

***Anyone [who] is a hearer of the word and not a doer . . . is like a man who looks at his own face in a mirror. He sees himself, then goes off and promptly forgets what he looked like.***

The Letter of James 1:23-24

A notable philosopher of the twentieth century – possibly the most notable – suggests that we are “enticed” along our way through life. Indeed “captivated” wouldn’t be too strong a word. And that’s certainly the impression we get when we read Scripture. In the very beginning of the *Book of Genesis* we hear of God urging Abraham to *go forth from your land, your relatives, and from your father’s house to a land I will show you . . .*

Later on we find Moses, an outlaw from Egypt, tending his flock in a wilderness, startled by a bush ablaze out of which a voice calls: *I am sending you to Pharaoh to bring my people . . . out of Egypt.* And Moses asks the voice’s name and the voice answers: *I am who I am*, which leaves Moses still bewildered. Then there is that other moment in *Exodus* where Moses asks to see the Lord’s glory and the Lord acquiesces but rules that *you may see my back; but my face may not be seen.*

Then there was the boy Samuel – asleep in the Temple at Shiloh – who was awakened by someone calling: *Samuel, Samuel.* The boy ran to the priest Eli, assuming he had called him. But he hadn’t and so Samuel went back to bed, only to be called twice more – and be told by the Lord: *I am about to do something in Israel that will make the ears of everyone who hears it ring.* And then there was the prophet Elijah, fleeing for his life to Mount Horeb and hiding in a cave, when a voice called him to stand outside while the Lord passed by. And there came a violent wind and earthquake and fire but the Lord was not in these but in the silence that followed, which whispered: *Why are you here, Elijah?* (A good question that might be addressed to each of us as well.)

Then in the New Testament at the start of John’s Gospel we find the disciples, upon meeting Jesus for the first time, begin to follow him. He asks them what they are looking for. They answer: *Rabbi, where are you staying?* And Jesus says, *Come and see.* (Possibly with a sly smile on his face?) And then there is that episode in the Gospels where Jesus tells a rich young man to give up whatever he clings to and *Come follow me* – or words to that effect.

It’s like God in Scripture is both seen as always behind us – as originator of our world and yet always ahead us – receding - remaining beyond our reach yet somehow always close enough to ignite some tumbleweed or touch our faces like a gentle breeze – so near and yet in some way always inspiring us to face tomorrow as a day of revelation – as when a sunrise might stir us to the core of our being or a phone call may completely turn our life around.

Or it may be that - as the Jesuit poet Gerard Manley Hopkins says of Christ - this very Source of our universe may simply play this game of hide and seek with us *in ten thousand places, Lovely in limbs, and lovely in eyes . . . through the features of men’s faces* – even the face you see in your mirror.

**Geoff Wood**