

The writer Gerard Hughes imagines

there's a knock on your door one evening.

On your doorstep stands Jesus himself, come to stay with **you**.

You gladly let him in, make him a cuppa in your best china

whilst you give the guest room a quick dust,

turn down the crisply ironed sheets, buff the wash-basin.

You crack open a bottle of wine, it proves the very best ever,

glass after lush glass - and it was only £6.99 from Proudfoots.

The stabbing pain in your hip, which has kept you awake for

months goes in an instant, along with all the resentments:

‘How dare his mother say that, how dare his sister do that,

how dare my son speak to me like that...’

Instead you pray, ‘God bless them, God bless them all.’

But then things begin to go wrong.

‘Get me a tin of sardines and five bread-buns from the Co-op.’

He stands at the door, your door, handing out sandwiches
to line upon line of folk who've cottoned on that he's in town.

A food bank incarnate, delivered by the Bread of Life.

Then another queue, those who've been on NHS waiting lists
for ever, the halt, the lame, the sick, the blind:

one healing touch from him and they are made whole.

The neighbours start complaining about all these people
from the wrong side of town, not welcome in these parts.

What's more, he lets some of them into your house,

partying late into the night, not nice people at all,

sex workers, drug dealers, vagrants, who are very, very rude

about the Tory government and your beloved Boris.

He's tethered his ass to your gatepost, braying at all hours.

As house prices plummet, the neighbours organise a petition
because something must be done...

One day you catch him alone in your guest room, in prayer.

‘Jesus,’ you say, ‘This room is just not good enough,

I’ve prepared a better place especially for you,

nice and light and quiet and holy – it’s the shed outside,

with lots of lovely straw to keep you warm.’

‘Jesus first,’ you say, but then as soon as he steps in

you slam the door shut, padlocking it with a thick chain.

You barricade the door with a staunch oak picnic table

on which you put a vase of fresh flowers, to be changed daily.

Each evening you light an oil lamp next to the flowers

and every time you pass you pause, bow reverently and sing:

Come, thou long-expected Jesus, born to set they people free,

From our fears and sins release us, let us find our rest in thee.

Even so, best to keep your Jesuses firmly under lock and key.

God knows what would happen if you let them loose.