those who try to make themselves safe
In this life, will forsake it all;
But those who prepare for new life,
Will find new life, just as God wills.*

*If two share a bed, one will die;
If two are at work, one will leave;
This is the myst'ry of that day:
That one dies, as another lives.*

Again his disciples asked him,
"Lord, where will we be taken then?"
He answered, *"Where the corpse is found,*

There will the vultures come to feed."

18.

Jesus told them a story then
Of how the faithful should persist
In pray'r, to pray and pray again,
If they would all be blest by grace:

*"There was a judge, a solemn man
Who loved neither people nor God,
And a widow came before him
Seeking some payment for a debt:*

*'Make this debtor pay what he owes!'
She repeated this ev'ry day,
The judge refused; still she would go
And in his court she made her plea.*

*Till one day, to himself, he said,
'This widow always bothers me,
And though I have no love for God,
Or people either, yet still, I*

*Will grant her justice as she says;
Therefore I can be rid of her.'
And so God admonishes us
To pursue justice forever.*

*Will God not grant these little ones,
Who cry out to him night and day,
Fulfillment of their petitions,
And give them each a prompt reply?*

*I tell you, justice is at hand,
And yet, when justice comes to men,
Faith, here on earth, will not be found.
Answer to this, all you who can.*

He told another tale of those
Who trusted in their wealth and pride,
Mistaking sin for righteousness
And casting humble folk aside:

*"One day two men came up to pray
At the temple, we saw them there,
One of them was a Pharisee,
The other was a tax collector.*

*The Pharisee, all purified,
Aloof and proud, kept himself clean,
And up to God in heav'n declared,
'I thank you Lord for what you've done,*

*For making me more virtuous,
Than thieves and rogues and drunks and whores,
All of those who are not pious,*

*Just like that tax collector there;
I fast twice a week, and offer
One tenth of ev'rything I earn.'
Nearby stood the tax collector,
Who wept and grieved with head bent down,*

*Beating his breast, he cried aloud,
'May God have mercy on my sin!'
I say, this man was justified
When he went back home again.*

*For all who set themselves on high
Will be brought down to low degree,
And those who know humility
Will be exalted when they die."*

People brought infants to Jesus
So he might hold and nurture them;
They were stopped by his disciples,
But he said to them, "Let them come;

*Don't send away these little ones
For heav'n belongs to the children,
And if one day you get to heav'n
Then, as a child, you may come in."*

Then a wealthy man said to him,
"Good teacher, tell me what to do,
So when I die I'll come to heav'n.

And live there through eternity."
And Jesus said, *"Why call me good?
No one is good but God alone.
You already know that you should
Obey the law that God has giv'n:*

*Do not commit adultery,
Do not steal, and do not murder,
Bear no false witness, nor envy,
Honor your father and mother."*

"All this I have obeyed and done."
But Jesus said, *"There's one thing more,
You must sell ev'rything you own
And give the money to the poor.*

*Then your treasure will be in heav'n,
Then you may come and follow me."*
But this dismayed the wealthy man,
For he loved rich things and money.

Jesus spoke to him face to face,
Say'ng, *"For the rich it must be hard,
Before you enter into grace,
To leave behind the life you led.*

*Unless your load is thrown aside,
You will not enter heav'n's portal,
No better than a camel would*

Fit through the eye of a needle."
"Who can be saved if this is so?"
They asked, who heard these words from him.
He said, *"What mortals cannot do,
God does, if mortals ask of him."*

Then Peter said, "We left our homes,
Left ev'rything, and followed you."
And Jesus answered, *"Glory comes
With faith, to ev'ry one of you."*

Then Jesus took the twelve aside,
And said, *"Soon the dark day will come
When all that has been prophesied
Will happen in Jerusalem.*

*The Son of Man will, in that day,
Be mocked and flogged and spat upon,
Then they will kill him, and then He
In three days time will rise again."*

The twelve did not understand him.
For them, his meaning was obscured,
And they drew towards Jerusalem
All ignorant, and unprepared.

And as they came towards Jericho
A blind man sat there in the dust,
Who, when he heard the crowd go by,

Raised a loud voice above the noise:
"Who is that coming down the road?"
They said to him, "Jesus is there."
He cried, "Lord Jesus! Son of God!
Have mercy on this sinner here!"

When those in front of him called out,
"Be quiet!" louder his shouts came,
"Pity me! Jesus, Son of God!"
And Jesus stopped, and said to him,

"What do you want for me to do?"
He said, "Lord, let me see again."
And Jesus said, *"Let it be so.*
Your faith gives you back your vision."

And the man followed, praising God,
And all the people praised God, too,
For giving sight back to the blind.
And so they entered Jericho.

19.

There was a man called Zacchaeus,
A rich man, chief tax collector,
Who could not see who Jesus was,
Because he was short of stature.

So he climbed up a sycamore,
There by the road, so he could see,
And when Jesus saw him up there,
He said, *"Come down here from that tree,*

I'm staying at your house tonight."
Zacchaeus welcomed Jesus in,
But people complained about it,
Asking "Who honors such a man?"

Zacchaeus said, "Lord, half my goods
I will give now to help the poor,
And anyone I have cheated,
I'll pay back what I owe, times four."

Jesus said, *"Now Salvation comes*
To dwell with you, within your house,
For you are son to Abraham;
Now come to help and save the lost."

Some of the people came to see.
Jesus told this story to them;
For Jerusalem was nearby,
And soon Romans would come for him.

"A young prince traveled far from home,
As was his royal privilege;
Before he left, he said, 'Slaves, come,

*From each of you I'll take a pledge:
You shall invest one pound of mine,
And get back a profit for me;
Your effort will not be in vain
If you invest this pound wisely.'*

*Then one day the slaves sent for him;
And they called him back home again,
But said, 'We always hated him,
We will not give him back his throne.'*

*But he took back his royal pow'r,
And sat in state, and called them in,
And asked from each of them to hear
About the pound that he had giv'n.*

*The first slave came and said, 'O Lord,
Your pound for me has made ten more.'
'Well done, good slave!' the ruler said,
'Ten cities you shall now rule o'er.'*

*Then came the second, saying, 'Lord,
Your pound has made five pounds for me.'
The ruler answered, 'Well and good,
Lord of five cities you shall be.'*

*And then the third came, bending low,
With one pound wrapped up in a cloth,
Saying, 'I feared what you would do,*

*For you are prone to fits of wrath;
You take and don't give back again,
And reap what you have never sown;
I was afraid to lose this one,
So I buried it in the gard'n.*

*Then the prince said, 'As now you speak,
So will I judge you, wicked slave,
Without justice I'll reap and take,
And you'll lose ev'rything you have.*

*If money by itself could thrive,
You're right to bury it somewhere!
No need to stay nearby, dear slave—
No one would ever find it there!*

*So take away this cloistered pound,
And give it to the one with ten!
And none who saw this would defend
The prince's injustice to this man.*

*Those of you with ears to listen,
Now hear," said Jesus, "what I say:
To those who have, more will be giv'n;
From those with naught, all ta'en away."*

*At the Mount of Olives, he sent
Two followers ahead of him,
Saying, "In the village, you'll find*

*A colt tethered beneath a palm.
Untie this colt and bring it here,
And say to them, 'The Lord needs this,'
If they should ask you who you are."
And so the owner let them pass.*

They brought the colt as Jesus said,
And draped their garments 'cross his back,
On his donkey colt Jesus rode,
And all the people came to look.

They threw their robes down in his path,
And tore the palm leaves from the trees;
And shook, and waved them back and forth,
And sang for him a song of praise:

"Blest be the Messiah who comes,
Now, to his name, all praise is giv'n;
And peace be in Jerusalem,
And glory in the highest heav'n."

They heard some Pharisees protest,
"Rabbi, now stop this blasphemy!"
Jesus said, *"If I stop their voice,
These stones would shout it to the sky!"*

As He came near Jerusalem
And saw her spires and canopies,
He wept, and grieved to say her name,

That did not recognize his face.

*"If only you had seen these things
That now are hidden from your eyes!
For soon, the day comes when your kings
Will be enslaved by enemies!*

*They will build ramparts all around
And hem you in on ev'ry side,
And crush you all into the ground
Till ev'ry soul of you is dead;*

*Because all of you are still blind
To th'image of a living God,
You seize the savior of mankind
And lose the grace you could have had."*

He went into the temple square,
And sent the merchants forth in droves:
His house would be a house of pray'r
Where it had been a den of thieves.

And in the temple there he taught,
But they could not restrain him then,
So th'authorities made a plot,
How to arrest the Son of Man.

20.

As Jesus sat and taught one day,
Th' authorities came and asked to know
Who gave authority to him
To teach people and lead them so.

Jesus considered what they meant,
And then he asked them about John:
*"Was John's baptism sent from heav'n
Or did it come from mortal men?"*

The priests debated this problem,
And they thought, "If we say, 'From heav'n,'
Then why didn't we follow him,
And trust his word when it was giv'n?"

But if we say, 'From humankind,'
All these people will punish us,
For they all believed with one mind
That John spoke holy prophecies."

So they answered, "We do not know
Where John's authority came from."
Jesus said, *"Neither can I tell you
From who's authority I am."*

Then Jesus told a parable:
*"There once was a man who planted
A vineyard, and its vines were full;
Then the whole vineyard was rented*

*While the man traveled far away.
After a long time the man returned
And sent a slave to ask if they
Could pay a share of what had grown.*

*But the tenants beat up the slave,
And left him bloody in the road,
Then two more of his slaves arrived,
Sent to collect what he was owed,*

*But both of them were beaten too,
Until the owner finally said,
'There's nothing more my slaves can do,
I'll send my own son there instead.'*

*But when the tenants saw his son,
They all conspired to have him killed,
And soon after the deed was done,
The tenants claimed to own his fields.*

*So tell me, should the owner choose
To let these tenants have the lot?
Or should he come at them with force,*

So he can finally get them out?"
When all the people heard these words,
They said to Jesus, "God forbid!"
He spoke again to them and said,
"Interpret what the prophets wrote:

*'The stone the builder first would spurn
Has now become the cornerstone.'*
*I say, if you fall on this stone,
You will be broken, ev'ry bone,*

*And that a harder stone will grind
To dust, all these authorities."*
And when the elders understood
That Jesus spoke against their ways,

They would have had him seized and bound,
But they needed time to devise
A plot that would take him in hand,
And still conceal their purposes.

And so they watched and spied on him,
Laying their traps to catch his words,
For when they caught them they would aim
To prosecute him afterwards.

They said, "We know you speak the truth
In what you say and what you teach,
And follow in a righteous path,

As you would have your foll'wers preach;
So tell us, if we give away
Our worldly goods to feed the poor,
Must we then still be taxed to pay
The soldiers and the emperor?

But he perceived their guile, and said,
*"Show me a coin out of your purse.
On this your coin, whose is the head?"*
They answered him, "The emperor's."

And so he said, *"Then give to him
Those things the laws decree are his,
And give to God the things that come
From your own spirit's willingness."*

Try as they might, they could not snare
The words they thought could prove his guilt,
So then they stopped, and left him there
Among the blind and lame and halt.

And then came more authorities,
They who believe there is no heav'n,
And they said, "Rabbi, Moses says
That a man's widow may be giv'n

To his brother for him to wed.
Now, if there would be seven brothers,
And the first one of them has died,

The same wife does for all the others,
And none of them has any child,
And then the woman also dies...
When they stand in heav'n before God,
Which marriage will be recognized?"

Jesus said, *"The people here on earth
Can marry and obey their pledge,
But those who are of heav'nly birth,
Will not enter into marriage.*

*They cannot die ever again,
They will live through eternity,
Children of God, no more of men,
A resurrected family.*

*And Moses also made this claim,
That men would live beyond earth's realm,
For the God that came before him
Was also God of Abraham,*

*Of Isaac, and of Jacob, too,
For all together worship Him,
There up above, here down below,
And know Him as the great I AM."*

Then Jesus said, *"How can you say
That the Christ must be David's son?
For David would himself reply*

The Christ is Lord of ev'ryone,

*And if David calls the Christ, Lord,
David cannot still call him, Son:
So follow David's holy word;
And may the will of God be done."*

And then he spoke out to the crowd:
*"Th'authorities wear the richest cloth;
From far off hear them pray aloud,
All to display their pride and wealth;*

*They stroll about the marketplace
So they their may increase status,
And plot to take the better seats
At synagogue and wedding feast.*

*Widows' houses they may devour,
For their own wealth's accumulation,
But after their great show of pray'r
They earn a greater condemnation."*

21.

Some wealthy folk came up and put
Their gifts into the treasury,
And then a widow came, and dropped

Two coins in, and she went away.
"Truly, I tell you," Jesus said,
"She put in more than all of them;
For she has giv'n all that she had,
While they toss in their scrap and crumb.

*And to what end or purpose is
This giving by both rich and poor?
The wood is carved in tracteries,
And jewels decorate the door,*

*Our temple may be proud and great,
But comes the day when not one stone
Will on another stone still sit,
And all you see will be cast down."*

Then they asked him, "Teacher, when?
And what will be our sign to flee?"
He said, "Some may see an omen,
But you should not be led astray.

*When you hear of war and terror,
Do not fear, but collect your soul,
For these things speak the end of war
But with a distant, echoing call.*

*Nation rises against nation,
Kings and kingdoms join in the fray,
Famine, plague and desolation*

*Signs and symbols may display,
But long before this comes to pass,
In our belov'd Judaeen land,
The powers will bind you up in chains,
Accused and beaten you shall stand:*

*And then you all must testify,
But do not struggle in your speech;
In that instant you are with me,
And I will give you words to preach.*

*Wisdom will flower forth from you
That none may contradict or quell,
Even if ev'ry one shuns you:
Relatives, friends, betrayed by all.*

*Your fam'ly may put you to death,
And you'll be hated in my name.
My Spirit in your ev'ry breath
Endures, till you come into heav'n.*

*By your endurance gain your soul,
No matter if your body breaks;
My Spirit will uphold you all
If you would suffer for my sake.*

*And when you see the target's eye
Concentered in Jerusalem,
Then ev'ry one of you should flee,*

*For then its desolation comes.
Flee to the mountains, flee your death,
Go there, do not come back again,
For this people shall know God's wrath,
Their city will no more be seen.*

*Woe to the unborn child that day,
And the babies their mothers nurse,
God's wrath will come down to repay
The debts, the sins, the ages' curse.*

*The sword will take all flesh captive,
Gentiles will rule this barren waste,
Until even the Gentiles have
Good reason to face their own test.*

*Signs will creep 'cross the sun and moon,
Stars flick, and planets stray their course,
The mountains heave and oceans swoon,
Ev'ry soul call out its distress.*

*People will fear to take their breath,
All things be seen to shake and quiver,
For in that instant, life and death
Will join themselves and be forever.*

*The Son of Man, arrayed in cloud,
Will stand before you face to face;
Now raise your head among the crowd,*

*For your redemption comes with grace.
The fig tree sprouts its tiny leaves,
And then, you see the summer come:
So also should you now believe
That God will take you in his arms.*

*This era will not pass away
Till all these things have come to pass;
And heav'n and earth no more will be,
But in your soul my Word will last.*

*So watch, keep yourself free from care,
From dissipation, sin, and sleep,
The end may catch you anywhere,
And hold you fast within its grip.*

*Watch and pray God may still grant you
The strength to answer if you can;
Free your souls and prepare to go,
And stand before the Son of Man."*

22.

The Passover was coming soon,
And all of the authorities
Wanted to have a good reason
To go out and capture Jesus.

Satan took the mind of Judas,
As the mind of God had foreseen:
For money, he would bring soldiers
To put Jesus in their prison.

But Judas knew it must be done
Secretly and without a crowd;
For him the voice of treachery
Whispered in silence, not aloud.

On the day of the Passover,
Jesus sent out Peter and John,
Saying to them, "*Go and prepare,
For see the ev'ning coming on.*"

"Lord, where will we go?" they asked him,
"We have no place to sit and eat."
He said, "*Go to Jerusalem,
Follow the first stranger you meet*

*Carrying a big water jar;
When the stranger comes to a house,
Go in and tell the owner there,
'Our holy teacher has sent us.*

*Is there a room where we may eat
And celebrate the Passover?
And he will show you where to meet,*

And help prepare tonight's dinner."
This happened just as Jesus said.
Then Jesus sat down with them too.
He said to them, "*I have wanted
To eat this Passover with you,*

*For I will never eat again
Until God's sentence is fulfilled,
And I am taken by Romans,
Judged and flogged, and harrowed, and killed."*

Then he lifted up his own cup
And after he had giv'n God thanks
Said, "*Drink this, and divide it up,
Amongst yourselves, so each one drinks.*

*It will not drink any more wine
Until I see the face of God,
And we know one true communion,
And I have ris'n up from the dead."*

And then he took a loaf of bread,
Offered thanks, and broke it for them,
And ev'ry one of them he fed,
All of the women and the men,

And he said, "*This is my body,
Which I now sacrifice for you,
Eat of this to remember me,*

*And blest be all of you who do."
And then he took the cup and said,
"This cup I now pour out for you
Makes a new cov'nant with my blood;
Drink from this to remember me.*

*And see, the one who betrays me
Performs the will of God for us;
So I must die on Calvary,
And he his soul will sacrifice!"*

All of the twelve asked of themselves
Who was ordained the deceiver;
They said, "Which one of us deserves,
When he dies, to be the leader."

But Jesus said, "You are not kings,
That would have some high position;
The least of you the greatest brings,
Your leaders serve the other ones.

*Consider those who sit and feast,
And those who bring the cup and dish:
Now see, among you, I am cast
As one who waits upon your wish.*

*You have stood strong beside me here,
You are my Father's legacy,
So do not struggle to declare*

*Which one the greater one will be;
And Peter, hear me: Satan will
Winnow you all like grains of wheat!
I pray for you, that faith won't fail
When you and your temptation meet."*

Peter answered him, "How so, Lord?
I will be with you till our death!"
But Jesus said, "Just mark this word,
Satan will bring you down to earth!"

*The rooster will not greet the day
Before the world will hear you say
That you know nothing about me:
Three times you will my name deny.*

*When you went out into the world
You did not take your purse or bag,
And still people fed you, and cared,
You didn't lack for anything.*

*Now, these things must be left behind:
Your purse and bag should be at hand,
So sell your cloak and buy a sword,
And watch to see who's foe or friend.*

*The scripture in me comes to pass:
'I will be among the outlaws.'*
They told him, "Here, we have two swords,"

He answered, *"Two will protect us."*
Then they went out into the night
On the Mount of Olives nearby,
And he said, *"I hope that you don't
Suffer as I do when you pray."*

Then in the dark he offered up
A pray'r to help withstand his pain:
*"Father, may you take back this cup,
Yet not my will, but yours be done."*

An angel came to him from heav'n
And his glory shone all around;
As Jesus wrestled with his pain
His sweat dripped like blood from a wound.

When he rose up from his dark pray'r,
His disciples slept by the gate.
He called to them, *"Wake up! Prepare,
Be ready to preserve your life."*

And as he spoke, a crowd appeared
With Judas, who kissed Jesus' lips.
And Jesus said, *"You have betrayed
The Son of Man with your last kiss."*

And one disciple said to him,
"Lord, we want to protect your life!"
With his sword he went after them,

Cut the ear of the high priest's slave.
But Jesus said, *"No more of this,"*
And touched and healed the wounded ear,
*"Say to me what your mission is,
That you bring arms against me here."*

*I would go voluntarily,
But you bring swords, to capture me;
Yet, in the temple, ev'ry day,
You would not lay a hand on me."*

*But this dark hour belongs to you,
The power of evil is abroad."*
And so they led Jesus away
To beat and flog him as they would.

Peter followed them, not too close,
And sat where a fire burned, within
The courtyard of the high priest's house,
So he could hear what would happen.

Then a servant girl came to say
To Peter, "Weren't you with him?"
Peter answered, "I don't know him;
Nor do I know the rest of them."

And then, someone else said to him,
"Aren't you also one of his men?"
But Peter said, "No, I am not!"

And the dawn began to gleam.
And yet another person said,
"This man is a Galilean,
And Jesus comes from Nazareth,
So Jesus must be with this man."

But then Peter said, "I don't know
What rumors you've heard about me!"
Nearby they heard a rooster crow;
Jesus, turning, caught Peter's eye,

And Peter heard once more his word:
Three times, he'd said, he'd be denied;
And Peter cried out to the Lord,
Bitterly Peter moaned and cried.

Meanwhile, Jesus, mocked and beaten,
Had a cloth tied around his eyes,
And all the soldiers poked and threatened,
Laughing and say'ng, "He prophesies:

Take that, prophet, and then tell us
Which one of us it was that struck!"
They showered him with spit and piss
And wiped his skin with streaks of muck.

The next day all th'authorities
Held their sham justice puppet show.
Up before them they brought Jesus:

They asked him if he was Messiah.
He said, "*What if I answer this?
Will you believe a word I say?
Yet, if I ask you why you ask,
Surely you will not answer me.*"

*You all should know that from this hour
The Son of Man will sit and rule
At the right hand of God's own power,
Over men's kingdoms, one and all."*

They asked, "Are you the Son of God?"
He said to them, "*You say I am.*"
They judged his guilt, and so he died
Because God had willed this for him.

23.

All the soldiers stood together,
And brought him to the Governor,
Pilate, a Roman, their ruler,
And Jesus' executioner.

They said, "This man is a liar,
He lied to the common people,
He scorned the Roman Emperor,

And claimed to be immortal.
Pilate asked him, "Are you a king?"
And Jesus said, "*You say I am.*"
Pilate said to his ministers,
"For justice here I make no claim.

This man may well be innocent;
You know more about it than I.
But I will order what you want
If you think he threatens me."

Th'authorities called for his blood,
Saying, "From here to Galilee
He has taught rebellion, and stirred
The people up to mutiny."

But Pilate said, "From Galilee?
Let him go see King Herod, then."
And Herod took authority,
Saying, "Jesus, give me a sign."

Jesus did not answer Herod,
Whatever questions he might have.
They sent him back with his hands tied
As if he were an escaped slave.

Pilate said, in front of them all,
The authorities and the crowd,
"You say he is a criminal,

So I will accept your word.
Herod sent him back here to me;
He will not have him crucified.
I think that he should be set free,
But first I think he should be flayed."

But the crowd shouted with one voice:
"Kill him! But first set free our man!
Set free Barabbas in his place,
And execute this other one!"

Then Pilate tried to speak again,
But the crowd cried "Crucify him!
Crucify him! Crucify him!
Let him die now! Away with him!"

And at last, Pilate said to them,
"Murder him then, fools that you are,
I don't care what happens to him.
Nothing else will quell your anger."

As was usual at this feast,
One man was set free from prison.
They chose one of the murderers,
Called Barabbas, to be the one.

And how the crowd taunted Jesus!
He was paraded through the streets;
Simon of Cyrene was seized,

And they forced him to bear the cross.
Many followed in their footsteps;
Women beat their breasts and they wailed.
When Jesus heard the way they wept
He stopped, and turned to them, and called:

*"O Daughters of Jerusalem!
Do not weep and cry out for me;
Weep for yourselves, for soon will come
Great woe in all your families!*

*Blest are the barren, you will say,
Blest be the womb that never bore,
Your breast will wither and be dry,
And give your sustenance no more.*

*Say to your mountains, fall on me,
Cover me now, you barren hills,
The wood that smokes and tears your eye
Will blaze then as your city falls!"*

There with him being crucified
Were two thieves, on his left and right.
One of them taunted him, and said,
"Save yourself now, O King so great!"

But the other one scorned the first
And said, "Fear God, for death is near.
All of us now can taste the worst

And we have nothing else to fear.
You and I deserve this death,
And we will die before too long;
But from the moment of his birth,
This holy man did nothing wrong."

The second thief said to Jesus,
"Up in your heav'n, remember me."
"We meet today in paradise,"
Jesus said, and the good thief died.

And then came down a veil of dark
That shrivel'd off the noonday sun;
The people gaped and probed the murk,
And heard the temple curtain torn,

And Jesus, with a fearsome voice
Called, *"Father, I give thee my spirit!"*
And with that cry, he breathed his last:
This is the way that Jesus died.

The crowd beat on their breasts and cried,
Then went back home to hide their shame;
The women from Galilee stood by,
And took his body off with them.

Joseph of Arimathea came,
Who was a good and righteous man,
And put the body in a tomb

Where no body had ever been.

Then sun was starting to go down;
The women followed to the tomb.
And when they arrived, they went in,
And wrapped his body in linen.

After they had prepared his corpse,
They stepped outside, and then a stone
Was rolled over and put in place,
To close the tomb; then they were gone.

24.

On the third day, the women came
And found the stone rolled from the door.
Inside, there where the corpse had been
They found nothing but empty air.

They were perplexed, and suddenly,
Two men in dazzling robes appeared
And spoke to them; in response they
Bowed down, because they were afraid.

"Why are you looking for him here?"
Said the men when they saw their fright.
"You will not find him in this bier,

He has arisen like the light.
Remember how in Galilee
He said to you, 'The Son of Man
Will be murdered, and he will die,
And be buried, and rise again?'"

Then the women remembered this,
And came back from his tomb, and said
To all his other followers,
"Jesus has risen from the dead."

They were Mary of Magdalene,
Mary, mother of James and John,
Joanna, and other women,
Who told these things to ev'ryone.

Their words seemed like a fantasy,
And nobody would believe them.
Peter went to the tomb to see,
And he thought his eyes deceived him.

Later, two of them were walking
To Emmaus, sev'n miles away;
And as they walked, they were talking,
About the things they'd seen that day.

On the road they met a trav'ler,
And he walked along beside them,
But he appeared as a stranger,

And they did not recognize him.
"As you came here," he said to them,
"Can you tell me the things you said?"
They were sad when they answered him;
Then the one called Cleopas asked,

"Are you the only stranger here
Who has not heard what th'Romans did?
How Jesus, a prophet, had appeared,
And he was condemned and murdered?"

We thought th' Messiah had arrived,
Israel's redemption was sure,
But, after three days in his grave,
Now they can't find him anywhere.

Early this morning, at his tomb,
Some women came and found him gone;
They said that angels spoke to them,
And claimed he was alive again.

Others also went to the tomb,
And they saw that he wasn't there.
Now we don't know where to find him,
And we are sad, and filled with fear."

Then Jesus said, *"What fools you are!
How slow your hearts are to believe!
For what the prophets once declared*

*Your senses still cannot perceive.
Hasn't God's plan yet made it clear
That Christ should suffer on his cross,
And enter into glory there,
When from his tomb he will arise?"*

And as they came to Emmaus,
He left the two of them behind,
But then they urged him, "Stay with us,
The day is coming to an end."

So he went in to stay with them,
And at the table, blest the bread,
And broke, and passed it to each hand,
And then their eyes were opened wide,

For they recognized Jesus then,
And he disappeared from their sight,
And they spoke, and they thought again,
"Weren't our sad spirits kindled bright

When he joined us this afternoon?
He opened up our hearts, and read;
And yet, no sooner here, than gone."
And so they did not go to bed,

But went back to Jerusalem,
And told the others what he'd said,
And how he had appeared to them

After the breaking of the bread.
And as they spoke, there he appeared,
And raised up his hands, saying, "*Peace.*"
And they were shocked and terrified,
And thought that he must be a ghost.

And he said to them, "*Do not fear,*
Do not find doubt within your heart.
For you can see that I am here,
And you can touch my hands and feet.

Ghosts do not have real bones and flesh,
Yet you can see me with you here."
With them he ate some broiled fish
To show his flesh was really there.

He said, "*Hear what I tell you now:*
So ev'rything will be fulfilled,
After you witness life in me,
Then I will go where I am called."

They all went out to Bethany;
He raised his wounded hands again,
And when he rose up in the sky,
They all cried out their joy. Amen.