

A Contemporary Reading: *Maranatha Australis* by Jamie Harrison
Dunk

If our Lord had been born in spring,
We would yearly rehearse the idea
that the birth of a child might bring peace:
In the manner of buds, and apple blossoms,
As flowers open to the sun, and
Give themselves to the world.

We forget when it was he rubbed his eyes with too-small hands, and
screamed.

Metaphors were conceived in the north,
And wrapped in strange bohemian saints and kings,
But those who received the words of truth and life
From men who saw and loved the man
Blinked, and then colonised the world.

The gospel was forced upon men and women in the farthest
reaches

(Whom they did not know whether to paint or put in galleys and
trade amongst themselves).

Agents of empire in red and black.

They saw and did not see the power of their words, which
In the space between homily and massacre, floundered.

A southern Christmas carries these burdens

It is not that he now lacks any part of this earth to call his own
But the manner of annunciation.

Where did the message of peace come in peace—

How did these words not shrivel in those white throats—

When did Christ take up the sword?

Say you will not take up this burden, that it must be carried by others

In some absolved past

But it belongs to any one who cries Immanuel in the morning

After laying in this poisoned earth through the eve, who

Sings hark the angels in a scarred new world.

For he was born unto all.

This made the world new.

The heavens surged with joy

Round words of peace fell from the stars

And landed even here.

Did we need to come through slaughter.

Savage, and then civilise,

And was peace, that open flower,

That cup of water, ever ours to give—

Or only theirs to lose.

We are not our fathers but our past overflows.

It boils with forgetful praise from pulpit, from parliament,

It is in our blunt hearts and silted lungs and tarred songs.

We pine for christendom,

That bastard state.

We were never meant to take up the Word—

somewhere translated Reason—

And with sophistry, and brutality, destroy

These lyrical peoples, heirs-in-common of perfection.

These the jarring bells that ring,

This the wound, the pall between

The old carols that we sing and

A past which cannot be sung.

Marana, tha. We still have lost our way.

pause

For challenge and inspiration in contemporary reflection

We give thanks.

Gospel: Listen for words of faith in the gospel of Luke 4:16-21

Jesus came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up. Entering the synagogue on the Sabbath, as was his habit, Jesus stood up to do the reading. When the book of the prophet Isaiah was handed him, he unrolled the scroll and found the passage where it was written:

“The Spirit of our God is upon me:
because the Most High has anointed me
to bring Good News to those who are poor.
God has sent me to proclaim liberty to those held captive,
recovery of sight to those who are blind,
and release to those in prison—

to proclaim the year of our God's favour.”

Rolling up the scroll, Jesus gave it back to the attendant and sat down. The eyes of all in the synagogue were fixed on him. Then he said to them, “Today, in your hearing, this scripture passage is fulfilled.”

pause

For the proclamation of God's pathway of love and justice.

We give thanks.