

Story: The River Who Wanted to Be a Mountain

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Exodus 24:12-18

Matthew 17:1-9

The river was a pretty good river. It had some charming waterfalls and some broad pools. It had earth banks solid rock banks and stony banks and down near where it entered the ocean, it had sandy banks. It made chuckling sounds over small rocks, roaring sounds as it fell, and seemed to create its own silence in its wide, slow sections. Anyone would say it was a pretty good river. – anyone, perhaps, except the river itself. You see, the river wanted to be a mountain.

It looked up to the mountain and envied its craggy sides and its lofty peak. It envied the clouds that wreathed its summit sometimes and the snowy crown they left behind. It envied the sheer mass of the mountain, so great that it pressed down the sea floor from which it had grown. It envied its grandeur. It envied its majesty.

The river wanted to be a mountain.

“Oh, I wish I could be a mountain,” it said in the musical rippling of the water over stones.

To the river’s surprise, the mountain heard, and to the river’s greater surprise, the mountain replied. “Why do you want to be a mountain?” it hummed with its deep, rumbling voice.

“I’d like to be as tall as you,” said the river. “I’d like to touch the sky. I’d like to see all the earth around me. I’d like people to look up to me with awe.”

“You’re nearly as tall as me,” pointed out the mountain. “Water that falls on my peak comes down to you – you and other rivers on my sides. Water you carry to the sea rises up to touch the sky. Between the oceans and the clouds, your waters cover all the earth. And you know that people look at your falls and pools with joy.”

“Yes, but I’ve heard stories,” said the river, “about times when God had special things to say, and those things were said up on the mountains. God spoke to Moses on a mountain, and Jesus taught on a mountain.”

“That’s true,” said the mountain. “I’ve heard those stories, too. And I’ve heard another story. Did you forget that one?”

“Which one?” asked the river.

“I’ve heard that before Jesus taught on a mountain, he was baptized. In a river.”

The river was silent, because that was a familiar story, too, and in its envy, it had forgotten it.

“I guess it’s not so bad to be a river,” said the river.

“I’m glad to hear it,” said the mountain. “Can I send the water that falls on me your way?”

“You can,” said the river. “And I’ll send it on to the ocean.”

The mountain stands, and the river runs, and both have their place in the life of the world, and in the stories of the Bible and our faith.

by Eric Anderson