**2 Kings 2.1-12**

2Now when the Lord was about to take Elijah up to heaven by a whirlwind, Elijah and Elisha were on their way from Gilgal. 2Elijah said to Elisha, ‘Stay here; for the Lord has sent me as far as Bethel.’ But Elisha said, ‘As the Lord lives, and as you yourself live, I will not leave you.’ So they went down to Bethel. 3The company of prophets who were in Bethel came out to Elisha, and said to him, ‘Do you know that today the Lord will take your master away from you?’ And he said, ‘Yes, I know; keep silent.’

4 Elijah said to him, ‘Elisha, stay here; for the Lord has sent me to Jericho.’ But he said, ‘As the Lord lives, and as you yourself live, I will not leave you.’ So they came to Jericho. 5The company of prophets who were at Jericho drew near to Elisha, and said to him, ‘Do you know that today the Lord will take your master away from you?’ And he answered, ‘Yes, I know; be silent.’

6 Then Elijah said to him, ‘Stay here; for the Lord has sent me to the Jordan.’ But he said, ‘As the Lord lives, and as you yourself live, I will not leave you.’ So the two of them went on. 7Fifty men of the company of prophets also went, and stood at some distance from them, as they both were standing by the Jordan. 8Then Elijah took his mantle and rolled it up, and struck the water; the water was parted to the one side and to the other, until the two of them crossed on dry ground.

9 When they had crossed, Elijah said to Elisha, ‘Tell me what I may do for you, before I am taken from you.’ Elisha said, ‘Please let me inherit a double share of your spirit.’ 10He responded, ‘You have asked a hard thing; yet, if you see me as I am being taken from you, it will be granted you; if not, it will not.’ 11As they continued walking and talking, a chariot of fire and horses of fire separated the two of them, and Elijah ascended in a whirlwind into heaven. 12Elisha kept watching and crying out, ‘Father, father! The chariots of Israel and its horsemen!’ But when he could no longer see him, he grasped his own clothes and tore them in two pieces.

**2 Corinthians 4.3-6**

3And even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing. 4In their case the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelievers, to keep them from seeing the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God. 5For we do not proclaim ourselves; we proclaim Jesus Christ as Lord and ourselves as your slaves for Jesus’ sake. 6For it is the God who said, ‘Let light shine out of darkness’, who has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.

**Mark 9.2-9**

2 Six days later, Jesus took with him Peter and James and John, and led them up a high mountain apart, by themselves. And he was transfigured before them, 3and his clothes became dazzling white, such as no one on earth could bleach them. 4And there appeared to them Elijah with Moses, who were talking with Jesus. 5Then Peter said to Jesus, ‘Rabbi, it is good for us to be here; let us make three dwellings, one for you, one for Moses, and one for Elijah.’ 6He did not know what to say, for they were terrified. 7Then a cloud overshadowed them, and from the cloud there came a voice, ‘This is my Son, the Beloved; listen to him!’ 8Suddenly when they looked around, they saw no one with them any more, but only Jesus.

9 As they were coming down the mountain, he ordered them to tell no one about what they had seen, until after the Son of Man had risen from the dead.

Peter climbs a mountain

I’ll be honest: I don’t much like mountains. All that climbing, the sun beating down on your back and your legs screaming for mercy, and what do you find when you get to the top? Rocks and wind, mostly. I know there are views, but I’d rather be on level ground looking up at a mountain than on the top of one looking down.

But the Teacher has always had a thing about high ground. It gets him away from the crowds, gives him space to think. More often than not he heads off by himself, which always makes me uneasy. Who will look out for him while he’s lost in his prayers? So this time, when he asked three of us to come with him, it was a relief. He’s been in a strange mood lately, talking about plots and violence and catastrophe. I don’t see how that fits with his message of peace and plenty. If he’s God’s chosen Messiah (and he pretty much admitted it, even though we’re not supposed to say anything), shouldn’t he be leading a triumphal army? But I should know by now that he never comes at things the way you’d expect. When I tried to talk him down from his gloomy predictions, he turned on me - called me Satan, if you please. That really stung. I make my share of mistakes, for sure, but since he turned up by the lake in Galilee I’ve given up everything for him: my job, my family, my home. And he knows I’d do anything to keep him safe. So I suppose being invited on one of his mountain walks felt like a kind of olive branch.

It was as bad as I’d expected: an exhausting climb through that thorny scrub that rips at your legs, with no hint of a breeze. The air started to feel thinner than normal, as if we’d reached a place made for birds, not humans. Is this what he means by being close to heaven? If it is, I’m not sure it’s for me. Give me flat land, civilization and a practical problem to solve, and then I can be useful. But the truth is he only half belongs in that world. You could see it as he climbed, how the weariness dropped off him. While we stumbled behind, he surged on like an eagle riding an air current. And when we finally stopped, his whole face had changed. It was as if he was drawing the sun itself into his body, until he glowed with a light from within. Even his clothes were dazzling, white as a fresh fall of snow.

When I could stop squinting, I had the shock of my life. There were two men talking to him. Where did they spring from, on that bare mountain? Was he in danger? But they carried no obvious weapons and it all looked friendly enough. Very slowly it dawned on me: these weren’t ordinary people. They were dressed in the robes of desert nomads from long ago, and shining with the same unearthly light. Out of nowhere, two names came into my head: Moses, and Elijah. It was like the moment when the Teacher asked us who we thought he was, and I found my lips saying “Messiah”. Look, no one would call me the brains of our group. I’m not a strategist like Judas. I don’t have visions like John. I’m not one for symbolic gestures like Mary. But sometimes I just know things, and this is what I knew then. Moses, the law-giver, and Elijah, the great prophet, stood there on the mountain, speaking with our Teacher. Had they summoned him, or had he summoned them? Or were we perhaps not in our world any more? Had we climbed right through the sky into heaven? Moses, and Elijah and the Messiah - The Law, and the Prophets, and the King-to-be. The three of them were like the completion of a circle, the fulfilment of the promise of long ago.

I don’t mind saying that right then my knees were trembling so I could hardly stand. But weirdly all I wanted was to stay there for the rest of my life, on the bare mountain where the world made sense. Nothing else mattered, not the petty quarrels between us, not our miserable failure to heal people, not even the way my words had offended him. This was God bringing everything together, and I wanted to be part of it. I knew I should keep my mouth shut but the words came out anyway: “Teacher, how lucky we’re here! Let us build three dwellings for you.” Even as I spoke, I could hear how ridiculous I sounded. Did I really think three fishermen could rig up shacks out of thorn scrub fit for Israel’s mythical heroes?

He didn’t reply: I don’t think he even heard me. God replied. I know, I’ve said already, I don’t do visions. I don’t have prophetic dreams or see angels. But I did hear this, as surely as I once heard the Teacher saying “Follow me.” “This is my Son,” said God, “the one I love; listen to him!” And as the voice spoke the light got brighter and brighter, until all the glory of heaven was showering down on him. When I could open my eyes again, the other two figures were gone. None of us dared to approach him, so we watched from a distance while he prayed. Then with hardly a word he led us back down the mountain, back to our ordinary lives.

Since then I’ve noticed a difference in him. He always had a sense of purpose, but now it’s redoubled. He talks about time running out, and his instructions come so fast no-one can keep up. But then - I don’t feel quite the same, either. I wish I could recapture that feeling of everything making sense, seeing the bigger picture, not just what’s in front of my face. The other evening, someone was telling the story of Elijah, whisked up into heaven in a chariot of fire. I used to think that was mostly a fairy tale, but now – I wonder. If God visits our world, wouldn’t it be in just that kind of a blaze of glory? And I noticed something I hadn’t before, about Elisha. He set off on that last journey as Elijah’s loyal servant, but he came back changed. It wasn’t long before he’d stepped right into his master’s shoes: feeding the hungry, healing the sick, raising the dead. What if that’s what seeing God’s glory up close does to you? What if it opens the door to possibilities you never knew you had?

Elisha walked all the way to the Jordan, and we climbed a mountain to see it. But I’ve started to wonder if the light and splendour and truth isn’t always there, just on the edges of our sight, like a fish that doesn’t quite break the surface of the water. If you’re not paying attention it looks like a flash of sunlight, but follow its silvery glint and it can lead you to a shoal rich enough to overflow your nets. You just have to know what to look for. Up there on the mountain, you couldn’t miss God’s glory. Now I’ve seen it though, I find myself catching glimmers of it in all sorts of unexpected places: the kindness of strangers, the times we put aside our differences and make peace with each other, the small joy of sharing a meal at the end of a long day.

The memory of what happened that day is like a lamp shining in a dark place. When I doubt myself, or I doubt his message with its dismal undertones, I remember that dazzling light, and the feeling that everything fitted together. I remember hearing the voice of God. The Teacher still says things which scare me, and some which make no sense at all. I have a feeling there will be more mountains to climb before the end. But God told us to listen to him, and that’s what I’m going to do, wherever it takes me and whatever it costs.