

Letter 099
Amsterdam, 31 May 1877

Dear Theo,

It is already late and everyone is asleep, but I feel that I must write you once more.

You tell me in your last letter that you dream of going to another city, if you get the chance, and you mention London or Paris. That isn't bad, I think, old son; I love those towns with all my heart, I know that I like certain aspects and that I detest others, or better, that I do not like certain things about the hawthorn hedges, green grass and the little grey churches. No, it is not a bad idea.

Remember only that we both have to reach the cape of thirty to keep us from sin. Since the life that is given us, we have had to fight the good fight and to become men; but, we are not them anymore, neither one nor the other. My conscience tells me that there is a lot more to do to become perfect, we are far from the worth of others, but we have the ability to strive. You know I have the ambition. If I one day have the joy to become a pastor and to acquit my task like our father, I will thank God.

I have strong hopes of success: once somebody who was more advanced in life than I and who was no stranger to Jerusalem – meaning he had sought after it and found it – said to me, “I believe you are a Christian.” It did me so much good to hear this! Whatever you wish for yourself, too, hold firm to the thought of Christ and treasure His word – just as you do. It is good to believe that there is a God who knows what we want better than we do ourselves, and Who helps us whenever we are in need of it. And it is also good to believe that now, just as in olden days, an angel is not far from those who are sad – strengthened unto God – not only to those who are nearly angels themselves, but particularly to those who want the help of a higher power to be preserved from the evil, from the badness which we know is in the world and not far away from us – not far from those who are broken-hearted and dejected in spirit. I have often read the story of Elijah with care; so often has it fortified me even to this day:

And when he saw that, he arose, and went for his life, and came to Beer-sheba, which belongeth to Judah, and left his servant there. But he himself went a day's journey into the wilderness, and came and sat down under a juniper tree: and he requested for himself that he might die; and said, It is enough: now, O Lord, take away my life; for I am not better than my fathers. And as he lay and slept under a juniper tree, behold, then an angel touched him, and said unto him, Arise and eat. And he looked, and, behold, there was a cake baken on the coals, and a cruse of water at his head. And he did eat and drink, and laid him down again.

And the angel of the Lord came again a second time, and touched him, and said, Arise and eat; because the journey is too great for thee. And he arose, and did eat and drink, and went in the strength of that meat forty days and forty nights unto Horeb the mount of God.

And he came thither unto a cave, and lodged there; and, behold, the word of the Lord came to him, ... What doest thou here, Elijah? And he said, I have been very jealous for the Lord God of hosts: for the children of Israel have forsaken thy covenant, thrown down thine altars, and slain thy prophets with the sword; and I, even I only, am left; and they seek my life, to take it away. And he said, Go forth, and stand upon the mount before the Lord. And, behold, the Lord passed by, and a great and strong wind rent the mountains, and brake in pieces the rocks before the Lord; but the Lord was not in the wind: and after the wind an earthquake; but the Lord was not in the earthquake: and after the earthquake a fire; but the Lord was not in the fire: and after the fire a small still voice. And it was so, when Elijah heard it, that he wrapped his face in his mantle, and went out, and stood in the entering in of the cave. And, behold, there came a voice unto him, and said, What doest thou here, Elijah? And he said, I have been very jealous for the Lord God of hosts! ... And the Lord said unto him, Go, return on thy way ...

And this story is not the only one; we read of the angel who, in Gethsemane, gave strength unto Him Whose soul was sorrowful even unto death; of the angel who awakened Peter from his sleep in prison; of the angel who appeared to Paul in the night, and said, “Fear not.” And we, even if we should not see an angel, even though we are not like men of old, should we not know that there is strength from above? This afternoon there was a gale blowing here, and it rained, and I walked to the sea along the Jewish cemetery, and a few days ago I also took a walk to the spot of the Buitenkant near the East Railway where they are working on that sand embankment, etc. How beautiful and inspiring is that story of Jesus walking on the sea, Matthew 14 : 22 – 33.

And straightway Jesus constrained his disciples to get into a ship, and to go before him unto the other side, while he sent multitudes away. And when he had sent the multitudes away, he went up into a mountain

apart to pray: and when the evening was come, he was there alone. But the ship was now in the midst of the sea, tossed with waves: for the wind was contrary. And in the fourth watch of the night Jesus went unto them, walking on the sea. And when the disciples saw him walking on the sea, they were troubled, saying, It is a spirit; and they cried out for fear. But straightway Jesus spake unto them, saying, Be of good cheer; it is I; be not afraid. And Peter answered him and said, Lord, if it be thou, bid me come unto thee on the water. And he said, Come. And when Peter was come down out of the ship, he walked on the water, to go to Jesus. But when he saw the wind boisterous, he was afraid; and beginning to sink, he cried, saying, Lord, save me. And immediately Jesus stretched forth his hand, and caught him, and said unto him, O thou little of faith, wherefore didst thou doubt? And when they were come into the ship, the wind ceased.

Believe in God; through faith we may become “sorrowful yet always rejoicing” and ever green, and we need not complain when our youth flies with the maturing of our strength.
Herewith something else by Esquiros. Be as happy as possible, write soon again; compliments to the Roos family and other acquaintances you may meet, a handshake from
Your loving brother, Vincent