10. Jez wins through

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

In the valley there was an uneasy calm, much as there often is before a storm. Jez was standing in the garden, his mind made up. He listened to the sounds of the night.

"I can hear them coming, Dad," he said. "I think I can see the light of their torches." His Dad said nothing, but Jez could feel his support.

"I realise now," Jez went on. "This isn't failure. It's just the next battle. These people who're coming to get me, they can't see, unless I show them, that there just is no force greater than your love."

"Yes," said his Dad, "that's what they need to see."

"And the only way to show them," said Jez, "is to suffer all this evil, and come out the other side. Then they'll *have* to see where the power really lies."

"That's the programme," said his Dad.

Jez turned to his sleepy, worried friends. "Come on," he said, "let's be going. Here comes the crunch."

The courtroom filled with frustrated anger. Fists were clenched and eyes glared. Jez longed for them to see clearly what they all stared at, but their eyes took nothing in, they only gave out hatred. He turned inwardly to his Dad.

"Words don't do any good any more," he said.

"No one's listening to anything they don't want to hear," said his Dad. "This 'trial' has no justice."

"I suppose it can't have any justice," said Jez, "if their minds are all made up before they begin."

"Exactly!" said his Dad. "They're all in the power of darkness."

"I can see what these people are searching for," said Jez, "and yet they're so blind to the way, so deaf to the truth."

"On with the programme then," said his Dad. "Only going through all this will show them who you really are."

"Yes," said Jez, "and when I come out the other side, and I'm back with you – *then* they'll be able to see where I alone can lead them."

The military Governor looked confused. He was not accustomed to silence from prisoners on trial. Jez met his frown in the hope of helping him stand firm, but the man turned away. Expediency had beckoned.

Jez spoke silently to his Dad. “I thought he might hold,” he said. “These people have come about as close to true justice as any race on earth.”

“Yes,” said his Dad, “they’re a bit short on mercy, but they understand justice well enough.”

“And yet,” said Jez, “if everyone were to be given true justice they’d all be found guilty. No one could stand – not this Governor, nor any of his people. Nor *our* people, for that matter.”

“No,” said his Dad, “they’re all guilty. Justice demands punishment.”

“It only goes to show how glorious your programme is,” said Jez. “How perfect the blend.”

“You mean the blend of justice and mercy together?” said his Dad.

“Yes,” said Jez. “I can take the punishment for them, and you can show them mercy… and they only have to see it and believe.”

The crowds watched as Jez was led, dragged and kicked past them towards the hill. They were menacing, scornful, self-righteous and angry. Some laughed, others sneered, but mostly they shouted. Jez forced his mind clear from the pain in his body.

"Dad," he said, "they cheered a few days ago, and now listen to them."

"They feel you've let them down," said his Dad. "They thought you were going to set them free."

"Yes, but free from what?" said Jez.

"Free from a foreign power is what they meant," said his Dad.

"Oh Dad, it's far deeper freedom than *that* they need," said Jez. "They need freedom from slavery to their own fickle passions. Freedom from the dark power of evil that blinds their senses. Freedom from all that keeps them from coming close to you, and becoming what you always intended."

"That's the programme," said his Dad. "That's the freedom you're going to win for them all by going through this hell."

Darkness was having its day. Events were executing smoothly. The guards played dice. Flies rejoiced in the sweat and blood. Shame and disgrace were added to agony as Jez was held up to public ridicule.

"Dad," said Jez, "forgive them for this. They don't know what they're doing."

His Dad was there, on the other end of the prayer line.

"Dad," said Jez, "I do so want to gather them all in, but my hands are tied."

As his blood ebbed, he could feel the support of his Dad. But then…

"Dad! Dad! Why have you hung up on me?"

Then he remembered… He alone had to bear the blame for all the wrong of the world. He had to show that not even that weight could drag him down. That was the programme.

Darkness hung in the sky as he waited, strengthened by his absolute faith in his Dad's plan. Suddenly the whole earth heaved a sigh of relief. The barrier between God and man was ripped apart. Victory!

"I've done it!" cried Jez, and then, "Dad, into your hands I commit my spirit."

And there was peace.

Roy Lorrain-Smith