

Dear Theo,

The time approaches when you will go on your business trip for Messrs. Goupil and Co., and I am already savouring the prospect of seeing you again. I want to ask you one thing: could not you arrange it so that we could be quietly and calmly together for at least one whole day?

This week Mendes is out of town, spending a few days with the Rev. Schröder at Zwolle, a former pupil of his. So having some leisure I could carry out an old plan to go and see the etchings by Rembrandt in the Trippenhuis, I went there this morning and I am glad I did so. While there, I thought, could not Theo and I see them together some day? Think it over, whether you could spare a day or two for such things. How would a man like Father, who so often goes long distances even in the night with a lantern, to visit a sick or dying man, to speak with him about One whose word is light even in the night of suffering and agony, how would he feel about the etchings of Rembrandt, for instance "The Flight to Egypt in the Night" or the "Burial of Jesus"? The collection in the Trippenhuis is splendid, I saw many I had never seen before, they also told me there about drawings by Rembrandt at the Fodor Museum. If you think it possible, speak about it with Mr. Tersteeg and drop me a line when you are coming, then I can finish my work and shall be free and quite at your disposal when you come.

I never see things of that kind, etchings or paintings too, but I think of you and all at home.

But I am up to my ears in my work, for it is becoming clear to me what I really must know, what they know and what inspires those whom I should like to follow. "Examine the Scriptures" is not written in vain, but that word is a good guide and I should like to become the sort of scribe, who from his treasure brings forth old and new things. I spent Monday evening with Vos and Kee; they love each other truly, and one can easily perceive that where love dwells, God commands his blessing. It is a nice home, though it is a great pity that he could not remain a preacher. When one sees them side by side in the evening, in the kindly lamplight of their little living room, quite close to the bedroom of their boy, who wakes up every now and then and asks his mother for something, it is an idyll. On the other hand, they have known days of anxiety and sleepless nights and fears and troubles, too.

Walked back over the big piles of sand near the East Railway – you know where I mean – and along the Buitenkant; the moon was shining, and everything was full of Matthijs Maris and Andersen. From there you get such a superb view of the town and the towers, and here and there lights on one side, and on the other, the Ij and Bicker's Island. And that deep silence, "e'en the withered leaf rustles not, the stars alone do speak." [Quoted in English: "When the sounds cease, God's voice is heard under the stars."]

Last Sunday I went to the Oudezijds Chapel and heard the Reverend Jeremie Meyer's sermon on Ecclesiastes 11:7-12: 7:

Truly the light is sweet, and a pleasant thing it is for the eyes to behold the sun: but if a man live many years, and rejoice in them all; yet let him remember the days of darkness; for they shall be many. All that cometh is vanity. Rejoice, O young man...and let thy heart cheer thee in the days of thy youth, and walk in the ways of thine heart, and in the sight of thine eyes: but know thou, that for all these things God will bring thee into judgement. Therefore remove sorrow from thy heart, and put away evil from thy flesh: for childhood and youth are vanity. Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth, while the evil days come not, nor the years draw nigh, when thou shalt say, I have no pleasure in them; while the sun, or the light, or the moon, or the stars, be not darkened, nor the clouds return after the rain: In the day when the keepers of the house shall tremble, and the strong men shall bow themselves, and the grinders cease because they are few, and those that look out of the windows be darkened, and the doors shall be shut in the streets, when the sound of the grinding is low, and he shall rise up at the voice of the bird, and all the daughters of musick shall be brought low; also when they shall be afraid of that which is high, and fears shall be in the way, and the almond tree shall flourish, and the grasshopper shall be a burden, and desire shall fail: because man goeth to his long home, and the mourners go about the streets: or ever the silver cord be loosed, or the golden bowl be broken, or the pitcher be broken at the fountain, or the wheel broken at the cistern. Then shall the dust return to the earth as it was: and the spirit shall return unto God who gave it.

For whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap...he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting [see Galatians 6:7-8].

In the same chapel I once heard the Reverend Mr. Laurillard in the early sermon on Jer. 8:7, "Yea, the stork in the heaven knoweth her appointed times; and the turtle and the crane and the swallow observe the time of their coming." In connection with this he told that once he saw a swarm of birds of passage when he was walking along a road where the leaves were already falling from the trees; and he said that one day every man shall be as a bird of

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passage, migrating to a warmer land. He treated this subject in the manner of Michelet or Rückert or the many painters who have painted it, among others, Protais, "Souvenirs de la patrie."

Father wrote me that you had been to Antwerp, I am longing to hear what you saw there. Long ago I too saw the old pictures in the Museum, and I think I even remember a beautiful portrait by Rembrandt; if one could remember things clearly, that would be fine, but it is like the view on a long road, in the distance things appear smaller and in a haze.

One evening there was a fire here on the river – a boat loaded with arrack, or something like it, was burning: I was with Uncle on the Wassenaar, there was, relatively speaking, no danger as they had removed the burning steamer from between the other ships and had fastened it to the moorings. When the flames rose high one saw the Buitenkant and the black row of people that stood looking there, and the little boats that were hovering around the blaze of the fire looked also black in the water in which the flames were reflected; I do not know if you remember the photographs after the works of Jazet that were in the Galerie Photographique at the time, but have been destroyed since, "Christmas Eve," "The Fire," and others, this was something like them.

Twilight is falling, "blessed twilight," Dickens called it and indeed he was right. Blessed twilight, especially when two or three are together in harmony of mind and like scribes bring forth out of their treasure things old and new. Blessed twilight, when two or three are gathered together in His name and He is in the midst of them, and blessed is the man who knows these things and follows them too.

Rembrandt knew that, for from the rich treasure of his heart he brought forth among other things that drawing in sepia, charcoal, ink, etc. which is at the British Museum, representing the house in Bethany. In that room twilight has fallen, the figure of our Lord, noble and impressive, stands out serious and dark against the window through which the evening twilight is shedding itself. At the feet of Jesus sits Mary who has chosen that good part which shall not be taken away from her, and Martha is in the room busy with something or other, if I remember well she stirs the fire or something like it. That drawing I hope never to forget nor what it seems to tell me: "I am the light of the world, he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life."

Like the figure of John Halifax, who said that he was a Christian, his figure outlined against a white-curtained window in a room at Rose Cottage, I think, on an evening like so many that are described with so much feeling in the book...the light of the Gospel preached unto the poor in the Kingdom of my Father shining like a candle on a candlestick, upon all that are in the house [see Matt. 5:15]. I am come that they may have life, and that they might have it in abundance [see John 10:10]. I am the Resurrection, and the life, and he that believeth in me shall never die. Whomsoever loveth me my Father shall honour him, and we will come and make our abode with him [John 14:23]; we shall come unto him and have Supper with him.

Such things twilight tells to those who have ears to hear and a heart to understand and to believe in God – blessed twilight! And in that picture by Ruyperez, the "Imitation of Jesus Christ", it is also twilight, and also in another etching by Rembrandt: "David in Prayer to God."

But it is not always blessed twilight, as you can see from my handwriting, I am sitting upstairs by the lamp, for there are visitors downstairs and I cannot sit there with my books. Uncle Jan sends you his compliments.

Last week Hendrik and Marie were here for a day; they have gone now. Monday a telegram arrived, saying that the Madura had arrived in Southampton. The day they left, Uncle took a train to Nieuwendiep at six o'clock in the morning to see them off, together with Mr. Vos, who had come here from Utrecht the night before.

Oh, boy, how glorious it must be to have a life behind one like Pa's; may God grant us to be, and to become increasingly, sons after the spirit and his heart. He can raise man above his nature, His strength may be fulfilled in our weakness [see 11 Cor.12:7 and 9].

Have a good time, write soon and come soon, for it is well to see each other again and to talk things over, perhaps this summer we can go and see the exhibition that will be opened a few days from now. Compliments to the Roosees, à Dieu, a handshake from

Your loving brother, Vincent