

Hammer, nails, wood. by Philip Hyne

It was always fun in Joseph's yard, with
hammer, nails and wood -
swords, and houses out of shards, using
hammer, nails and wood.
Then splinters in hands, bruised thumbs, torn skin, from
hammer, nails and wood;
then tears, and hugs and a good mother's care
and no longer wanting a small child's share in
hammer, nails and wood.

It was harder after Joseph died
though you rallied us round as you could;
your skills kept the family together then, with your
hammer, nails and wood.
But as we grew you taught us anew to use
hammer, nails and wood -
and then you left your home to pursue a road of your own,
while we younger brothers took over the load with our
hammer, nails and wood.

We heard great things of what you did, as we plied
hammer, nails and wood;
healing, teaching, raising those who'd died.
And then things changed so that fear stalked beside our
hammer, nails and wood.
But when they came for you in dark Gethsemane
we weren't there for you, brother, then -
not one of us there to share your deep, dark despair - too busy with
hammer, nails and wood.

Now you hang in agony from
nails hammered into wood;
this cross of shame seems your only gain from a life of
hammer, nails and wood.
Yet you asked for forgiveness on all of those men who
nailed you onto the wood;
nails and splinters in hands, scourge-cut limbs and torn skin,
with no one to care, only enemies who share in the guilt of
hammering you onto the wood.

What can we say, who kept well away from where you
hang in the air from your wood?
Your life took the role of making folk whole
doing good to all where you could.
But all that's left now to show for the love that you sowed
is one hammer, three nails, and some wood.

[Note: Jesus' brothers had nothing to do with his ministry until after the resurrection when James became influential in the Jerusalem Church – they only appear with Mary trying to force him to go home, thinking him out of his mind]