THE GOSPEL OF PEACE

A Commentary on Matthew, Mark, and Luke from the Perspective of Nonviolence

JOHN DEAR



Founded in 1970, Orbis Books endeavors to publish works that enlighten the mind, nourish the spirit, and challenge the conscience. The publishing arm of the Maryknoll Fathers and Brothers, Orbis seeks to explore the global dimensions of the Christian faith and mission, to invite dialogue with diverse cultures and religious traditions, and to serve the cause of reconciliation and peace. The books published reflect the views of their authors and do not represent the official position of the Maryknoll Society. To learn more about Maryknoll and Orbis Books, please visit our website at www. orbisbooks.com.

Copyright © 2024 by John Dear

Published by Orbis Books, Box 302, Maryknoll, NY 10545-0302.

All rights reserved.

Scripture quotations are from the New American Bible © 1986. All rights reserved.

Quotations from Ched Myers, *Binding the Strong Man: A Political Reading of Mark's Story of Jesus* © 1988, 2008 (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books), used with permission.

No part of this publication may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopying, recording, or any information storage or retrieval system, without prior permission in writing from the publisher.

Queries regarding rights and permissions should be addressed to: Orbis Books, P.O. Box 302, Maryknoll, NY 10545-0302.

Manufactured in the United States of America

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Names: Dear, John, 1959- author.

Title: The gospel of peace: reading Matthew, Mark, and Luke from the perspective of nonviolence / John Dear.

Description: Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, [2024] | Includes bibliographical references and index. | Summary: "A comprehensive commentary of the synoptic gospels from the perspective of nonviolence"— Provided by publisher.

Identifiers: LCCN 2023026957 (print) | LCCN 2023026958 (ebook) | ISBN 9781626985339 (trade paperback) | ISBN 9781608339907 (epub)

Subjects: LCSH: Bible. Gospels—Criticism, interpretation, etc. | Nonviolence—Religious aspects—Christianity. | Peace—Religious aspects—Christianity.

Classification: LCC BS2555.52 .D415 2024 (print) | LCC BS2555.52 (ebook) | DDC 226/.06—dc23/eng/20230808

LC record available at https://lccn.loc.gov/2023026957

LC ebook record available at https://lccn.loc.gov/2023026958

CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION	X111
Why Gandhi and King?	xvi
What Is Nonviolence Anyway?	XX
The Synoptic Narrative of Active Nonviolence	xxi
A Note about Terms and Language	xxiii
Further Points to Keep in Mind	XXV
MATTHEW	
The Mountaintop Sermon on Nonviolence	1
Journey to the Mountain: Preparing a Way for the Nonviolent Jesus (1:1–4:25)	3
The Lineage of the Nonviolent Jesus (1:1–17)	3
The Epiphany of the Nonviolent Jesus (1:18-2:23)	4
John the Baptist, the Baptism of Repentance, and the Temptations	
of Violence (3:1–4:11)	8
The Nonviolent Jesus Takes Up John's Announcement: "The Kingdom of Heaven	
Is at Hand!" (4:12–17)	12
The Call to the Discipleship of Nonviolence (4:18–25)	13
The Great Mountaintop Sermon on Nonviolence (5:1–7:29)	14
The Beatitudes of Nonviolence (5:3–12)	15
"Those Who Obey and Teach These Commandments Will Be Called	
the Greatest in the Kingdom of Heaven" (5:13-20)	20
"You Have Heard It Said, But I Say to You": The Six Antitheses	
of Nonviolence (5:21–48)	23
Be Real, Avoid Hypocrisy: Prayer, Fasting, Almsgiving, Forgiveness (6:1-18)	38
"Seek First God's Kingdom and God's Justice and Everything Else	
Will Be Provided for You" (6:19–34)	40
"Enter through the Narrow Gate" (7:1-14)	42
Jesus Models the Teachings on Nonviolence That He Just Preached	
in the Sermon on the Mount (8:1–9:38)	47
Journey "To the Other Side" (8:18–9:8)	49
"Go and Learn the Meaning of the Words, 'I Desire Mercy,	
Not Sacrifice'' (9:9–38)	51

"Behold, I Am Sending You like Sheep in the Midst of Wolves" (10:1–33) "It Is Enough for the Disciple to Become like the Teacher" (10:24–33)	54 58
"Whoever Loses His or Her Life for My Sake Will Find It" (10:34–11:24)	59
"I Am Meek and Humble of Heart" (11:25–12:49)	63
"Whoever Does the Will of the God of Peace Is My Brother or Sister" (12:15–49)	66
"A Sower Went Out to Sow" (13:1–58)	71
"Take Courage, It Is I; Do Not Be Afraid!" (14:1-16:28)	76
"O Woman, Great Is Your Faith" (15:21–16:12)	81
"I Will Give You the Keys to the Kingdom of Heaven" (16:13-28)	84
"This Is My Beloved Son Listen to Him!" (17:1–18:35)	86
"Whoever Humbles Himself or Herself like This Child Is the Greatest	
in the Kingdom of Heaven" (18:1–35)	90
"Come, Follow Me": The Turn toward Jerusalem (19:1–20:34)	95
"For God, All Things Are Possible" (19:16–34)	96
"You Shall Love the God of Peace with All Your Heart, with All Your Soul,	
and with All Your Mind, and Love Your Neighbor as Yourself" (21:1–23:39) "My House Shall Be a House of Prayer, But You Are Making It	102
a Den of Thieves" (21:12–22)	103
"The Kingdom of God Will Be Taken Away from You" (21:23–23:12)	106
"Woe to You" (23:13-39)	113
"Whatever You Did for One of These Least Brothers and Sisters of Mine,	
You Did for Me" (24:1–25:46)	118
The Arrest and Execution of the Nonviolent Jesus (26:1–27:66)	127
The New Covenant of Total Nonviolence (26:26-32)	130
"My Soul Is Sorrowful Even to Death. Remain Here and Keep Watch with Me" (26:33–46)	131
"Put Your Sword Back into Its Sheath for All Who Take the Sword	131
Will Perish by the Sword" (26:47–56)	132
"From Now on You Will See the Son of Humanity Seated	
at the Right Hand of Power" (26:57–27:26)	134
"My God, My God, Why Have You Forsaken Me?" (27:27-66)	138
Break Out! The Civil Disobedience Continues:	
The Illegal Resurrection of the Nonviolent Jesus (28:1–20)	144

MARK

The Radical Discipleship of Nonviolent Resistance to Empire	
——————————————————————————————————————	148
The Campaign of Nonviolent Resistance and	
Civil Disobedience Begins (1:1–3:35)	150
"The Beginning of the Gospel of Jesus Christ" (1:1–13)	150
"For This Purpose Have I Come" (1:14–45)	151
"Why Are You Thinking Such Things in Your Hearts?" (2:1–28)	154
"Stretch Out Your Hand!" (3:1–31)	158
"To What Shall I Compare the Kingdom of God?" (4:1–34)	162
"This Is How It Is with the Kingdom of God" (4:26–34)	164
"Let Us Cross to the Other Side" (4:35–8:26)	166
"Do Not Be Afraid. Just Have Faith!" (5:21–6:6a)	168
"His Heart Was Moved with Pity for Them" (6:6b–52)	170
"Hear Me, All of You, and Understand" (6:53–8:10)	173
"He Sighed from the Depth of His Spirit" (8:11–26)	176
"Take Up Your Cross and Follow Me!" (8:27–10:52)	178
"This Is My Beloved Son. Listen to Him" (9:2–32)	180
"Be the Last of All and the Servant of All" (9:33–10:12)	183
"The Kingdom of God Belongs to Such as These" (10:13–16)	186
"Go, Sell What You Have, Give to the Poor, Then Come,	
Follow Me" (10:17–52)	187
"Entering the Temple Area, He Began to Drive Out	
Those Selling and Buying" (11:1–13:37)	193
"Have Faith in God. When You Stand to Pray, Forgive" (11:20–26)	198
"Why Are You Testing Me?" (11:27–13:2)	200
"Be Watchful!" Jesus's Visionary Sermon on Eschatological	
Nonviolence (13:3–37)	205
The Arrest and Execution of the Nonviolent Jesus:	
The End of the Beginning of Total Nonviolence (14:1–15:47)	209
The Blood of the New Covenant of Nonviolence (14:12-31)	210
"Watch and Pray" (14:32–42)	212
"Have You Come Out as against a Robber, with Swords and Clubs,	21.4
to Seize Me?" (14:43–72)	214
"Jesus Gave a Loud Cry and Breathed His Last" (15:1–47)	216
"Go Back to Galilee and Start His Campaign of Nonviolence	210
All Over": The Never-Ending Story of Gospel Nonviolence (16:1–8)	218

LUKE

Nonviolence, and Compassion	222
"Guide Our Feet into the Path of Peace" (1:1–3:20; 3:23–38)	226
Jesus's Teacher of Nonviolence: Mary and the Three Movements	
of Gospel Nonviolence (1:26–56)	228
"Glory to God in the Highest and on Earth Peace": The Birth	
of the Nonviolent Jesus (2:1–40)	235
"Did You Not Know That I Must Be in My Father's House?" (2:41–52)	238
"A Voice of One Crying Out in the Desert" (3:1-20, 23-38)	238
"You Are My Beloved Son: With You, I Am Well Pleased" (3:21–22; 4:1–13)	241
"Today, This Scripture Passage Is Fulfilled in Your Hearing":	
The Nonviolent Revolution Begins (4:14–6:11)	246
"Put Out into Deep Water and Lower Your Nets	
for a Catch" (4:31–5:11)	251
"I Have Not Come to Call the Righteous to Repentance but Sinners" (5:12-6:11)	255
Blessings and Woes: The Sermon on Peace, Love, and Nonviolence (6:12-49)	258
"I Tell You, Arise!" (7:1–9:50)	272
"The One to Whom Little Is Forgiven Loves Little" (7:36–8:21)	275
"Do Not Weep Any Longer for She Is Not Dead but Sleeping" (8:22–9:17)	278
"The Son of Humanity Must Suffer Greatly and Be Rejected" (9:18–50)	282
Jesus's Grassroots Campaign of Peace and Nonviolence Begins (9:51–10:42)	286
"Go on Your Way; Behold I Am Sending You like Lambs	
among Wolves" (10:1–24)	289
"Do This and You Will Live" (10:25–42)	297
'Ask and You Will Receive; Seek and You Will Find;	
Knock and the Door Will Be Opened" (11:1–12:59)	300
"Whoever Is Not with Me Is against Me" (11:14–54)	304
"The Hairs of Your Head Have All Been Counted" (12:1–15)	308
"Your Father Is Pleased to Give You the Kingdom" (12:16–48)	311
"Do You Think That I Have Come to Establish Peace on the Earth?" (12:49–59)	314
"What Is the Kingdom of God Like?" (13:1–15:32)	317
"Woman, You Are Set Free" (13:10–17)	320
"Strive to Enter through the Narrow Door" (13:18–35)	321
"Invite the Poor the Crippled the Lame and the Blind" (14:1–35)	323

"We Must Celebrate and Rejoice, Because Your Brother Was Dead and	
Has Come to Life" (15:1–32)	327
"If They Will Not Listen to Moses and the Prophets,	
Neither Will They Listen If Someone Rises from the Dead" (16:1–19:27)	331
"Say, 'We Are Useless Servants; We Have Done What	
We Were Obliged to Do" (17:1–19)	336
"Behold, the Kingdom of God Is among You" (17:20–37)	338
"Pray Always without Becoming Weary" (18:1–17)	341
"What Do You Want Me to Do for You?" (18:18–19:27)	345
"If This Day You Only Knew What Makes for Peace":	
The Campaign Reaches Jerusalem (19:28–21:36)	351
"My House Shall Be a House of Prayer, but You Have Made It	
a Den of Thieves" (19:45–48)	354
"What Then Does This Scripture Passage Mean?" (20:1–44)	356
"Stand Erect and Raise Your Heads Because Your Redemption	
Is at Hand" (20:45–21:36)	359
"Father, Forgive Them, They Know Not	
What They Do" (21:37–23:56)	365
"I Confer a Kingdom on You" (22:21–34)	366
"It Is Enough!" (In Other Words, "Oh, Forget It!") (22:35–38)	368
"Pray That You May Not Undergo the Test" (22:39–46)	373
"Stop, No More of This!" No More Violence, No More Killing,	
No More War! (22:47–53)	374
"The Lord Turned and Looked at Peter" (22:54–62)	376
"From This Time On, the Son of Humanity Will Be Seated	
at the Right Hand of the Power of God" (22:63–23:25)	378
"If These Things Are Done When the Wood Is Green, What Will Happen	
When It Is Dry?" (23:26–32)	383
"Father, Forgive Them, They Know Not What They Do" (23:33–38)	384
"Amen, I Say to You, Today You Will Be with Me in Paradise" (23:39–43)	386
"Father, Into Your Hands I Commend My Spirit" (23:44–56)	387
"You Are Witnesses of These Things" (24:1–53)	389
"What Are You Discussing as You Walk Along? What Things?" (24:13-35)	390
"Peace Be with You!" (24:36–53)	394
Conclusion	396
Recommended Readings	398
Acknowledgments	402
About the Author	405