Ars Poetica, or Why I Love Jesus

Having heard, on the Friday night of Passover, that her grandson, Chris, got an acting job performing Jesus on the Eternal Word Television Network, my mother asks, “Why couldn’t he have gotten a decent job? Does he have to play that son-of-a-bitch from Bethlehem?”

It’s not the lilies of the field, nor the water walking escapades, the miracles countless and unconditional, nor that soft-speak manner of an Aramaic NPR announcer – in fact, all that bullroar makes me ill. Nor is it the humble start – the barn, the poverty, the god-damn star so contrived as to suggest, heaven-forbid, Spielberg. Nor the dim wise men bearing their witless gifts. Nor the torture
he endures, or his mother’s faithfulness. Nor the wardrobe, however chic, and Wisemulleresque. Or the death he never got right, coming back and coming back, or the complicated call to Mary Magdalene – though that, I must admit compels me. It’s something else. Something MY mother, deep behind her Jewish fence, might see to like. It’s the young Christ in the temple scene, going postal on the money-lenders, saying in jive, perhaps, *Git yo mofo asses out my Fatha’s house, take yo biz to the curb where it belong, hit the road you honky gold bugs, yo coin, yo bling-bling too.* And when they do not
listen, when they sit
there like this
is their set
and language is
nothing and the kid
is from outer space, he
leaves to lock and
load his cat-o-nine
tails, a fucking bull
whip with shards and
comes back flailing
the thing, a dust-
storm of granite, John
Cusack on speed, and
they run like Hell is snapping
all about their ears,
the whole time hearing,
*Git yo mofo asses from my
Father’s crib, a house of word
is a house of meaning, git
yo asses from this house.*
That’s what that son-
of-a-bitch from
Bethlehem did and he did it
the way his Father
did. Brought David
to the Philistines, Moses
to the Pharaoh, plague, pestilence, death to the first-born. Not Christ-like, not the pansy on the mount, but God-like. There’s just so much a god can take. 

*Git out my Father’s house. His house is word and word is meaning.*

And when he comes back, if he comes back, he’ll come back swinging at all our temples, at all our sets where word means nothing, swinging his cattails saying, *THIS is the house of word, THIS is a house of meaning,* and being what he always was, so poorly dressed, so *BADLY* Jewish, so looking for a little trouble.

That’s why I love Jesus.