

# A sudden storm



Lord Jesus, you made no promises of security when you called fishermen to follow you. Give us the courage to take risks in our lives in order to follow you more closely and to work with you to proclaim the good news of God. Amen.

## Keeping Christ in Christmas Part 1 – Christmas crackers

by Heather Cooke

“Christmas! Are you crackers?” I can almost hear you protesting as you read this. “It’s only early November,” you say, “and we’re not celebrating Christmas quite yet!”

But look around you – in the shops, in the windows of homes – and you’ll see that the world out there is already in Christmas countdown mode. In the supermarkets, stock has been moved to make way for “Xmas”

wrap, “Xmas” decorations, festive selection boxes and other goodies.

So perhaps, if you can’t beat them, we should join them.

Over the next eight weeks we’ll be looking at ways to prepare spiritually for Christmas, and remember the reason for the season, with the help of a line from a carol or hymn. The first step is a very simple one: whenever you see the abbreviation Xmas this week, mentally replace the X with “Christ” and remember that X is the sign of a kiss, a token of love.

“Love came down at Christmas”. 🙏

Katharine Smith *reflects on* Mark 1:14-20

**W**e are fishers, the rhythm of our lives governed by the sun and the moon, the seasons, the tides and the winds. We work when we’re most likely to haul in a good catch. At quieter times we mend nets and repair boats. It’s all relatively safe – we know there are dangers: unexpected storms and hidden undercurrents, but in this world can life ever be completely risk free?

So why are we suddenly restless, dissatisfied, unable to settle to our daily routine? This man Jesus has overturned our lives as quickly as our boats could capsize in a sudden storm. He’s from this

neighbourhood but he’s different, as if he came from a foreign land, and he talks about the kingdom of God as if that were his home, where he belongs. He proclaims good news and somehow you know that it really is good news, not something that will end in disappointment.

What is it about him that has stirred us up so that here we are out on the road alongside him, our safe, predictable lives left behind as we set off into who knows what? It’s hard to put into words, but when he calls you the tide turns, life turns upside down and nothing will be the same again. 🙏

## Books of the Old Testament – *Numbers*

by Gillian Cooper

God’s people regularly complain about the food and water or lack of it, wishing themselves back in Egypt where even slaves were fed. They are ready to believe stories of giants, but not ready to be the people God needs. So God decides they will travel round the wilderness for another forty years till they can grow into a mature people.

While the people are maddeningly insecure, whiny and disobedient, God is sometimes angry, often grieved, always faithful. Abraham was promised his descendants would have a land, and a land they will have, despite their behaviour.

The key passage is 14:13-24, where Moses persuades God that “Project People of God” is still worth pursuing. By the end of the book they are ready to cross the Jordan for the next stage of their great adventure. Reassuringly, God’s plans cannot be derailed by human stupidity and sin.

Do not miss chapters 22 to 24, with their wonderful talking donkey and a prophet who cannot do as he is told. And chapter 21 tells of the magical bronze snake that later becomes a metaphor for the crucifixion of Christ. 🙏

“Without waiting, begin at once to obey him with the best heart you have. Any obedience is better than none.”

John Henry Newman (1801-1890), Roman Catholic cardinal, theologian and poet