7. Jez gets ready

Jez and his Dad stories were first written as 1-minute Monday-Friday thoughts for Pennine Radio

Jez and his Dad stood together and looked out across the wide valley. A sense of waiting hung in the air, and the two were silent for a long time.

At last the father turned to his son and asked, almost with a sense of reluctance, “Are you ready to go, Jez?”

Jez gave a quick, nervous smile and said, “It’s funny, Dad. But I can hardly believe the time has come at last.”

“No,” said his Dad, “ I know.”

“I mean,” said Jez, “we’ve been planning this trip for even longer than there have been people in the valley. We’ve chosen and built up a single nation as a focus for everyone else, and we’ve fed them with information about what to expect.”

“Yes, it’s been a long process,” said his Dad. “And painful, at times.”

“There was the flood, and the exodus. And the exile and return,” said Jez. “All getting them to look forward to something greater.”

“Yes,” said his Dad, “something greater, all right. Something great enough to lift their lives to a whole new level.”

Jez pointed down to the lower slopes, and said to his Dad, “I wonder if *they’re* ready for me?”

His Dad looked at him enquiringly, and Jez went on, “Well, they don’t really look as if they are. They seem far more interested in money and status and power – for all our efforts to show them what to look for.”

“Oh, there are some who’re not blinded by all that and deaf to the truth,” said his Dad. “You’ll find a group who are ready for your visit – even if they don’t fully realise it yet. They’ll know you when they meet you.”

“You mean I won’t have to explain myself to everyone?”

“I think you should do *some* public speaking,” said his Dad, “but planting the seeds of the new life safely in the minds of a few trusted friends may be the best way to begin.”

“I suppose you’re right,” said Jez. “After all, I’ve got to make them ready to carry on without me when the next stage comes.”

He looked thoughtful for a time, as he stood with his Dad overlooking the great valley.

"If I have to go down there and be a teacher," he said, "I suppose I'd better think out what I'm going to say."

"Think out what you're going to say?" said his Dad. "That sounds good, coming from you!"

"Eh?" said Jez, "Why?"

"Have you forgotten who you are?" said his Dad. "You *are* the lesson."

"I am?" said Jez.

"You are," said his Dad. "You're the wisdom that went into the design of that place. You're the command that brought it into being. You're the light that gives the people life and understanding."

"Spare me, spare me!" said Jez, looking at the ground.

"Well, I'm not so sure about that," said his Dad with sudden seriousness, thinking of something else entirely, "but because you *are* the word, you hardly need to think out what you're going to say. I'm sure you won't be lost for words! In any case, you'll be keeping in touch with me while you're there. We can sort out the detail as you go along."

They turned and walked slowly back to the house.

As they went Jez said, “There’s one thing I’m not quite clear about.”

“Yes?” said his Dad.

“Well,” said Jez, “I can see how to talk about the new life to a handful of close friends. But what about those who think that all the good things in life come from money or power or political prestige. Will *they* be ready to listen?”

“No,” sighed his Dad, “most of them won’t. But we want to give them all the chance.”

“They say seeing’s believing,” said Jez. “I could just go and quietly *live* the true life. I could show what it means by healing the blind and deaf and dumb, and setting people free from illness, and lies. I could be a servant – showing your love by simply helping those in need and explaining what I’m doing.”

“Yes,” said his Dad, “if that doesn’t make them listen, I doubt if anything else will.”

They paused as they reached the garden by the great house.

"If you go and quietly help those in need, as you suggest, Jez," said his Dad, "you'll do all that can be done to get through to people who're ready to listen. But the point is: are *you* ready to go?"

"Well yes, I think so," said Jez. "You've explained there's nothing much to prepare. I've just to go."

"Yes," said his Dad, "but are you *ready* to go? Are you willing – to go and face all that lies ahead? It won't always be… easy, you know," he added tenderly.

"Oh yes, Dad," said Jez, "I'm ready. I'm willing to go. But…"

"But what?" said his Dad.

"Well, what's going to happen when I actually arrive?"

"Ah!" said his Dad, "that's no problem. I've sent a message to a young woman and her husband and arranged for them to look after you to begin with."

He laughed. "That's one person who *is* ready for you," he said. "She's expecting you!"