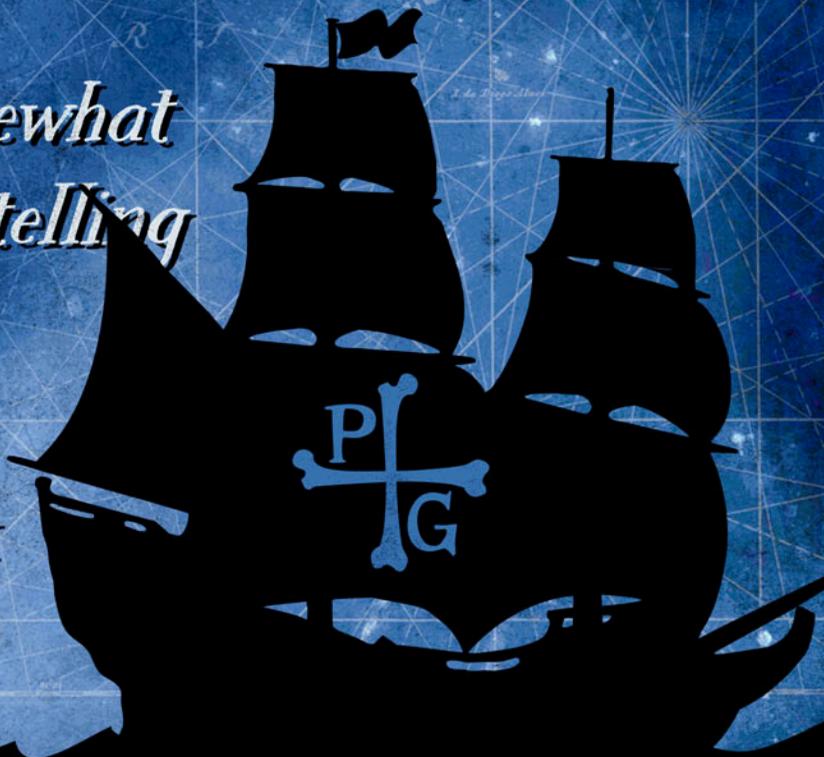


Tales of the **PIRATE GOSPEL**

*A Somewhat
Free Retelling
of the
Gospel
of Mark*



by **ANDREW MOODY**

*For my brother, who's half pirate.
I mean, just look at him.*

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of the Gospel of Mark*

By Andrew Moody



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PREFACE

The gospel, in pirate, eh? What do you say to that?

Alright! Why didn't somebody think of that before?

Or;

That sounds stupid! What's wrong with the Bible?

If your instinct was more along the lines of the first response, you can really skip this bit. Jump to chapter one and start reading. The only thing I'd ask you to remember is this: the original Jesus is better. If, by some strange chance, you find that you like him better here, I'd urge you to consider that I've just helped you see a few things that were already there. Try going back to the Bible after you've read the Pirate Gospel and look again. You might be surprised at what you find.

For those readers who are inclined to be more suspicious, I should make it clear that this book isn't pretending to be anything like a *real* "translation." The Pirate Gospel is not meant to be an alternative to the Bible, but it might help you appreciate the Bible. Here's why.

The Bible is God's word: it has everything we need for every good work and is stuffed with treasures! But very often we have trouble seeing it. We come to it thinking we already know what's there. We hear it through the filters and associations of our childhood or the caricatures of the media.

When we read "blessed are the meek," we don't hear a shocking challenge to the foundations of power and privilege, we picture a limp-wristed clergyman.

When we hear Jesus talking about being "born again," or washed in the "blood of the lamb" we don't catch the original surprise or shock of these words - instead we think of TV evangelists trying to get at our money.

Now I'm sure that the best remedy for this problem would be for us to study the Bible harder, or to read a few good commentaries. But sometimes we can get a few of the same benefits when someone retells the story in their own words. It can happen in a sermon or it can happen at greater length when someone tries to re-imagine the story of Jesus in another tone or setting. They use a new style of speech, or they change some of the details, and suddenly we are jolted awake and begin to notice things that we'd missed or forgotten.

This has been my experience with two books that inspired me to try writing this one. The first is *The Heliand*, an ancient book which retells the story of Christ through the lens of the ninth century Saxon world. The writer of *The Heliand* depicts Jesus as a noble warrior king who comes to *Middlegard* (Earth) to bring forgiveness from the meadows of heaven and death to the powers of *Hel*. The apostles are Jesus' shield companions, the gospel writers are the *skalds* (bards). The tone of the whole work is heroic and magical.

My second inspiration is *The Aussie Bible*, a colloquial retelling of the life of Jesus published by Kel Richards in 2003. *The Aussie Bible* imagines Jesus in the outback being harassed by lawyers from the big smoke. Cleaving a bit closer to the original gospels than *The Heliand*, it keeps the biblical emphases, but gives the story an informal and (helpfully) irreverent feel. For Australians at least, *The Aussie Bible* offers a refreshing reminder that Jesus was a real person who told it straight, stayed true to his mates and showed a healthy disrespect for religious pretence.

Books like these can act like tinted lenses, filtering out some wavelengths so we can see others more clearly. In one sense they're distortions (and so we should never take them too seriously) but they can also help us see things in a new light.

A FEW NOTES ON MY "TRANSLATION"

One of the first challenges facing anyone who wants to translate the Bible is the question of whether to go for a literal or dynamic approach. A literal translation tries to preserve the *words* of the Bible, holding on to the original language and symbolism as much as possible (even when it doesn't make much sense to modern English speakers). A dynamic translation attempts to convey the *meaning* of the original passage, even if that means changing the words and metaphors.

Bible translations work with a trade-off between these two principles. The more serious versions opt for the literal approach; the more popular embrace the dynamic. This book is extremely dynamic! I've converted the parables into tales appropriate to the golden age of piracy. I've reordered and simplified complex passages to bring out (what I think is) the

meaning. I've even altered the geography of first century Palestine.

So take it with a grain of salt. Dynamic translations can be really helpful, at other times they'll miss their mark and get the interpretation wrong. No doubt there will be examples of both in the pages ahead.

What about the pirate talk? Is that accurate?

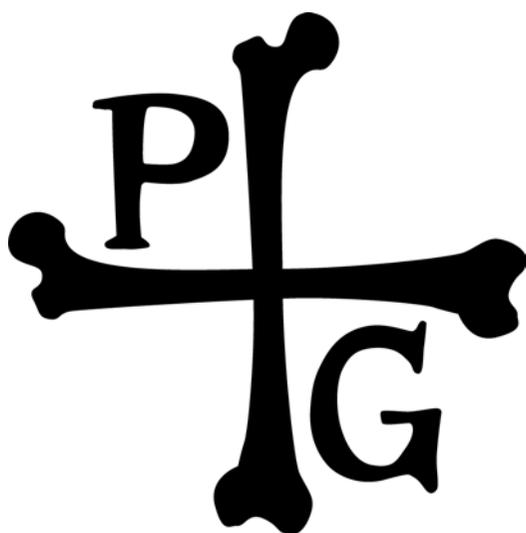
Well I've tried to make it sound convincing without resorting to too many "Arrs!" and "Shiver me timbers" (but you have to have a few). There are quite a few archaic and nautical terms scattered through the text - for which I've provided a glossary at the end of the book. Nevertheless, to readers who are more highly attuned to the fine points of eighteenth century south-coast English, I extend my apologies in advance.

That's enough gabbin'. Look lively and get yerself readin'.

Andrew Moody,

Feb 2, 2015





CHAPTER 1

Of His First Appearin'

Now listen up! I got good tidin's fer ye. This here's a tale that'll shake up yer timbers and rewrite yer maps. It tells of a man sent to steer the world to rights: the Captain o' the world, aye, and the son o' the Almighty 'imself.

The first wind we got of 'im was through a cove by the name o' John the Baptizer. This fella turned up at the mouth of the river Jordan, on the edge o' the Judean desert. He was baptizin' folks - dunkin' 'em in water and tellin' 'em to turn from their wicked ways. The folks from all around was goin' out to see 'im. They was comin' clean about their scurvy dealin's, and he was washin' 'em in the river.

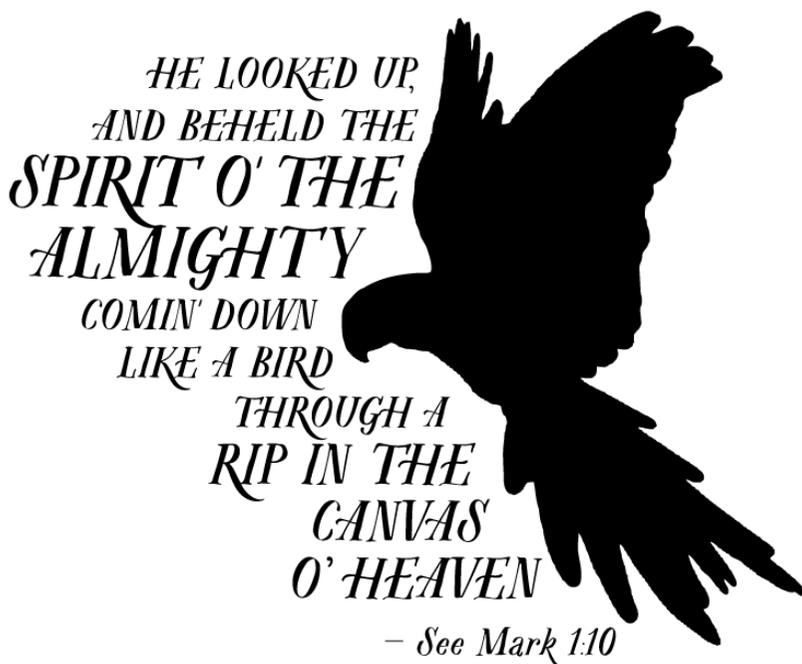
He was a rare bird, that John - like a prophet out o' the old tomes. He came wearin' duds made out o' camel hair, and eatin' weevils and honey.

The message on 'is lips was out o' the old tomes too.

"Another man be a'comin'," he said, "- a man so great that I ain't worthy to lick 'is boots. He'll do more 'n

dunk ye in water. He'll pour out the Spirit o' the Almighty 'imself."

Now while this was goin' on, the very man that John was talkin' about showed up. His name was Jesus and he'd just rowed himself across from Nazareth to have 'imself dunked along with the rest.



But it turned out he weren't like the rest. Rum things began to happen when Jesus came up from them waves. Fer he looked up and beheld the Spirit o' the Almighty

comin' down like a bird through a rip in the canvas of heaven. And as that bird was perchin' on 'is shoulder, there was a mighty voice from the heavens sayin', "Here ye be! Me own beloved son. Mighty pleased, I be with ye, lad."

So that was how it started with this Jesus fella. But there was plenty more to come.

Straight off, the Spirit sent 'im out into the desert, and so off he went. Marooned he was for forty days. There was no grub, and no drink and no sail on the horizon, just 'imself livin' out amid the dunes and beasts. And in the end the Devil 'imself showed up and plied 'im with honeyed lies to make 'im turn mutinous against the Almighty. Aye, but he stood firm, and the angels came and tended 'im.

Soon after this, John the Baptizer was clapped in irons - I'll tell ye more o' that tale shortly. But it was like a signal fer Jesus. He legged it up to the coast o' Galilee and began tellin' all 'n sundry that there was good tidin's from the Almighty.

"'Tis the last watch," he told 'em. "Sharpen up! Swab yer decks and set yer wrongs to right! Ready yerselves for fair winds from heaven!"

In the town o' Capernaum, Jesus got 'imself a ship and began gatherin' a crew. As he was traulin' by the quayside, he spied 'imself a pair of Jacks by the name of Simon 'n Andrew. They was sittin' in their longboat, a'danglin their nets in the drink.

"Ahoy, lads!" he called. "Join me crew and ye'll soon be catchin' somethin' worth more than fishes - I'll have ye hookin' the very souls o' men!"

Well that made 'em look lively. They chucked in their fishin' and took after 'im.

Not too much farther and he came across some other young tars: James and John - whelps of an old dog named Zebedee. They was sittin' in a ketch mendin' their tackle. But soon as Jesus fixed 'is eye on them, they grabbed their kit and jumped ship right enough.

On the Sabbath Jesus made way to the chapel, where he held forth like a preacher-man. But arr, he weren't no platitudinous pansy parson. When Jesus strode the pulpit he spoke with the mighty words o' God 'imself, and all the folks that sat there gaped.

As he schooled 'em, there sprang up in their midst an addled cove who was possessed of a devil. "What be

yer truck with us?" he slavered. "I know who ye be - ye be the holy one sent from the Almighty."

"Stow that lip!" growled Jesus with a glintin' eye. "Let go this swab, ye fiend." And lo 'n behold, the devil that was in that cove up and shipped out before you could draw yer blade.

Well after that, weren't all the folks blinkin' and gaspin'? "What be this?" they was jabberin' "He lays down a line to the devils and they tows it!" And the news about Jesus blew through the seaports like a gale in June.

After chapel they retired to the lodgin's o' Simon 'n Andrew. Now the mistress o' the house was laid low with a fever, and when Jesus heard of it he went and seized her by the hand. That was all it took to make her right. Up she jumped and started cookin' a skilly fer 'em all.

Later on that day, as the sun went down, all manner o' folk gathered about. Some had the pox, some had the plague, others was possessed o' wicked spirits. Jesus fixed the lot of 'em. He drove out the devils and ordered 'em to keep their traps shut for they'd caught wind o' who he was.

Next mornin', just afore first watch, Jesus grabbed 'is kit and went off by 'imself to parley with the Almighty, leavin' Simon and the rest o' the crew in their bunks.

When they woke up to find 'im missin', they was mighty vexed and went out searchin'. They found 'im, sure enough, and said. "Ho there Capt'n, here ye be! Don't ye know that all the folks is lookin' for ye?"

But Jesus didn't care for that talk. Nor did he care fer the kind o' popularity that made 'is lads so pleased.

"Dallyin's over boys. Get yerselves to the ship. The Almighty sent me to spread the word and that's what we'll be doin' henceforth."

So they looked sharp and made ready - and that was the start o' their first cruise. They went out huggin' the coast and puttin' in at the harbours so Jesus could preach in the chapels and drive out the devils.

One day, as they was standin' off shore 'n preparin' to sail, they was hailed by a swab in a dinghy. Leprous he was, and a piteous sight to behold.

"Capt'n Jesus," he shouted. "If ye be willin' I know ye can cleanse me o' this cursed plague."

Leavin' 'is charts, Jesus went to the side and looked down at the swab, who was squattin' on 'is thwart with 'is blighted arms upraised. And he was mighty stirred with pity.

"Aye, lad," said the Capt'n, "willin' I be. Get yerself alongside."

As he came in, Jesus went over the side and down the ladder. He leaned out and grasped the swab by the hand.

"Be clean, matey," he said. And all in a flash the cove's skin was changed like a cloth plunged in water.

"Now I'll be thankin' ye to keep this under yer hat, lad," said Jesus as he was climbin' back. "Get yerself to a clergyman and make yer testimony. Then leave it at that."

But he might as well have told 'im to shout it from the bell tower. The scabby cove gabbed about 'is healin' to everyone he could find. And that was the end o' free passage fer Jesus and 'is crew. Thereafter it was like gulls to a scalin'. Though they did their best to drop anchor out o' sight o' the towns, the crowds flocked to 'em all the same.

CHAPTER 2

Trouble Brewin'

After a while, they sailed back home to Capernaum and spent a bit o' time ashore. But when word went out that Jesus was back in 'is lodgin's, folks crowded 'round till the place was more packed than powder in a gun. So what do ye think Jesus did? He stepped up onto the table and began givin' 'em the word o' the Almighty.

Now while this was goin' on, there came a brace o' enterprisin' salts who plann'd to get a bit o' doctorin' for one o' their shipmates. Paralysed he was, on account of a fall, so they laid 'im on a stretcher and brought 'im up from the docks to see the Capt'n. When they got there, they found there was no way in on account o' the crowd. But they wasn't put off, not these lads. They tacked around to the back 'n found a way up onto the rooftop. Then they began shiftin' tiles to make a hole in the roof above the parlour. When they had a hole that was big enough they made fast some lines and belayed their mate, aye, stretcher 'n all, right down in front o' the Capt'n as he was preachin'.

Well Jesus looked up at 'em all, and ye could tell that he liked their faith and their bold ways. But he gave 'em strange treatment all the same. "Ye sins are forgiven, mate," was all he said to the Jack on the stretcher.

To them such as look on the outside o' things, this was strange. Here was this fella with a busted back bein' spoke to 'bout 'is soul. But the clergy gathered by, saw somethin' even more confoundin' in it.

"That fella's blaspheming," they said to 'emselves. "It be the sole prerogative of God to forgive a man's sins."

Straightaway Jesus could tell what they was a'thinkin', so he looked at 'em and said, "Here be a conundrum for ye all, padres. Which be more possible, to tell a man 'is sins be forgiven or to tell a paralytic to up and walk? How's about I prove one by doin' the other, and ye'll see whether the man sent by the Almighty has power to forgive sins?"

With that he cocked 'is head and looked down at the cripple afore 'im.

"Alright boyo, up ye get and go home. Don't forget to take yer beddin' with ye."

Well that cove on the stretcher sprang up like he was ready to dance a jig. He took off with 'is stretcher under 'is arm, leavin' 'em all struck by a thunderous amazement.

“Praise the Almighty!” they said. “We ain't never seen nothin' like this!”

As he made 'is way back down to the ship, the crowds came surgin' at 'im from every alley and stair and doorway and balcony. So he went slow, teachin' 'em as he went along.

When they got to the steps near the quayside, they went past a tavern where there was a certain privateer by the name o' Levi loungin' in the shade with 'is mates. When Jesus caught sight of 'im, he went and stood in the doorway and crooked a finger at 'im.

“Get yer kit, mate. I want ye fer me crew.”

Well that's just what Levi did, and pretty soon Jesus had a whole parcel o' rogues gathered about 'im. He and 'is men ate supper at Levi's lodgin's that day along with a menagerie o' publicans, slavers and other rare birds.

O' course that didn't sit well with the clergy. Them religious folks took on mighty superior when they caught sight o' the Capt'n's hosts.

"Look at the rabble he hangs about with," they said as they peered in at the windows. "Look, there's petty thieves, corrupt officials 'n all manner o' sinners. 'Tis a disgrace."

But Jesus had a thing or two to say to 'em as he heard their pious talk.

"So yer wonderin' why a man such as I should eat with disreputables are ye, Reverends?" he called out to 'em. "Here be me answer. If righteous gents like yerselves won't give ear, then why shouldn't I call upon rogues? A physic be only useful to them what knows they be stricken."

That wasn't the last time he crossed swords with that lot by any stretch.

'Twas the custom o' that time fer the holy crowd to go without grub out o' grief for the plight o' Israel. The religious folks was doin' it; so was Baptizer's lads. And when they saw that Jesus and 'is crew was goin' on eatin' and drinkin', well, it made some of 'em sour. It made the folks in the crowd curious too.



“How is it that yer crewmen dodge the ways o’ the religious folks, Capt’n?” they asked ’im.

“Tell me,” answered Jesus, “do ye keep on diggin’ when ye’ve reached the gold? Do you keep on sailin’ when ye reach yer port? Do ye keep eatin’ weevils when you’ve got fresh stores? Nay, ’course not!

There’ll come a day when me own lads’ll be grievin’ too. But fer now there’s a new wind. And when the wind changes, ye changes yer tack or ye goes off course.”

Another time, ’twas on the Sabbath, Jesus and ’is crew was comin’ ashore in the longboat. Now as they was wont to do, some o’ the lads up the stern thought

they'd trail a couple o' lines as they came in. So they baited their hooks and dropped 'em over the side.

But the religious folks spied 'em doin' it, and didn't they make a fuss? When the boat reached the sea-wall, they was standin' there like a bunch o' magistrates fixin' to pass sentence.

"Capt'n Jesus!" said they in a quiverin' rage, "How dare ye allow yer men to make sport on a holy day such as this!"

Well Jesus rolled 'is eyes.

"Do ye ever read the Scriptures, yer Reverences?" he asked 'em as he climbed out o' the boat. "Ye do? Well did ye ever come across a place where King David was hungry and grabbed a bite o' bread from the temple - even though 'twasn't strictly legal fer ordinary folks?"

"I tell ye, these rules yer makin' such a fuss about was given to bless men, not to tie 'em up and keep 'em down. And besides, as I just showed ye, things work a bit different fer the Almighty's man. He be the master o' ceremonies as far as the Sabbath goes."

CHAPTER 3

The Plottin' Begins

Arr, but there was plenty more o' that to come. Them pious folks was always fussin' about what Jesus was doin' on the Sabbath - 'twas like a scab they couldn't help pickin'.

One Sabbath, he was teachin' at a chapel, where there was a cove with a withered hand in attendance. Sure enough, the religious crew was waitin' up the back, lookin' on with their beady eyes to see if he would do a work o' healin' on the Almighty's day.

Well Jesus knew what they was up to. "On yer feet, mate," he said to the crippled cove.

"Tell me, gents," he said lookin' over the pews. "Do ye think the Almighty would prefer us do good or evil on this day? Which would be more in keepin' with 'is laws - to save a life or to set about killin'?"

They stared right back at 'im without givin' 'im a word. And Jesus gnashed 'is teeth at their shrivelled black hearts.

“Stretch out yer hand!” He roared to the cove. And when he did, ’twas good as new.

That was all they was waitin’ for. Out o’ the chapel they filed to hold a counsel o’ war with some o’ the gentry. Aye, and that was the start o’ the plans fer ’is execution.

But with the common folks, the word kept on spreadin’ and the crowds kept on growin’. There was folks comin’ up in carts from Judea and Port Jerusalem. There was foreigners shippin’ down from the straights o’ Sidon and up from the southern Isles of Edom. And it was gettin’ perilous fer the Capt’n too. Sick folks was surgin’ at ’im from every side, desperate fer a healin’ touch. Devil’s was throwin’ coves into fits and screamin’ that he was the Son o’ the Almighty - though Jesus forbade ’em to give voice. Aye ’twas close to bedlam.

In the end he was near forced from the shore and began spendin’ more time aboard ship. When he came in to do his preachin’, he’d have the lads stand off in the longboat ’case he needed to escape the crush.



Came a time now when Jesus was ready to appoint 'is officers, so he went up on a mountain, hoisted 'is flag and called the lads he'd set 'is eye on. First there was Simon ('im what Jesus called Peter); then there was the Zebedee boys - Jesus dubbed 'em 'is Sons o' Thunder. After that came Andrew, Philip, Bartholomee, Matthee, Thomas, James son of Alphaeus, Thaddaeus and Simon the Rebel. Last of all there was that scurvy throat-slittin' Judas - aye, the cur what betrayed the Capt'n in the end. So there was twelve in all - like the tribes of Israel - and Jesus made 'em 'is messengers, and gived 'em power over the devils.

But they was all hard pressed in those days. When they went to a tavern there'd be such a crowd as he and 'is lads could barely see their plates in front o' them. And there was trouble brewin' in other quarters too. His family was mutterin' that he'd gone mad on account of all the daftness that surrounded 'im. The clergy from Port Jerusalem reckoned he was possessed.

“That man has a devil,” they was sayin’ “The reason why he’s castin’ out all those spirit’s is ’cause he’s in league with the chief o’ devils. It’s Bezelbub castin’ out other devils.”

Well that set Jesus growlin' in 'is beard. But he shot to crack that hull.

“So the Devil is fighting 'is own crew is he?” he asked 'em. “Well that be grand news! He must have a mutiny on 'is hands. Drinks all round!

“How's about I give ye a more plausible solution, padres? If ye see the devil's ship a'fire and 'is crew in the boats; if ye see 'is slaves loosed o' their shackles, and 'is booty piled on the deck of 'is enemy - then it means that he's met 'is match. There be a greater pirate on the seas with truer shot and tougher steel.

“But ye should look to yerselves with that bilge yer spoutin'. This be the work o' the Spirit o' God that you're callin' devilish. How do ye think the Almighty'll feel about that? Watch yerselves. Them what sees white as black is headed for perdition with no hope o' turnin'.”

Just as he was sayin' this to 'em, some o' Jesus clan showed up. They was still thinkin' that he'd lost 'is topsails, and was fixin' to take 'im in hand. But when they saw there was no gettin' near 'im, they found a lad to scurry through the legs until he popped up at Jesus' feet.

“Capt’n Jesus,” squeaked the whelp, “Yer mother and yer brethren are outside and are wantin’ to see ye.”

Well Jesus gave ’im a wink.

“I thank ye, laddie,” he said. “I thank ye very much fer yer pains. But I’m afraid ye be mistaken. Ye see me kin are all in here. Look about ye. ’Tis these folks who wants to do to the will o’ the Almighty that be me mother and brother and sister.”

CHAPTER 4

His Riddlin' Ways

So on he went with 'is teachin'. But now the crowds was so large that he had to preach from the longboat. His usual manner o' teachin' in those days was a kind o' riddle - a mysterious tale that vexed the ears o' the listeners. One of 'em went like this.

“Now listen close. There was once a governor who had a fleet o' privateers in 'is harbour. They used to sail forth to do mischief amongst 'is enemies, and ye can be sure they made a tidy profit into the bargain.

“Well one day this governor called the captains together, and when they was gathered about he brought out a secret map that showed 'em where they might come upon a treasure galleon, loaded with gold and gems. They was mighty pleased by this news and made ready to ship out, each of 'em eager to claim the prize.

“Now the first captain who set sail was a luckless drunkard. Straightaway he forgot where he was supposed to be goin' and steered 'imself into a pirates'

nest. They burned 'is ship to the waterline and sold the crew into slavery.

“The second captain was a different kind o’ man - sharp, and full o’ cunnin’ plans. Seein’ by ’is own charts that he could reach the prize faster if he avoided the deep, he began sailing’ by the coastlines and channels. That seemed to be workin’ nicely fer a time until he ripped ’is belly open on a coral reef.

“The third captain went out bold, and full o’ purpose, but ’is crew was a mouldy mob. When they heard about the galleon’s mighty guns they turned on the captain and made ’im abandon the quest. The last anyone heard of ’em they was off on a mad search fer buried treasure.

“But the fourth Capt’n followed that map he was shown. He found the galleon just as he’d been told, fell upon her and took her booty. Aye, and there was a king’s ransom in that hold - enough to buy thirty, sixty or even a hundred lesser ships.”

Then Jesus looked about and tapped ’is ear.

“Do ye hear what I’m sayin’? If ye got ears fer listenin’ and a brain fer thinkin’, use ’em now!”

But 'is officers and crew was greatly mystified by this talk and, later on they told 'im so.

Jesus looked at 'em sideways and said, "'Tis a code, lads. Ye what serve with me have been given the secret o' the Almighty's plans. But them what just comes along fer the miracles - they'll never get more. Fer that lot, 'tis just like it says in the Tome of Isaiah; 'everythin's in riddles so they can't hear or understand - 'cause if they did they might turn aside and be saved!'

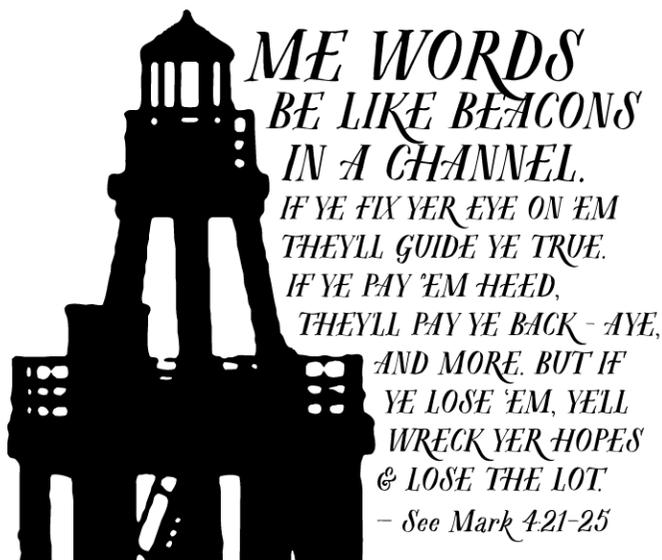
"Alright," he went on. "Here be the meanin'. 'Tis a riddle 'bout riddles - so if ye miss this one ye'll be in the dark about the lot."

"The map be like the word o' the Almighty, and the captains be like the folks who hear it. Some be like the drunkard - they forget the word straight off and get 'emselfes captured by the devil. Others make a good start but never get past the shallows. Soon as trouble or tribulation comes along they run aground.

"The third lot be like the captain with the mutinous crew. Things seem shipshape topside, but below decks, there's a canker at work. Sooner or later the worries o' life or vain tales of easy riches'll bring it to the surface - and that'll be the end o' the voyage.

“Finally there be them that follows the map and reaches the prize. Aye, what a pile o’ riches there’ll be fer them what hear the word and sails true to it! I tell ye it’ll be like wealth beyond yer wildest imaginin’.

“So keep mindin’ me words lads. They might sound dark but they’re meant fer yer guidance. They’re like beacons in a channel. If ye fix yer eye on ’em they’ll guide ye true. If ye pay ’em heed, they’ll pay ye back - aye, and more. But if ye lose ’em, ye’ll wreck yer hopes and lose the lot.”



Then he went on with another of 'is riddles.

“It all begins with the word, lads. The world to come is like a bunch o’ seeds a man spits from ’is mouth as he eats a melon. They don’t look like much, but them seeds has a wondrous and mysterious power. Soon as they hits the soil they start sproutin’ and growin’. And then they sticks up their heads and starts to creep along the ground. And then one day the job is done and the man comes along and finds the fruit.

“But remember, mates - it don’t look like much to start with. Cast yer eyes at the fine mast on our ship. That great tower o’ strength was once just a seed from a pinecone - aye, no bigger that a nail on yer finger. But it grew and grew until it was a mighty tree that gave shelter to all manner o’ birds and creatures. And now it stands tall above the waves, makin’ a home fer the strangest birds of all! That’s what the kingdom o’ the Almighty’ll be like. Seed now; great tower later.”

That evenin’, when the teachin was done, they left the crowd o’ lubbers on the shore and put out into the bay. But while they was under way, there blew up a fearsome tempest. Mighty billows started spillin’ o’er the gunnels and the crew was a’feared she’d go down.

Aye, but not Jesus. Cool, he was - reclinin' aft, with 'is feet up and 'is hat down over 'is eyes.

“Avast, Capt'n!,” they cried to 'im. “Have ye no care that we're headed for Davey Jones?”

Jesus cocked an eye at the storm and stirred 'is stumps. “Pipe down!” He said to the wind. “Quit yer fussin!”

The sea went as flat as a millpond.

“Why be ye so a'feared, ye faithless swabs?” said the Capt'n.

But the crew was quiverin' like boys at their first boardin'.

“What manner of man be our Capt'n?” they asked themselves. “Even the elements be at 'is beck and call!”

CHAPTER 5

The Man o' Power

Another time in those days, Jesus and 'is shipmates dropped anchor on the island of Gerasa. As they was clamberin' out o' the longboat to stretch their shanks, they was set upon by one of the natives o' the island. This knave was riddled with devils from 'is bilge to 'is binnacle and he was a scourge upon 'is own brethren. Many a time they'd tried to load 'im down with chain but he came endowed with the strength o' twenty men and could tear ironmongery like it were parchment. Out among the tombs he spent 'is mortal days, foragin' like beast among the bones o' the dead, and slicin' 'imself with shards.

Now when the Capt'n stepped ashore the devils within this poor cove was mighty stirred. He came at the Master roarin', frothin' and throwin' 'imself on 'is scabby knees.

“What be ye wantin' with me, Jesus, Son o' the Almighty? Swear by God in heaven that ye'll not torture me.”

“What be your name?” answered Jesus.

“Me name be Legion,” he shouted. “Legion it be for legion we is.”

After that he began beggin’ like a dog - whimperin’ and askin’ Jesus not to expel the devils that was bunked in ’im. Then the devils tried to parley, offerin’ to ship out quiet if Jesus would let ’em go into a herd of pigs that was feedin nearby.

Well Jesus let ’em do that, and so they went forth into the herd. But them devils sent the swine mad. ’Afore any man could raise a hand, the full complement had cast their selves off a cliff, and into the belly o’ the sea - about two thousand o’ the creatures.

Now there was islanders watchin’ these beasts, and when they spied ’em a’hurtlin to the brine, they took to their heels and began broadcastin’ the news to all about. ’Afore long a parcel o’ the clan crept out to spy on the camp - and it made ’em much afeared to see their madman made right and wearin’ clothes. So they came forth and made signs fer the Capt’n to leave their shores, and he obliged ’em.

The cove wanted to come away in the boat too, but Jesus required other service from ’im.

“Go back to your brethren, mate. Tell ’em what the Almighty has done for ye.”

Aye, and that’s what he did. Paddlin’ in ’is coracle from shore to shore, he went right through the Ten Isles proclaimin’ ’is deliverance at the hand o’ Jesus. All the folks was struck with wonder by the tale he told.

Jesus and ’is crew meantime sailed back to the coast. As they warped-in there was already a great crowd awaitin’ ’em, includin’ one o’ the chief elders from the chapel. Jairus was ’is name - and he was in a great state o’ consternation o’er the state of ’is daughter.

“Please, Capt’n,” said he, “I beg ye fer help. Me little lass is dyin’. Would ye come and heal her?”

Well Jesus said he would and they set out, though it was slow progress, fer the crowd was pressed in tight.

There was another delay too. In the midst of the mob there was a woman with a secret affliction o’ bleedin’. Twelve years the blood had been flowin’ and the sawbones had done her no good. She’d poured all her treasure into their coffers but they’d just left her worse.

But when she’d caught wind o’ Jesus she smuggled herself out into the crowd and let herself be carried

along. Fer she was thinkin', "If I can just lay a finger on 'is bandolier I'll be healed."

So she did. And she was. Aye, the moment she made contact with 'im she felt that her sufferin' was at an end.

But the Capt'n wouldn't let it go. 'Soon as it happened he stopped and began lookin' about 'imself, fer he could tell that power'd gone out of 'im.

"Who touched me clothes?" he called.

Well 'twas a rum query in the eyes of 'is crew.

"Everyone, Capt'n!" they shouted. "Look about ye! Here's this religious gent tuggin' on yer sleeve and all these landlubbers fixin' to crush ye. What do ye mean, 'who touched me?'"

Jesus ignored 'em, however, and kept castin' about. When the woman saw that he wasn't goin' to let her slip away, she came out o' the press and dropped afore 'im.

"'Twas I, Capt'n," she said, all a'quiverin' with fear.

Jesus heard her tale and let her go. "Go with peace, lass. Yer bold trustin' has brought ye what ye was seekin'. Be free o' yer pains and whole in yer self!"

Now poor old Jairus was dancin' on the spot while this was goin' on. But just as they was about to get on with the journey he was hailed by a couple o' gents comin' down wind.

"Tis all fer nought," they called out "Yer daughter's dead. Leave the Capt'n to go 'is way."

Well the chapel-man was stricken. But Jesus steadied 'im.

"Hold fast, mate. Don't let yerself be a'feared."

So they kept on. When they reached the place, there was a powerful wailin' goin' on fer they was ostentatious grievers in them days. Jesus' tried to get 'em to shut up.

"What's all this racket?" he said. "The lass is but a'sleepin' not dead."

Well they jeered at that. But while the wailers went back to their clamoury, Jesus caught hold o' the parents and made 'em convey 'im to the lass. He brought Peter and the Zebedee boys too.

When they got within and saw her, he caught her little mit and said a word in the old tongue. "*Talitha koumi!* - up ye get, lassie!"

Up she got, and began skippin' about like the little lass she was. Them what witnessed it was utter gobsmacked, but Jesus bade 'em keep mum, and told 'em to get some food in her belly.

CHAPTER 6

No Escape

On the Sabbath, Jesus took 'imself back to the chapel at Capernaum and held forth from the pulpit. Like before, the folks was amazed, wonderin' where he'd got hold of 'is wisdom and power. 'Cept now they began to look down on 'im too.

“Why are we payin' attention to this knave,” they was sayin'. “Isn't this that shipwright fella? Don't we have 'is mother and brethren livin' in our midst?”

“Aye,” Jesus said to 'em when he heard their mutterin' “The old sayin' is true. A prophet gets no hearin' in 'is home port.”

So he was mighty limited in what he could do in that place. No great miracles - though he did give healin' to a few o' the sick. And he shook 'is head at their flinty hearts.



Fer a time now, Jesus worked 'is way along the coast, goin' from village to village. To get word to folks

inland, he got 'is officers into pairs and sent 'em off on foot.

“Travel light, lads,” he told 'em as they was lowerin' the boat. “Trust to the mercy o' the Almighty. Leave yer gold and steel and yer spare duds. Limit yerself to a stick fer walkin'.

“When someone offers ye lodgin' stick with 'em till it's time to move on. When no one'll give ye welcome or a hearin', pull off yer boots and empty out the dust to show 'em what ye think o' their cussedness.”

So off they went and preached the Capt'n's call fer turnin' back to the Almighty. They sent the devils packin', and healed folks through anointin' their heads with oil.

But all this time there was a question in the wind 'bout who Jesus truly was. Some folks was sayin' he was Elijah come back from heaven; others that he was like a prophet of old. There was even one mob sayin' that Jesus was John the Baptizer come back from the grave.

It was this last tale that reached the ears o' Lord Herod, the Duke o' Perea as he sat in 'is mansion in Tiberias. And the tellin' made 'is blood run cold, for he was the one that had put John down. It happened like this:

John, as you'll recall, had been preachin' 'bout turnin' away from sin - and he was not particularly gentle in 'is mode o' expression, for he was a doughty cove and he liked to tell it straight. But it caused 'im a world o' trouble with Herod, for the Duke was a lecherous dog who'd stole 'is brother's wife, and when John reminded 'im that this was displeasin' to the Almighty, 'is lordship showed 'is thanks by invitin' John to stay in one o' the smaller rooms of 'is estate for an indefinite time.

Now there things might've rested, for despite 'is wicked ways, Herod knew the Baptizer was a righteous man, and found 'is words mighty stirrin'. Sometimes he'd go 'n talk with John and it'd leave 'im wonderin' - aye, and other times he'd come away much a'feared.

But Herod weren't the only one with an interest in the business. His mistress too nursed a grudge and kept lookin' for ways to put a knife in 'is belly.

Finally she got her chance. The duke had staged a grand feast to show the governor 'n the military fellas what a big man he was, and as part o' the festivities, he had the daughter of 'is mistress perform a jig fer the crowd. Now the dancin' o' that girl pleased the guests

very well, for she was a comely wench and light on her toes.

Herod was pleased too, both with the jig and with its effect. So, feelin' ostentatiously generous on account of 'is liquor, he told the girl that she could ask for a prize. "Aye, even half the plantation," he said.

Well she went to consult her mother, and that harpy had just one thing on her list.

"Ask fer the head o' John the Baptist," she said. "And make 'em bring it on a plate."

Now the duke was powerful racked by that, but there was nothin' he could do after 'is big talk. So he sent 'is men to do the job. They brought the head and gave it to the girl who passed it on to her dame.

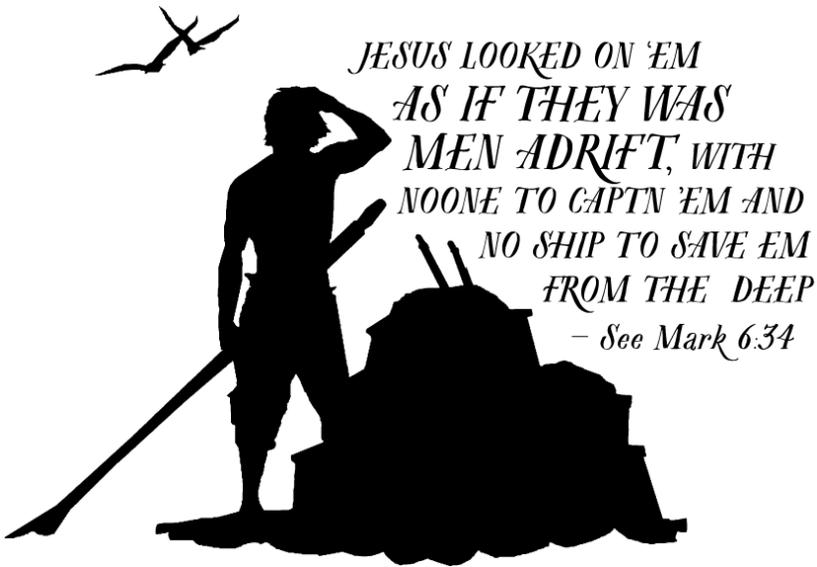
After that, all that was left was for John's crew to come and get 'is corpse for a decent burial.



Anyway, gettin' back to Jesus, all this comin' and goin' amongst the landlubbers was wearin' the crew thin. So he plotted a course for a deserted stretch o' coastline, plannin' to lie quiet among the palms for a bit. Forlorn hope, that was! The folks o' the coastal towns had set

'emselves to watchin' fer 'is sail, and when they divined 'is headin' a great crowd made their way to the coordinates with a confoundin' alacrity.

What was the Capt'n to do? You and I mighta weighed anchor or fired a swivel gun at their blighted heads. But Jesus looked on 'em as if they was men adrift with noone to capt'n 'em and no ship to save 'em from the deep. So once more he began to school 'em in the ways o' the Almighty.



Now the schoolin' went on through the day, and the sun was dippin' low as he finished 'is talkin'. Then 'is crew was all for drivin' the crowd away.

“It be late Capt’n. Bid ’em leave so they can forage for ’emselves.”

“Nay,” said Jesus, “You give ’em somethin’ for their bellies.”

Now they was mighty astonished by this talk.

“Blimey, Capt’n!” they said “There’d be powerful amount o’ plunder required for that deed. This swarm o’ locusts’d eat ’emselves through eight months pay. Are ye tellin’ us we should spend all our wages to fetch bread for these lubbers?”

“Well what have ye got with ye?” said Jesus.

“Five loaves, and a couple o’ fishes they said,” after they’d cast about.

Well that was enough for the Capt’n. He set to dividin’ the congregation into hundreds and fifties, and had ’em sittin’ on the sward. Then he raised ’is eyes to heaven, gave thanks to the Almighty, and began breakin’ the bread and fish for ’is lads to dole out. All the folks had enough, and there was twelve bushels o’ leftovers to deal with after.

Aye. And there was around five thousand coves in that gatherin’.

Now you might suppose that this deed would have had an excitin' effect on them what saw it. But Jesus weren't interested in indulgin' that. Soon as the scraps was gathered he ordered the crew back to the ship with orders to sail north for Bethsaida. Meanwhile, he set the crowd on their way and went up a hillside to pray.

Now as night came on, it was hard goin' fer the lads on the ship. With Bethsaida windward and squalls comin' on there weren't no thought of beatin'-to. 'Stead they furled the canvas and ran out the sweeps - each man strivin' at 'is oar.

Around the fourth watch, they was still makin' heavy of it when the Capt'n came to 'em - stridin' amidst the billows in 'is sea boots. He made as if to walk on, but the crew caught sight of 'im and screamed like madmen. They thought he was a phantom flung up by the deep to seal their doom.

"Ho, lads!" he called to 'em o'er the gale. "Take heart. It be meself and no other."

He climbed up the shrouds, mounted the Bulwark, and stood afore 'em. They was struck dumb for their skulls was thick, and the meanin' of his miracles had passed 'em by.

In the end, they made harbour at Gennesaret, and things went on as they was 'afore with folks at the quayside rushin' off to spread the word.

So there was no rest for the Capt'n. Wherever he went - quays or taverns or beaches - the crowds'd flock like gulls, all of 'em squawkin' fer a miracle cure. There were lines in the marketplaces and great swarms o' folks clamorin' to touch 'im.

Aye, and all who got a hand to 'im was healed o' their ills.

CHAPTER 7

Frauds & Foreigners

While this was goin' on, some o' the holier-than-thous came up from Port Jerusalem to run a spyglass over the Capt'n and 'is crew. And ye can be sure that they soon found somethin' amiss, fer these gents was mighty particular 'bout pretty much everythin' to do with religion.

One idea they had was that washin' was the way to keep sweet with the Almighty. They'd be forever washin' their hands and their kettles and their flagons and stools. And when they saw that Jesus and 'is crew didn't hold with them ways, well it didn't sit well with 'em.

“Why don't ye and yer men follow the traditions,” they was askin' “How can ye eat your food with impure hands?”

Jesus snorted into 'is cup when he caught that jibe. Then he crooked a finger at 'em and let fly.

“I hear ye talk 'bout tradition, gents, but what I sees is loopholes. I been observin' ye, and what I notice is that

ye've a fine way o' makin' yerselves look righteous while doin' just what pleases ye. Take the code o' Moses, fer example. It says that a man should do the right thing by 'im that sired 'im; and she what bore 'im. But in yer greater wisdom ye've invented a rule which says a cove can keep all 'is plunder for 'imself if he just takes a certain oath.

“Aye, yer all about loopholes. The old prophet Isaiah got it right when he described ye as knaves that honour the Almighty with yer lips but not in yer hearts.”

“But, since ye ask about it, let's talk about eatin'. Tell me,” he called to the mob, “do ye really think a bit o' washin' can make ye clean before the Almighty? Do ye think a bit o' meat can make ye unclean? 'Tis what comes out of a cove that makes the difference, not what goes in.”

Later on, when they was alone with 'im, the crew confessed that these words was a mystery to 'em.

“Are ye still sailin' in a fog, lads? Can't ye see the headin? Lookee here - it don't make no difference what a man eats. All o' that stuff just ends up in the privy. What the Almighty fixes 'is eye on is what comes out of a cove: evil plans, thievin', murder, lechery, lies,

envy and pride. Them be the things that come out of a man and make 'im unclean.”



After that, Jesus tried again to find a bit o' rest fer 'imself and 'is crew. Leavin' the Bay o' Galilee they sailed north to the old town of Tyre, where he and 'is lads planned to lie low at a tavern. But even in foreign parts the word had got around and it wasn't long before he had folks pesterin' 'im - same as in 'is own land.

One o' the first to call on 'im was a Greek of the feminine persuasion. She rapped on 'is door and kept on callin' out fer 'im to come and drive a devil from her lass. But Jesus made loath.

“Nay, woman,” said he. “Me charter be to victual the crew of Israel - not to toss meat to the sharks that swim 'round her hull.”

“Aye, Captain,” she said, “but even us sharks might catch a few fish heads when the mariners are done with their supper.”

Well that made Jesus throw back 'is head and laugh. "Well said, woman - that's the spirit. Get home to yer lass and ye'll find the devil gone."

So she went back to her dwellin' and found it so.

He sailed southeast after that. Still keepin' off from 'is home territory he passed through the Straits o' Sidon and down through the Ten Isles.

On one o' the Isles they brought 'im a cove that was deaf and near dumb, and here again the Capt'n was moved to act strange before the foreigners. This time he made 'is point by usin' spittle to heal the cove's tongue. He also healed the cove's ears by stickin' 'is fingers into 'em and by sayin' a word from the speech of Israel: "*ephphatha!*" - which means, "open up." Soon that fella was talkin and listenin' like any other man and all the folks was singin' Jesus praises.

"He be master of every trade!" they said. "Even healin' the deaf and mute!"

Well that made Jesus throw back 'is head and laugh. "Well said, woman - that's the spirit. Get home to yer lass and ye'll find the devil gone."

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CHAPTER 8

Capt'n o' the World

They pitched a camp on the far side o' one the islands, but the natives wouldn't leave 'em be. By the third mornin' there was a great mob hangin' about the camp and Jesus began to worry fer 'em.

“What'll we do fer this lot?” he said to the crew. “If we send 'em off without sustenance, they'll drop along the way.”

Well 'is lads was always a bit slow, so they scratched their heads and shook 'em.

“Don't know, Capt'n. There's no place to buy bread fer 'em all.”

“Well, just out o' interest,” he said to 'em. “How many loaves do ye have yerselves?”

“Seven,” they told 'im. “And a couple o' fish.”

“Hmm,” said he. “Well let's get the folks sittin' down and see what we can do, eh?”

When they'd done that, Jesus gave thanks for the food, and parceled it out amongst the crew to give the crowd.

And somehow there was enough fer 'em all. Nay, more'n enough - the lads ended up gatherin' seven baskets o' leavin's off the sand. Which was pretty fine, since there had been about four thousand souls present.

Jesus sent 'em all off and returned to the ship with 'is boys to set sail fer home territory.



They pitched up at a little place called Dalmanutha, and straight away, they was met by a delegation o' the religious mob.

“Show us a miracle if you want us to receive ye, Capt'n,” they said as they stood on the jetty.

Well the Capt'n just shook 'is head.

“More proof, more proof, eh? I reckon there's been enough evidence fer ye already. Come on lads, let's get back to the ship.”

So back they went.

As they was trimmin' the sails. Jesus called out to 'em all from the wheel.

“Steer clear o' folks like that, lads, they're like weevils in yer flour.”

Now the crew was in a fog about this, but they'd been plannin' to buy stores at that town, so they thought he was talkin' about food.

"It's 'cause we forgot to get the bread," they was sayin' to each other with a nod and a wink. "Aye, bread. And weevils."

They kept on like this fer some time, until the Capt'n fetched out 'is pistol and fired it over their heads.

"What are ye jabberin' about bread for?" he thundered at 'em. "Are ye daft? Did ye leave yer wits shoreside?"

"Tell me ye faithless, swabs, how many baskets did ye gather after I broke the five loaves fer that crowd o' five thousand?"

"Twelve, Capt'n," they said.

"And how many did ye pick up after the four thousand in the islands?"

"Seven, Capt'n," they answered.

"Do ye think I'd be stewin' over victuals? Use yer brains!"



Back they sailed to the port at Bethsaida, and there some folks came rowin' out to meet the Capt'n, bringin' a mate o' theirs who was blind.

Jesus brought 'im into 'is cabin, spat in 'is eyes and laid hands on 'im.

“Right,” he said as he led 'im back to the main deck. “What do ye see now, mate?”

“I see men walkin' about,” said he “But they kind o' look like trees.”

“Half-seein', eh?” said Jesus, raisin' 'is voice so the crew could hear. “I know some other coves like that.”

Again he put 'is hands on the man's eyes and he was as right as rain.

“Straight home now with the tide, boyo. Keep clear o' the village.”

Soon Jesus and 'is crew was on the move again, holdin' course for Caesarea Philippi. As they went he asked 'em a few questions 'bout 'is own self.

“Who do those landlubbers say that I be, mates?”

“Some say that ye be John the Baptiser,” they answered. “Others that ye be Elijah or some prophet o' the Almighty.”

“Ah,” he said, noddin’ ’is head. “And what about yerselves? Who do you think I be?”

Up piped Peter: “Ye be the Capt’n o’ the World, the man sent by the Almighty. That’s who ye be, Capt’n.”

“Aye, lad,” said Jesus. “But ye best be keepin’ mum about that fer now.

“There’s rough seas ahead, mates,” he said, turnin’ to the rest of ’em. “Afore long there’ll be a certain capt’n dancin’ Back they sailed to the port at Bethsaida, and there some folks came rowin’ out to meet the Capt’n, bringin’ a mate o’ theirs who was blind.

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“There’s rough seas ahead, mates,” he said, turnin’ to the rest of ’em. “Afore long there’ll be a certain capt’n dancin’ on a gibbet at the pleasure o’ the fancy folk.

“Aye, they’ll string ’im up and they’ll lay ’im low. But mark my words, lads. He’ll be back. Back after three days.”

But Peter weren’t havin’ that. “Nay, Capt’n,” said he. “This ain’t a fittin’ end for the likes of you.”

“Batten that hatch!” roared Jesus. “That’s the Devil’s talk - all glory ’n no cost. Quit chasin’ the fools-gold o’ man and get yerself after the treasure o’ the Almighty.”

He gathered the officers and all them what was servin’ afore the mast.

“Look’ee here,” he said, “Do ye want to sail under my flag? Do ye want to stay in my crew? If ye do, yer headed for the gallows. Get that into yer skulls. That’s the way o’ me and my gang.”

“So join me if ye will - and get ready to be sharkbait - else, go home and waste yer life livin’ high and dry.”

*SO JOIN ME
IF YE WILL -
AND GET READY
TO BE SHARKBAIT
ELSE, GO HOME AND WASTE
YER LIFE
LIVIN' HIGH & DRY.
- See Mark 8:34-36*



“That be the way o’ things, mates. Find your life by livin’ rough with me, or lose it in yer soft warm cots. Either way you’ll get to explain yer decision to the Almighty and ’is man.”

Then he stopped and looked around at ’em.

“Am I makin’ it sound like sour times, lads? I tell ye, some of ye’ll see the kingdom comin’ with power within yer lifetime.”

CHAPTER 9

Last Days o' Galilee

Near a week after this, Jesus and 'is chief officers - meanin', Peter James and John - left the ship and marched inland to one o' the tall mountains o' Galilee. Up 'n up they went until they was all alone, standin' high above the ocean.

And it was there that a wondrous change came o'er the Capt'n. His duds began to glow like they was lit up by St Elmo's fire - brighter than the flash of gun muzzle. And suddenly there was two other fellas there as well: Elijah and Moses from the elder days. They was holdin' parley with Jesus and talkin' to 'im about 'is commission from the Almighty.

Then Peter chirped up and called out to 'em. "Ho, Capt'n, Tis lucky ye have us lads with ye! We'll build yer friends and ye some huts to live in."

Twas a ridiculous thing, but they was all scared witless by what they was seein' afore 'em.

Aye, but there was more to come. No sooner had them words left Peter's lips, than a great cloud appeared -

bright it was, like the plume o' some volcano. It closed around 'em and then a great voice came boomin' ,
"This be me son, whom I love. Give ear unto 'im!"

It lasted but a moment and was gone. And then they was alone with the Capt'n once more.

"Keep all this to yerselves, boys," said he, as they legged it back down the slope. "This be a secret to be told after the Almighty's man has risen from the grave."

Now this talk o' risin' was just as puzzlin' as everythin' else that had happened that day, but the question they ended up askin' 'im was about another matter.

"Capt'n," they said to 'im, "why do all the clergy say that we shouldn't be lookin' fer the Almighty's man until Elijah has come?"

Jesus answered 'em with a nod. "Aye, they be right on that score. The tomes o' the Almighty do indeed declare that the prophet'll come and set things to rights fer the comin' o' the king.

"But here's somethin' fer ye to chew on, lads. If that be the case, why do the tomes also testify that the Almighty's man must face mutiny? Truth is, Elijah has

come already and they did just what their black hearts pleased with 'im."



When they came back to the ship, they found the rest o' the crew ashore and engaged in a shoutin' match with some o' the clergy. It broke up as soon as the crowd saw the Capt'n, fer they all rushed away to join 'im. But when he got closer he asked 'em what they'd been arguin' about.

"'Twas 'bout me boy, here, Capt'n," called one o' the lubbers in the crowd. "I bring'd 'im to see ye, fer he's got a devil that's robbed 'is speech and has 'im throwin' fits. Yer men had a go at it but they couldn't drive it out."

Jesus looked around at 'em all: the man, 'is own lads and the clergymen smirkin' at the rear.

"Yer a faithless lot aren't ye? How long will I have to tarry amongst ye? Bring the boy to me."

Even as they was bringin' the lad forward, the devil in 'im caught sight o' the Capt'n and began tossin' the boy about - writhin' on the ground and gnashin' 'is teeth.

“How long has this been going on?” Jesus asked the lad’s father.

“Since he was a pup,” was the answer. “’Tis wantin’ to kill ’im. Sometimes it’ll throw ’im into fire or water. If ye can do anything I’d be mighty grateful.”

“If ye can?” said Jesus. “Mate, all things be possible fer them what has a bit o’ faith.”

Suddenly the fella’s voice cracked. “I do believe. Help me with me lack o’ faith!

Over ’is shoulder Jesus could see a big mob o’ folks runnin’ up so he cut it short.

“Devil!” he said. “Deaf and mute devil. Go forth from this cove and come not back.”

Well all of a sudden the lad let out a terrible cry and gave a hideous jerk. After that he was so still that folks said he was worm food. But Jesus grabbed ’is mit and raised ’im up so he stood on ’is own feet.

Later on, when they was back aboard, ’is lads asked Jesus about what had passed.

“Why couldn’t we drive it out, Capt’n?”

“That kind needs a bit o’ prayer.” And he looked at ’em peculiar. “Ye might want to try that sometimes.”



They weighed anchor and fer a while sailed out into the bay so he could teach the crew alone.

“The Almighty’s man’ll be sold out, mateys,” he told ’em. “He’ll end up in the clutches o’ men who’ll send ’im to ’is grave - but three days later he’ll come back up.”

But they still didn’t know what he was talkin’ about, and it made ’em a’feared to ask.

They spent a day in Capernaum after that for fittin’ and repairs. They worked on the ship, and then, after sundown, the officers was gathered at ’is cottage.

Jesus asked ’em what they’d been discussin’ amongst ’emselves as they’d been loadin’ the stores. Now he asked ’em casual like, but they kept their hatches battened and their eyes on the fireplace, fer the topic o’ their disputation had been which of ’em was the biggest man in the crew.

When he saw that they was keepin’ quiet, Jesus stood up and walked over to the window. “Ye got it awry, me shipmates. If any o’ ye wants glory, he needs to put ’imself last and think of ’imself as a slave.”

He reached out through the window and picked up a whelp that was standin' on 'is toe-tips 'neath the sill. He took the lad in 'is arms and set 'im down afore 'em all.

“See this boy, mates?” He said, rufflin' 'is hair. “You’ll know yer on the right tack when yer ready to welcome a nobody like this. 'Im what cares fer a whelp like this fer my sake - tis the same as if he’d welcomed me. And welcomin' me be the same as welcomin' the Almighty who sent me.”

Then John thought he’d stick in 'is oar. “Aye Capt'n, I savvy that we welcome them what comes to ye. But today we found a cove castin' out devils in yer name and told 'im to stop, fer he wasn't one of us. That was right wasn't it?”

“Nay, shipmate,” said Jesus. “If folks be a'doin' miracles under my flag, they'll not be speakin' villainy against me will they? Them what don't sail away from us be sailin' toward us.

“So don't be drivin' folks away, lads. Give 'em a chance to come along side. As far as the Almighty goes, any man who gives ye so much as a cup o' water fer my sake can keep 'is place.

“Any case, take care how ye treat yer nobodies, lads. They ain’t nobodies to me. Anyone who thinks lightly about one o’ these little shipmates o’ mine or leads ’em into sin will answer to worse than the lash. Aye, he’ll wish he’d been lashed to a cannon and drowned in the sea.”

“You gotta be ruthless, lads. Ruthless with yer self-pleasin’ hearts and ruthless with yer indulgent ways. If yer hand causes ye to go astray, hack it off! Tis far better to go about with a hook than to find yerself in hell with the fire roastin’ the flesh off yer fingerbones.”

“Give yerself no quarter. If ye leg leads ye astray, get the sawbones to give ye a stump instead. If yer eye causes ye to sin against the Almighty then gouge it out with a fishhook. What’s it matter if ye wear a patch as long as ye make it to the world to come? What good would it be to have two eyes in the depths o’ hell?

CHAPTER 10

The Final Voyage

They was steerin' south now, away from the Bay and out across the outflow o' the Jordan toward the coast o' Judea. Along the way they put in to careen the hull. But, as soon as their presence was known they was swamped by crowds. So Jesus set to teachin' 'em - just like in Galilee.

The religious folks in those parts turned out to be cut from the same cloth as their northern kin. They showed up in a gang, armed with sly questions.

“Ah, Capt'n, we be so pleased to meet, ye,” they said as they wringed their hands and smiled their oily smiles. “Yer arrival gives us a chance to ask a question that's been troublin' our minds. Is it lawful fer a man to divorce 'is wife?”

Jesus looked around at 'em. “What does it say in the tome o' Moses?”

“Moses said a man could write a note and send 'er packin',” they said.

“Aye,” said Jesus. “He said that to men with stony hearts lest they do worse. But I was thinkin’ ’bout what he says at the beginnin’: ‘male and female he made ’em - so a man’ll leave ’is father and mother and cleave to ’is wife, and the two’ll become one flesh.’ Aye, no longer two but one.

“So, in answer to yer question, padres. How ’bout we don’t go separatin’ what God has stitched together, eh? If ye divorce yer wife and take up with another, I say yer an adulterer. Same fer the woman.”



As the men was labourin’, they was irritated by folks who kept bringin’ down their little ’uns fer Jesus to bless. They tried wardin’ ’em off, but when the Capt’n saw it he gave ’em a piece of ’is mind.

“Too grand fer whelps are we here, lads? Well I say to ye that if ye don’t come to the Almighty like one o’ those ye’ll never get to come at all.

“Let ’em come. The world to come belongs to the likes of ’em.”

So he gathered the children in ’is arms and blessed ’em, layin’ ’is hand upon their little heads.



*TOO GRAND FER WHELPS
ARE WE HERE, LADS?
WELL I SAY TO YE THAT
IF YE DONT COME TO
THE ALMIGHTY
LIKE ONE O'
THEM YELL
NEVER GET
TO COME AT
ALL.*

– *See Mark 10:14-15*

When they'd finished and was waitin' fer the tide, they was hailed by a young gent who came splashin' through the shallows. When he spied Jesus, he ran up and dropped to 'is knees.

“Good Capt'n,” he said, “afore ye sail off, I must ask ye a question that's burnin' in me breast. What must I do to be assured of gainin' the fair havens o' the Almighty? How can I lay me hands on the life eternal?”

Jesus let go o' the rope he was holdin' and looked at the cove.

“Why do ye call me 'good', lad? Who can claim that except the Almighty? And why are ye askin' me this

question? I'll warrant ye know what it says in the Tome of Moses: keep yerself from murderin'; steer clear o' womanisin'; avoid stealin', lyin' and cheatin', and give due honour to yer parents."

"Aye, Capt'n," said the young gent, all eager like, "I ...I been workin' on all these since I was lad."

Jesus looked at 'im and took a shine to 'is earnest countenance.

"Right'o, then, matey," he said, "I've got one more job fer ye. Go and pawn yer chattels and give the money to the beggars. That'll get ye treasure in heaven, and ye can come and join me crew."

Well that shot felled 'is mast. He got to 'is feet and straggled off like a man goin' to 'is own hangin'. Fer he was a moneyed cove with much to lose.

As Jesus climbed up the stays and onto the slopin' deck, he looked back at 'im and nodded to 'is officers.

"Tis mighty tough fer the rich to enter the Almighty's realm, lads," he told 'em. "Like tryin' to load a pistol with cannon shot."

The crew was mighty puzzled by this. “If riches don’t testify to the Almighty’s favour, then how can any man think ’imself in the clear?” they asked.

“Aye,” said Jesus. “That’s the right question. ’Tis impossible. Impossible fer men, but possible fer the Almighty. He can manage it.”

“How ’bout us, Capt’n?” said Peter. “We left everythin’ to sail with ye.”

“Don’t ye worry, lad,” answered Jesus. “Any o’ my boys who’s lost a home or family for my sake’ll be paid back a hundred times over - despite the hostility o’ the world about.

“You’ll be well cared for in this world and the next. But take care. Many o’ the big guns o’ this age’ll be nuthin’ in the world to come.”



On they sailed, fer Jesus had ’is sights set on Port Jerusalem. And as he stood up at the wheel with ’is eyes to the south, the crew was a’feared and the officers was astonished, fer they all sensed a storm o’ trouble ahead.

When he was alone in the mess with 'em, he told it to 'em straight.

“We’re Jerusalem-bound, mates,” he said, lookin’ grim. “And when we make port, the bishops and the clergy’ll be waitin’ fer us. The Almighty’s man is gonna be tried and sentenced and handed over to the military. Then it’ll be mockin’, floggin’, spittin’ and killin’. Aye, but three days later he’ll be back.”

While they was still under sail, James and John, those lads out of Zebedee thought they’d come up with a cunnin’ plan to hornswaggle their shipmates. So they came to Jesus, private like in ’is cabin, and asked ’im to cut ’em a special deal.

“Make us your first and second officers, Capt’n,” they said. “You’ll not regret it.”

“Oh,” said Jesus, “won’t I? Tell me lads. Can ye follow me when I sinks down to the ocean bed and take me place among the bones of dead men? Can you join me when I drinks the bitter rum of the Almighty’s wrath and drains it to its dregs?”

“Aye, Capt’n!” said they, comin’ on all wind and spume, “Aye, aye, we be the men for that.”

“Well, well” said Jesus. “Indeed ye shall be sharin’ in me trials, mateys. But I’ll not be handin’ out firsts and seconds this day.”

Now when the other crewmen heard about this they took on mighty surly. But Jesus called ’em to assembly midships.

“What a brace o’ laggards, ye are,” he said. “D’ye think this be the House o’ Lords? Are ye lookin’ for airs and graces and fancy duds?”

“On this ship ye rise up by goin’ down. Ye want to be high and mighty? Then get to the galley and bilge. Start servin’ yer shipmates.

“Take yer bearin’ from your Capt’n, lads. Does he make ye wait on ’im? Does he take on like one o’ the Admiralty? Nay, he’ll be spillin’ ’is blood for all yer sakes, afore this cruise be through.”



They spent a night in harbour at Jericho, after that. There was a large crowd waitin’ fer ’em ’cause folks had been keepin’ track of ’em down the coast. But there was also a fella beggin’ by the way - a blind cove by the name o’ Bartimaeus. When he heard that Jesus

had come he began to roar out, “Capt’n Jesus, Son o’ David, have pity on me!”

The crowd told ’im to shut ’is trap, but it just made ’im shout all the more. “Son o’ David, show me a bit o’ mercy!”

As the Capt’n drew close and heard it, he gave orders fer the cove to be brought forward. So they grabbed hold of ’im.

“Look lively, mate! Get on yer pins, he’s askin fer ye.”

So up he hopped, leaving ’is hat and coat, and came to Jesus.

“What can I do fer ye, mate?” asked the Capt’n when he saw ’im.

“I want me eyes workin’, Capt’n!” was ’is answer.

“Right, then,” said Jesus. “On yer way. Yer faith has brought ye what ye seek.”

Right away ’is eyes was healed, and he joined them what was hikin’ south along the coast.

CHAPTER 11

Port Jerusalem

They was running close-hauled down toward the point o' Bethphage now, with the Mount of Olives to port. Comin' to a small bay, they dropped the skiff, and the Capt'n sent two o' the crew ashore, tellin' 'em to hot-foot across the point to the village o' Bethany.

“When ye get there,” he said, “keep a sharp eye out and ye'll spy a colt tethered to a rail - he'll be an unbroken animal but that be the beast I want. Untie 'im and bring 'im to me at the docks. If any man tries to keep ye from yer business, tell 'em that the Capt'n needs 'im and will send 'im back when he's done.”

Off they went and found things just as he told 'em. There was a bunch o' landlubbers who asked 'em what they was up to. But they gave the Capt'n's answer and that did the trick.

They went down to the docks to find the ship tied up and Jesus waiting fer 'em. One of 'em threw a cloak over the beast as a kind o' saddle and they helped 'im

up. So the Capt'n rode ahead into Port Jerusalem with 'is crew in tow.

Now this was a dramatic sort of entry and it had a powerful effect on the folks there. When they heard that Jesus was on 'is way they poured out o' the squares and taverns and lined the streets shoutin' praises and blessin's in the name o' the Almighty.

"Blessed be the man who comes in the name o' The Lord!" they was sayin'. "Blessed be the comin' reign o' King David's heir!" And as they was singin' out, they was layin' down coats and palm branches to give a carpet fer 'is passage.

Well it was like that all the way up to the temple itself. Jesus took a tour o' that place before retirin' back to Bethany with 'is officers.



The next mornin', Jesus and 'is crew legged back to the city, stoppin' on the way by a fig tree to get some refreshment. But the tree was a disappointment to 'em - barren o' fruit, though decked out with a fine spread o' leaves. Jesus pronounced a judgement on it in the hearin' of 'is crew:

“That’s it for ye, ye useless thing,” he said. “There’ll be no fig-eatin’ from you, this day forth.”

They went on up to the temple, and there they found more disappointment, for the place had been made into a bazaar.

Jesus began settin’ upon the stallkeepers, spillin’ their wares and capsizin’ their tables. When he caught sight o’ folks tryin’ to bring their swag through the place he drove ’em back with a roar.

“This be a house o’ prayer for the nations!” he cried, quotin’ the tomes. “But ye’ve converted it to a palace o’ larceny!”

When the bishops and clergy heard ’im ragin’ like this it filled their hearts with dark skullduggery, and they began a’schemin’ how to do ’im in. For they was powerful a’feared of ’im and ’is influence over the mob.

But Jesus and ’is lads kept at their work. When evenin’ came, he finished ’is teachin’ and left the city.

Next morn’ as they was comin’ in from Bethany, they found the fig tree what Jesus’d cursed was withered from its roots.

“Look, Capt’n,” said Peter. “That tree ye cursed has withered!”

“Aye,” said Jesus. “’Tis a lesson o’ faith fer ye shipmates. Trust in the Almighty. If ye ask with faith, nothin’ will be impossible, fer ye. Ye could tell this mountain to capsize into the bay, and it’d be done.”

This time, when they got to the temple, there was a gang o’ clergy and gentry waitin’ for em.

“Now look here, master Jesus,” they was sayin’. “’Tis time to explain yerself. Come on and show us what warrant ye have to be carryin’ on like this.”

Jesus tipped ’is hat to ’em.

“Why I thank ye gents, fer yer welcome, and yer interest in me doin’s. But me sense o’ fairness demands an exchange. How ’bout I ask ye a question first, and if ye answer it, I’ll answer the one you’ve just put to me. Me question be this: that washin’ that was given by John the Baptizer - was it from the Almighty, or was it just a work o’ man?”

Well didn’t that make ’em dance? They stepped back from ’im and began mutterin’ to each other. “We can’t say it was from the Almighty, or he’ll ask us why we

steered clear of it. On t'other hand we can't say that it was from men..."

Ye see all the common folk reckoned John was a prophet and the clergy and the bigwigs was a'feared of 'em. So instead o' givin' the Capt'n 'is answer they claimed ignorance.

"We don't know," they answered.

"Ah, I see," said Jesus. "Well in that case I hope ye won't mind if don't tell ye about who gave me authority to do what I been doin' either."

CHAPTER 12

A Battle o' Wits

Jesus told 'em one of 'is riddles after that. It went like this.

“There was a certain Capt'n who had a great tradin' vessel. She was a fine ship with a good spread o' canvas and a capacious hold. He hired a crew to sail her, gave 'em gold, and sent 'em out to bring back a rich cargo.

“So off they went, and the voyage was a good 'un. The ship came home stuffed with sandlewood, spices, silks and sapphires. When the merchant heard that 'is vessel had come in, he sent off 'is manservant to fetch the goods. But when the servant got there he found that the crew'd set up shop and was sellin' the master's goods piecemeal to the public. When he tried to stop 'em they grabbed a'hold of 'im and sent 'im away with a lashin', and a pile o' choice words.

“So the merchant sent 'is lawyer to the docks. This fella they keel-hauled and near killed. Next t'was the steward's turn, and they made 'im walk the plank. And

after that they just started shootin' at the head of any man who appeared on the quay.

“At last there was only one man left - 'twas the merchant's own lad. So he sent 'im too, thinkin' to 'imself, 'at least they'll pay the boy a bit o' respect.’

“But when they seed the lad a'comin', well they chuckled in their black bellies and said to each other, 'well, well, here be the inheritor o' this fine vessel. Let's paint her deck with 'is blood and have her fer keeps.’

“So they grabbed 'im, and slit 'is throat, and dumped 'is body o'er the side.

“Now what do ye think the master o' that vessel would do after that, padres?” Jesus asked 'em. “Nay, 'tis not a trick question. He'll come and retake the vessel with force and hang those mutinous maggots, and get 'imself another crew. 'Tis just like it says in the tome: 'the stone the builders tossed aside has been made capstone by the wonderous hand o' the Almighty.’”

“Do ye savvy what I'm sayin'?”

Aye, and savvy they did, fer they knew he was talkin' about 'emselves. All those fine gents was itchin' to lay hands on 'im after that, but they was still powerful

a'feared o' the mob, so they skulked away with their heads down like a pack o' mangy dogs.

But they soon hit upon a new plan. They despatched a clutch o' religious folks who came up alongside of 'im, all bowin' and smilin'.

“Good day to ye, most excellent Captain,” they said to 'im. “Would ye be so kind as to lend yer sagacity to our humble selves? We've got an important question that demands careful thinkin'. Do ye think that the free folk o' this colony should be payin' taxes to the king, even though he be so far away?”

But Jesus was wise to that jig.

“Arr, look at ye creepin up on me with yer sly words gripped between yer teeth. Bring me a coin o' the realm.” he said.

They pulled out a gold guinea and he held it out afore their eyes, a'tappin it with 'is finger.

“Tell me,” he said, “whose visage be this? Whose likeness be scribed here?”

“Why, 'tis the king,” they said.

“Aye,” said Jesus. “The king. So here be me advice. Why don’t ye give the king ’is share and pay the Almighty whatever it is that bears ’is image.”

He chucked the gold at their feet, and there they stood all gapin’ and starin’ like a fish strewn on a deck.

After that it the was turn o’ some sophisticates from the upper class. These gents liked nothin’ better than to make sport o’ those who believed in the immortal soul, so they came at Jesus with a favourite chestnut o’ theirs.

“Most learned captain,” they said “Please assist us with this curious tangle. There was once a great beauty, who was married to a fierce pirate captain. Now in the course o’ time this captain was shot dead in a skirmish, and ’is first mate claimed the beauty fer ’is own. But soon he too was killed, and she gave her hand to the quartermaster. And so it went on. Tweren’t long afore this woman had been married off to pretty much every officer aboard that ship. Now what we were just wonderin’ was, who will this lady be married to when the dead are raised?”

Now these buffoons thought 'emselves wondrous wise fer askin' this question, but Jesus already had their measure.

“Got that from yer own wisdom, did ye, gents?” He said to 'em. “Tis' an unreliable source on its own.

“As to the terms of yer query. The answer be that them folks what God raises from the dead'll be like the angels. There'll be no more marryin' for them.

“But regardin' the dead bein' raised. Ye might do a bit more consultin' o' the Almighty's charts, if ye want to find yer way to the truth. Even the tomes o' Moses, which I know ye have a bit respect for, make it clear that them what trust the Almighty can't be lost. Aye, what does he say to Moses in the wilderness? 'I be the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.' Notice he don't say 'I *was* the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.' He's the God o' the livin' not the dead.”

While he was sayin' this there was another member o' the clergy passin' by. And when this fella caught wind o' the Capt'ns word, he slowed 'is stride and came in fer look. Fer he was a different kind o' man from them other parsons, and he liked what he'd heard.

“Which do ye regard as the most important o’ the commandments, Captain?” he called out o’er the heads of ’is fellows.

Jesus looked up and answered ’im direct.

“The most important order given by the Almighty be this: ‘Listen up, O Israel and remember that ye worship one God and one Lord. Love ’im with all yer heart and soul and mind and strength.’ Aye that be the most important one. The second be o’ the same ilk: ‘Love yer neighbour as yerself.’”

“Well said, Capt’n,” said the clergyman, noddin’ ’is head slow and serious-like. “Lovin’ God and lovin’ yer neighbour - be worth far more ’n all these sacrifices and ceremonies.”

When Jesus heard ’im say that, he raised ’is brow and looked at ’im hard.

“Hold that course, padre. Yer on a headin’ for the realm of the Almighty.”

That was the last o’ the questionin’, however. After that they was all too craven.

But Jesus had a few things to say on ’is own account.

“Since we’re talkin’ theological riddles,” he said to the crowd, “how is that the clergy say that the comin’ king must be the Son o’ David? Ain’t fathers greater than sons? But David, speakin’ prophecies from the Holy Ghost, calls ’im ’Lord.’ Remember what he says? ‘The Lord says to my lord, wait here at me right hand until I puts yer enemies ’neath yer heel.’

“So if David calls ’im ‘lord’, how can he be ’is son?”

Well the common folks was full o’ merriment when they heard this. But Jesus had more to say besides.

“Don’t take yer bearin’s from the clergy, folks. They’re fond o’ lookin’ pious and havin’ people think they’re holy. They like the clothes and the honours and the showy prayers. But all the while they’re turnin’ widows out o’ their houses.

“Make no mistake. Heartless dogs like that’ll be shown the rope’s end.”



GET A LOAD O' HER, LADS!

*...THAT BEAUTY
THERE JUST GAVE UP
MORE BOOTY THAN ANY
O' THESE FANCY FOLK,
THEY GAVE A BIT OUT
O' THEIR BOUNTY; SHE
HANDED OVER ALL SHE
HAD TO SUSTAIN HER*

- See Mark 12:43

'Twas time for a kip then, so Jesus set 'imself down in one o' the outer courts - just across from the donation jars. As he was lookin' on, a host o' monied folks was tossin' their gold into the vessels with great ceremony. Yet the Capt'n fixed 'is spyglass on a poor old widow, observin' her as she surrendered a couple o' ha'pennies.

“Get a load o' her lads,” he said, callin' 'is officers and passin' round the 'glass. “That beauty there just gave up more booty than any o' these fancy folk. They gave a bit out o' their bounty; she handed over all she had to sustain her.”

CHAPTER 13

Shadows o' the End

Later on, as they was on their way out o' the temple, one of the crew pointed back the way they'd come. "Look Capt'n, did ye e'er see such fine buildin's as these? Did ye e'er see such great blocks o' stone?"

But Jesus just kept on walkin'.

"Take a good look, lad. Every one o' them stones'll be pulled down," he said.

He led 'em up a goat path through groves of Mount Olivet until they came to a meadow with a view to the north. As they made 'emselves comfortable, the officers tried to sound 'im further on what he'd said.

"What do ye mean about the temple bein' sacked, Capt'n? When'll it happen? What'll be the signal for it?"

Jesus looked down at the city and a strange look came into 'is eye - like he was lookin' at somethin' the rest of 'em couldn't see.

“When ye see the temple desecrated then you’ll know it’s time to ship out. Don’t wait about to pack yer gear. Run fer the hills. There’ll be horrors comin’. It’ll be bad as anythin’ that’s happened since the beginnin’ o’ creation. Aye, without a bit o’ divine intervention there’ll be no survivors.

“It’s goin’ to get bad, before the end lads, make no mistake. There’ll be imposters claimin’ to be meself and doin’ signs to trick the laggards. There’ll be great battles and rumours of ’em. In some parts o’ the earth there’ll be mighty quakes; in other parts there’ll be awful famines. These’ll tell ye that the birthpangs have begun.

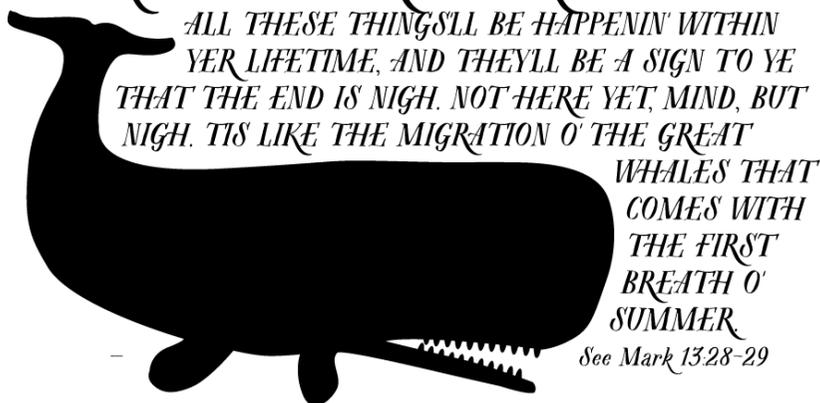
“Ye’ll need cool heads then, lads. And ye’ll need to show a bit o’ mettle too - for they’ll be comin’ for ye. They’ll clap ye in irons because o’ me, and they’ll flog ye in the churchyards. Everyone’ll hate ye, and yer own kin’ll be turnin’ on ye and murderin’ ye. Ye’ll be dragged in front o’ magistrates and princes and governors and ye’ll have to give an account fer yerselves.

“Tis all part of the plan, though lads. When they set ye in front o’ the authorities it’ll be the Spirit o’ the

Almighty speakin' through ye. And in the midst o' the chaos the good tidin's'll be goin' out from shore to shore.

“So, I tell ye lads, keep a sharp lookout. All these things'll be happenin' within yer lifetime, and they'll be a sign to ye that the end is nigh. Not here yet, mind, but nigh. Tis like the migration o' the great whales that comes with the first breath o' summer.

*SO, I TELL YE, LADS,
KEEP A SHARP LOOKOUT.*



“When the end really comes... now that'll be somethin'. The sun and moon'll break their moorin's and the stars'll fall like men caught in a cannonade. Then ye'll look up and see the Almighty's man swingin' in with 'is angel crew. They'll retake the world and gather every man who's on the Capt'n's side.

“So there ye have it, shipmates. The hour o’ the end is a secret known only to the Almighty. But I’ve told ye all ye need to know afore time, and these words o’ mine’ll hold true fer ye right up to the end o’ time. Give heed to ’em and keep to yer stations - then ye won’t be caught nappin’ when yer Capt’n comes o’er the side.”

CHAPTER 14

The Trap Springs Shut

'Twas only a couple o' days away from the feasts o' the Passover now, and the bishops and the clergy was workin' 'emselves into a lather. They was bustin' to lay hands on Jesus and slip a knife between 'is ribs, yet they was also a'feared of a riot if it was done durin' the festival. So they was schemin' and plannin'.

Jesus and 'is crew, meantime, was back at Bethany bein' entertained by a religious gent known as Scabby Simon. While they was all reclinin' on the couches one o' the women o' the town brought a precious vial o' sweet-smellin' stuff. She broke the seal and poured it on the Capt'n's head.

That set some o' the surly coves that was there mutterin' 'mongst 'emselves.

"What a waste o' good treasure," they was sayin'. "Ye coulda sold that stuff and got a year's worth o' wages fer the wretched folk. Aye, 'tis a shame."

But Jesus growled at em.

“What are ye playin’ at with yer low-talkin’ bilge? Ye leave her be! What ye’ve witnessed be a fine deed, and this lass’ll be mentioned in every port that hears the Almighty’s tidin’s to the end o’ time.

“Ye’ll never have a lack o’ wretches to succour, but ye chances with me are mighty limited. She was doin’ the best thing she could - preparin’ me body for burial.”

Well Judas the dagger-man felt ’imself sore crossed by this talk. So, first chance he got, he slipped away to the bishops and made ’em an offer to put Jesus in their paws. They was mighty joyed by that, and offered ’im a devil’s deal o’ bullion fer ’is pains.



From that time on Judas was always on the lookout - schemin’ in ’is shrivelled heart fer a way to do the deed.

On the first day o’ the feast, when it was customary for folks to sacrifice a lamb, the officers came to Jesus askin’ where they should go to get things ready for ’im and the crew.

By way o’ response he grabbed two o’ the crew and sent two of ’em off with a strange instruction.

“Right lads, here’s what yer to do,” he said. “Take a stroll up to the city and, as ye go, keep a sharp eye out fer a cove hoistin’ a barrel on ’is shoulder. When ye sight ’im, get in ’is wake ’cause he’ll lead ye to the place fer the feast. Go up to the door o’ that place and say to the owner that the captain be lookin fer a room fer the feast. He’ll take ye up the stairs and show ye a fine large chamber, all furnished and set fer ye to make ready.”

Off they went. And, as ye might guess, it turned out exactly like he said.

They got things shipshape, and at eventide the Capt’n and the rest o’ the officers came along and got started.

It was as they was eatin’, however, that he staggered ’em all.

“One of ye be fixin’ to turn traitor on me, lads.”

Straight away they was seized with vexation and began to protest. “Nay, Capt’n. Not I Capt’n. Surely ’taint me Capt’n!”

“Tis’ one o’ me officers,” he told ’em. “Aye, one o’ the coves who dips ’is bread in the same bowl with me. Now the Almighty’s man’ll take what the tomes say be comin’ for ’im. But fer the cove that stabs ’im in the back, ’twoulda been better if he’d not been born.

As they went on with their eatin' he broke some of the bread afore 'em and held it up.

“Lookee here, lads. This be me own body. Ye should all take a bit.”

After that he raised a cup. “And look at this. This be me blood bein' poured out for a great host o' souls. Tis like a seal on the Almighty's covenant with ye. Drink it up! Next time I take a draft o' this stuff it'll be in the realm o' the Almighty.”



THIS BE ME BLOOD
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THE REALM O' THE ALMIGHTY.

See Mark 14:24-25

They all sang one o' the old chanteys in praise o' the Almighty after that and then made their way out to Mount Olivet.

“You'll all be abandonin' yer posts,” Jesus told 'em as they was on their way. “The old tomes seed it comin' 'I'll strike the shepherd, and the sheep'll be scattered.”

But it won't be the end, lads. After I resurface I'll be waitin' for ye in Galilee."

"Nay, Capt'n," declared Peter. "These other Jacks might leave ye dry, but not I."

"Tis bitter tidin's fer ye, shipmate," replied Jesus. "This very night ye'll be denyin' that ye know me. Aye, three times afore the cock crows."

But Peter was still full o' swagger. "I tell ye, Capt'n. I'm ready to spill me blood fer ye if it comes to that. I be yer true man."

And they was all makin' similar boasts.

Up they went then; up to a grove called Gethsemane. Jesus left most o' the crew among the trees and went on, takin' only Peter, James and John.

And now, all of a sudden, the Capt'n was seized over with grievin' - stricken in such a style as they'd never beheld.

"Lads, lads, me soul be founderin' as if she was about to go down. Keep watch fer me here, I beg ye."

He ventured on a stretch from 'em then and dropped on 'is face, moanin' afore the Almighty.

“Great and Lovin’ Father,” he said, “there ain’t nothin’ beyond yer mighty power. Take this cup o’ sufferin’ from me tremblin’ hands. ...Oh, but aye, not what I be wantin’. It’s your willin’ I want.”

After a time he dragged ’imself up from the earth and staggered back to ’is mates - only to find ’em sleepin’ at their posts. “Simon,” he said to Peter, “can ye not keep watch fer one hour? Ye should be prayin’ hard that ye’ll stand firm. Yer spirit might be holdin’ fast, but yer body’ll let ye down.”

Away he went again, to pray the same words. And again ’is lads was kippin’ when he came back. Struck dumb they was with shame, but there was nothin’ they could do. The next thing they knew it had happened again and he was shakin’ ’em awake.

“Still sleepin’ are ye lads? Look lively and get to yer feet! Here comes me traitor.”

Now while Jesus was talkin’ to ’is crewmates, who should appear but that mangy cur Judas, leadin’ a gang of marines and militia - all armed to the teeth. Judas had arranged to give ’em a tipoff by shakin’ the Capt’n’s hand. So he came on all cheery. “Mornin’ to

ye Capt'n," he said. And as soon as he stuck out 'is mit the knaves moved in.

Quick as mercury, one o' the Capt'n's lads whipped out a cutlass and gave a swing, swipin' off the ear o' one o' them coves. Who knows what might have transpired after that, but the Capt'n showed a different kind o' steel.

"What need o' this hardware, boys?" said he, to the soldiers. "Do ye take me fer a revolution'ry? And why all the sneakin'? Couldn't ye bring yerselves to nab me at the temple? Nay, shame on yer craven ways. Still, the tomes will have their way."

When they saw he was goin' quiet, all the crew beat a hasty retreat. The marines grabbed at one o' the boys but he shed 'is canvas and ran off in the mode of Adam.



They took Jesus to the Archbishop's palace after that. Workin' by night, they pressganged a flock o' bishops, clergy and lords and made 'emselves into a parleyment for a drumhead trial. Then they set to work.

Things went awry for 'em a bit though. They wheeled in a troop o' perjurous monkeys to bear witness against 'im, but they kept on givin' contrary evidence. Neither could they find a crime that'd warrant a penalty o' death. Some said that they'd heard 'im speak about tearin' down the temple and buildin' it up in three days. But even then their jabberin' was too disorderly to be useful.

Finally, as they was gettin' fit to boil with vexation, the Archbishop 'imself jumped to 'is feet and shouted out to the Capt'n.

“Why don't ye speak up, and defend yerself? Don't ye hear these charges ranged against ye?”

But Jesus weren't cowed by that. He just sat there keepin' 'is powder dry and starin' right back.

Well then the Archbishop did lose 'is cool.

“Tell us,” he shouted, slammin' down 'is fist. “Are ye, or are ye not, the king sent by the Almighty? Are ye the son of God?”

“I am,” said Jesus. “And I tell ye that when things are reversed ye'll be seein' the Almighty's man sittin' at God's right hand and loomin' out o' the clouds o' heaven.”

“Outrageous!” said the Archbishop, tearin’ the stole from ’is neck in a false show o’ piety. “’Tis blasphemy! What say ye all? Do we need any more?”

Then they all piped up mutterin’ and jeerin’ that he ought to be slain fer ’is crimes. Some of ’em began to spit on ’im, others covered ’is head with a sack and began to have at ’im with their fists, all the while tauntin’ ’im to prophesy ’bout who’d hit ’im.

When they’d had their fun they handed ’im over to the soldiers fer another round o’ beatin.



Peter meanwhile was down in the palace courtyard, warmin’ ’is bones by the fire and tryin’ to look inconspicuous. As he stood there, one o’ the servin’ girls caught sight of ’im under ’is hat and came in close.

“Haven’t you got a nerve?” she said, “followin’ yer master in ’ere.”

“I got no mind o’ what yer speakin’ ’bout, wench,” he said. “Ye leave me be.”

He turned on ’is boot heel and walked away, hopin’ to lose ’imself in the mob near the gate. But it weren’t long afore she spied ’im again.

“Look at this Jack,” she called, pointin’ at ’im. “He’s one of ’is crew.”

Peter denied it again, but it did ’im no good.

“Yer protests give ye away, mate” said one of ’em, spittin’ on the ground. “Ye talks like a Galilean.”

Well, when he heard that, Peter was mighty afeared and began to call down all manner of oaths and curses.

“Shut yer gob, ye cloth-eared cockroach,” he growled. “I swear by God in heaven that I don’t know who yer speaking of.”

But what do ye think? Just as he spoke he heard a rooster crowin’. Aye, ’twas just what the Capt’n had said - “afore the rooster crows, ye’ll have denied me three times.”

Peter was cut deep by that and he fled the place with ’is face all a’blubber.

CHAPTER 15

Through the Jaws o' Death

'Round dawn it was now - when the parleyment reached its verdict. They parcelled Jesus up in irons and dragged 'im up to Governor' Pilate's house. Pilate listened to 'em, took a look at the Capt'n and said.

“So, Captain. Are ye indeed this 'king o' the Jews' fella that they say ye be?”

“Aye,” said Jesus. “That I be.”

Now the bishops standin' there all broke out then - accusin' 'im o' this and that, 'n callin' 'im a miscreant. But Jesus wouldn't say a word.

“Keepin' mum are you?” said Pilate. “Strange thing to do, considerin' all these charges.”

But Jesus still held 'is tongue, and it played upon the Governor's nerves.

Now 'twas a custom then fer the Governor to pardon some jailbird at the time o' the feast, and a mob o' folks had brought 'emselves up to make their pleas. When Pilate caught sight of 'em, he left the bishops and

walked over to the crowd. He knowed full well that it was the bishops blaggardry that had brought Jesus afore 'im, and he hoped that the crowd might give 'im an easy way out.

“Who would you like me to release for ye this year?” he asked 'em. “How 'bout the king o' the Jews?”

Aye, but the bishops was too crafty fer 'im. They had their lackeys in the mob already, and the moment the Governor popped the question they upped and shouted fer another.

“Barabbas!” they was shoutin' “Let Barabbas go free!”

Now Barabbas was a bloody rogue what had done a pile o' murderin' fer to start a revolution - so there weren't much joy in this fer Pilate.

“Aye, but what about the king o' the Jews,” he asked 'em. “How 'bout 'im?”

“Send 'im to the gibbet!” they howled with their blighted lungs. “String 'im up!”

Well Pilate tried one more time but it was no good.

“Why?” he called back at 'em. “What's he done?”

But it only made 'em shout louder.

“Send ’im to the gibbet! Send ’im to the gibbet!”

And the Governor, who was a flaccid wretch in the end, gave way afore em. He set free the rogue and gave up Jesus to the lash and gallows.

’Twere over to the soldiery after that. They took ’im to the fort and gave ’emselves a fine bit o’ sport by dressin’ ’im up. They gave ’im a fur trimmed cloak and made a crown o’ rusty wire. Then all the ranks made merry while the knaves from the barracks bowed low and struck ’im with ram-rods.

“Long live the king! Three cheers fer ’is regal majesty!” they shouted, all the while spittin’ in ’is face.

When they’d had their fill o’ the mockery, they stripped ’im, gave ’im back ’is own duds and dragged ’im off to be strung up.

As they issued from the fort, they came upon a cove out o’ Cyrene by the name o’ Simon (aye, the sire o’ Alexander and Rufus, fer them what knows ’em). They pressed ’im into service, loadin’ ’im up with a broken spar they had with ’em. Then they all went down to execution dock. ’Twas just after the start o’ the forenoon watch.

They offered Jesus a dram o' rum with coca leaves in it to dull the pain, but he wouldn't have it, so they set to. They laid 'im down and nailed 'is wrists to the spar. Then the corporal painted a sign spellin' "King o' the Jews," and tied it about 'is neck.

After that they hoisted 'im aloft with a block on a pole. There was a couple o' pirates strung up similar on either side of 'im, so when he was set in place it was like they was three masts of a ship.

When it was all done the marines sat round loungin' and smokin' their pipes. The privates cast dice fer 'is hat and coat, while the folks goin' by on the docks and water made sport of 'im.

"We heared ye was plannin' to tear down the temple and raise her up again after three days, Capt'n," they called. "What are ye doin' hangin' about here?" Aye, they was full o' wit.

Presently the bishops 'emselves strolled by to admire their handywork, and they too gave 'emselves to mockery.

"So tragic," they said. "He was good at savin' others but he can't save 'imself. Let's see if this great Captain

can bring 'imself down off 'is gibbet and make believers of us.”

And even the rogues strung up beside 'im joined in the fun.

It was about noon by now, and all sudden-like there came an inky blackness o'er the face o' the land - 'twere like the whole world had gone down to the deep fathoms past the reach o' the sun. And maybe that blackness got inside the Capt'n too. Fer as it was comin' to the end o' the afternoon watch there came a change o'er 'im - like he was seized by some kind o' horror. All of a sudden he threw back 'is head and gave up a blood-chillin' cry up into the dark:

“Eloi! Eloi lama sabacthani!”

Aye, 'twas somethin from the old tongue of 'is people, and its meanin' was even more terrifyin' than its sound. “My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?”

Now some o' the folks that was standin' there thought he was cryin' out fer Elijah.

“Let's see if Elijah comes to give 'im aid,” they said.

One of 'em thought to keep Jesus goin' with a bit 'o drink, so he filled a sponge with sour wine and raised it on a stick.

But it was too late. Whatever was causin' the Capt'n's terror was drainin' 'im fast. He gave a final roar and surrendered 'is ghost.

Only now with 'is passin' did the gloom begin to yield. Up the hill in the city, them what was in the temple heard a mighty noise as the great curtain o' the inner room was rent from top to bottom. Back at the dock, the Colonel in charge pulled 'is hat from 'is head and said, "I think that man might've been the son o' God after all!"

Despite all the bold boasts of 'is men, 'twas the women who was with 'im at the end. Mary o' Magdala; the Mary who was mother o' James and Joses; and Salome, mother o' the Zebedee lads. These had cared fer the Capt'n's needs all along the way, and they was still with 'im at the end - standin' a way off and seein' all that happened. And there was other womenfolk from Galilee with 'em.

In the final hours o' that day - and just afore the Sabbath - a member o' the rulin' council legged it up to

the governor's palace to ask fer the body o' Jesus. The gent's name was Joseph. He sailed out o' Arimathee and he was a stout seeker for the Almighty's realm.

Now Pilate was vexed by this askin', fer the mode of execution was not a quick 'un - many coves'd linger fer days upon such a gibbet. But he asked the duty officer, and found that Jesus was dead, so he gave 'im leave.

Joseph took down the body, wrapped it in a sheet o' canvas and stowed it in a cave with a stone to block the mouth. The two Marys looked on as it was done, and made note o' where he was laid.

It was dawn o' the day after Sabbath when them same women came back to the place, portin' great bags o' spices for the treatin' of 'is corpse. As they got near the tomb, they started frettin' o'er that great stone that sealed the entrance. "Who can move such a great thing?" they was sayin'.

Yet when they reached the place, what do ye think? 'Twas already moved.

Aye, and there was more surprises for 'em when they looked within. Sittin' on the right side of the chamber was a young cove in a white robe.

“Greetin’s to ye good ladies,” he said to ’em. “Don’t take alarm, but if ye be lookin’ fer yer Capt’n who was strung up and killed, then ’tis me duty to report that ye be in the wrong place. Back from the dead he be, and ye’ll find ’im in Galilee, just as he promised.”

Well might tell he ’em to take no fright. but they fled with their hands a’tremblin’ and their senses reelin’. And they kept mum ’bout these sightin’s fer they was full ’o fear.

The End

GLOSSARY

Afore the mast: The place of common sailors (rather than officers).

Aft : The back of a ship (opposite of fore).

Avast!: “Pay attention,” or, sometimes, “stop that.”

Awry: A bit wrong.

Beating-to: Sailing straight toward the direction of the wind by zig-zagging.

Bilge: The foul-smelling (often wet) bottom of the inside of the ship - sometimes used as a term for lies or worthless talk.

Binnacle: The wooden housing for a ship’s compass.

Brine: Seawater.

Bulwark: The low wooden walls that run around the upper decks.

Cannonade: A simultaneous discharge of an array of cannons.

Careen: The practise of using tidal variation to beach a ship so it can be scrapped clean of barnacles.

Chantey: A sailor's song.

Close-hauled: Sailing as close to the direction of the wind as possible with the sails pulled tight.

Comely: Good-looking.

Coracle: A small circular boat of cane and animal skins.

Cove: A man.

Craven: Cowardly.

Cutlass: A curved sword.

Doughty: Bold and tough.

Dram: A small drink (usually strong drink).

Drumhead trial: A swift trial conducted outside the usual procedures.

Davey Jones: The depths of the sea - often associated with death.

Drink: (Apart from the usual meaning) the water - as in, "she fell in the drink."

Duds: Clothes.

Furled: Sails pulled up so that they won't catch the wind.

Gibbet: A pole of any kind used for torture or execution.

Gunnel (*gunwale*): See bulwark.

Ha'penny: half a penny (a very small amount of money).

Harpy: A nasty woman (from a mythological monster by the same name).

Jack: A common man.

Keelhaul: A dangerous and painful punishment in which a person is tied to ropes and dragged down one side of the ship, under the keel, and then up the other side.

Keeping his powder dry: Patiently waiting for the right moment to speak (or to do something else).

Laggard: Someone who's slow (lags behind).

Landlubber: A non-sailor who is clumsy (lubberly) around ships.

Mode of Adam: Naked.

Mum: Silent (as in "keep mum").

Nigh: Near/almost.

Parley: Talk with.

Parleyment: Parliament.

Perdition: The state of being utterly lost.

Physic: A physician.

Pressganged: Seized and forced to serve (originally on British navy ships).

Privateer: A pirate who is given a license by one country to attack the ships of another.

Privation: Hardship.

Privy: Toilet.

Racked: Tortured (either physically or emotionally).

Savvy?: Do you understand?

Shrouds: The strong ropes which anchor the mast to the sides of the ship.

Sire: Father.

Skilly: A kind of stew or broth involving oatmeal and meat.

Spars: The cross-bars used to support the sails on a sailing ship.

Spume: Sea-foam.

St Elmo's fire: A rare electrical disturbance which can cause a glow around a ship's masts

Swab: A lowly sailor.

Sweeps: Oars.

Sward: Grassy area.

Sawbones: A surgeon.

Tar: (Apart from the black bitumen substance) a sailor.

Thwart: A plank used as a seat in a rowboat.

Victuals: Provisions. May also occur as a verb - to supply with food.

Warp-in: Pull the ship into a dock using ropes.

Whelp: A child (literally a puppy).

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

When Andrew Moody isn't hard at work parsing Pirate grammar he can sometimes be found teaching at one of Melbourne's theological colleges, running a graphic design business with his wife or reading books to his whelps. He has a doctorate (and several books forthcoming) in the area of the Trinity.

This is his first book with BrightMettle.