

Prayer: Lord, we thank you for the gift of your Word and as we think on these things, open our hearts and our minds to hear what you want to say to us. Amen.

When we consider the burning bush experience, we can be overwhelmed by the boundless holiness of God.

Scripture tells us that Moses was told to remove his sandals for the ground that he was standing on was holy.

Removing sandals was done when in the presence of someone superior, and as an act of servanthood, so Moses' actions were done as an act of reverence.

It is hard to grasp the awesomeness of this event. Moses sees the burning bush and decides to investigate it but we are not told much about the burning bush itself.

We don't know how big it was and we don't know of the conditions of the day. We are told that it did not go out as Moses went to it, but we do not know the reason Moses went to check the burning bush out. The last thing he would be expecting would be a visit from God. It hadn't happened to him before in this manner so why should he expect it now?

Perhaps the size of the blaze made Moses wonder if it was a fire out of control. He may have thought it was a group of men gathered there to try and steal sheep. Moses was an able-bodied man, after all he killed an Egyptian guard which forced his exile from Egypt to where he was now.

If there were men there, and if they were up to no good, surely Moses would give them a run for their money. Any thieves would not get sheep without going through him first.

When he arrived at the bush no-one was there so may be at this point Moses realised that he was dealing with something bigger than just a fire. He would notice that in the time it took him to get to the fire, the bush hadn't been consumed by the fire and gone out.

He did not know what was happening other than it seemed very peculiar.

God will at times do the same thing for us. We may be looking for an answer to a problem, or we may be waiting for God to act and we don't see anything falling into place, when suddenly we will see the fire, or hear our name called and we are summoned into the presence of God for a holy encounter.

Can you imagine what went through Moses mind when he heard God's voice. He knew it was God and he was told to remove his sandals for the place he was standing was holy ground - he was in God's presence.

As we have listened to the Government briefings about Covid19 we were constantly reminded that decisions being made were guided by the science.

This story has been interpreted many ways, with some scientific theories claiming that the voice was more of a metaphor than reality, but many still believe that Moses did hear and see the Burning Bush.

When we started our service you were reminded that the place where you are just now is holy ground so are you expecting a word from God today ?

God meets people in unexpected places. We expect to experience God in a church or in our quiet times of reflection but we can equally meet him in the supermarket or in the noise of a sporting event.

Burning bushes are those circumstances or events that interrupt life and grab our attention. They are not part of our plans. They take us by surprise.

They Are God Incidents.

They stop us in our tracks and cause us to turn aside and take a second look.

Regardless of how it comes to us the burning bush experience can shatter our expectations. We all live within an horizon of expectation. It's that part of life that can be reasonably planned and counted on. It holds a future that is mostly foreseeable. We mostly know what tomorrow will bring. Our expectations will likely be met. But we don't know what lies beyond or what we will have to face. Within our horizon life is relatively stable, which means it can also be relatively unstable. There is risk and potential for instability, for something to shatter our expectations, something that we could not see coming.

Moses never thought it possible for a bush to be on fire but not be burned up. He never expected or planned on being the one to bring God's people out of Egypt. In each of our lives there are experiences that shatter our plans. They are events, conversations and words, happenings that were unplanned, unexpected, unforeseeable, and they always ask something of us, a response. They are those times that leave us weeping and asking, "Why?" They are those experiences when the excess is just too great and we have no words, only tears of joy. They are those times when we can't wait to share with someone what has happened and we say, "Not in my wildest dreams could I have imagined or guessed that this would happen to me." They are the times when we shake our head in disbelief and say, "No, that's not possible; it can't be."

When and how has any of this happened in your life? What have been the burning bush moments for you?

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The burning bush doesn't reveal God to be a Supreme Being, a Super Hero, or the Big Guy in the Sky. Instead it reveals God to be more like a call, an asking, or an insistence. In burning bush experiences God calls.... more than God does or accomplishes. He calls and the doing and accomplishing are for us.

God says to Moses (Exodus 3:1-15), "I have observed the misery of my people." "I have heard their cry." "I know their suffering, and I have come down to deliver them from the Egyptians." Now it sounds like we're getting somewhere. God is coming to rescue His people. But listen to what God then says to Moses. "So come, I will send you to Pharaoh to bring my people, the Israelites, out of the land of Egypt."

"I have come down to deliver them, so I will send you," God says to Moses.

God is going to deliver His people by sending Moses. Moses is to give existence to God's call for deliverance. Moses is to make real and enact God's desire for the people. What if that's how God is working in our lives too?

The burning bush story is one of call and response. Something is being called for in the name of God. And I can't help but believe that call and response is also the story of our lives. Something is being asked of us in the name of God.

The burning bush experience does not happen apart from, or in spite of every day life but in the midst of life itself. That's what Moses was doing when this happened. He was keeping the flock belonging to his father in law. He was doing the ordinary routine things of his life, the same things he did the day before, the week before, and the month before. Burning bushes show up as we keep our flocks of routine and every day life; marriage, parenting, work, friendships, errands, church, household tasks.

Jesus calls us to "take up our cross" and follow Him. So often it seems that we misunderstand what our cross is. Difficulties at work, illness and disease, struggles in relationships are not necessarily our "crosses" because they are common to all human beings. Your cross my cross is something God places before us to be willing to endure because we are His followers, because we are believers, because we are His disciples. Loving the unlovable; caring for the lonely and forgotten, volunteering to help those in need;

We do not become aware of the reality of God only in sunsets or on the mountain top; we encounter him daily in the everyday things in our lives.

Elizabeth Barrett Browning wrote these words; Earth's crammed with heaven and every common bush afire with God, but only he who sees takes off his shoes; The rest sit round it, and pluck berries.

We do not have to be Moses, we do not have to come across a burning bush.

Taking up our cross daily leads to transformation. We won't always be the same

person as we are today but as we are cleansed from the sin in our nature the fruits of the Spirit will come in its place. Amen