

March 23, 2025

BURNING BUSHES

What do you think of when you think about ‘the good life?’ a steady job, a comfortable home, loving family and good friends? Moses had it all once he settled down in Midian.

The years went by – Moses seemed content with small pleasures and accomplishments. He didn’t talk about his past in Egypt, his dreams, or his future. He lacked passion – any sense of adventure. He simply lived the good life.

Then comes the day – it started out like any other – Moses got up early to go off to work. He gathered his father-in-law’s sheep and went off to the countryside. Hours pass while the sheep graze – the landscape is quiet, tranquil. Moses suddenly looked up and off in the distance he saw a burning bush! He watched the flame realizing the leaves and branches weren’t being burnt. They weren’t blackened by the fire.

This was weird friends – how does something burn but not be consumed? Moses decided to investigate – as he got closer to the flames a voice filled the air “Moses! Moses!” The sound filled all the open, empty landscape – he heard his own response – his small and weak voice responding – ‘yes, I’m here.’ The voice speaks again – ‘Moses, you’re on holy ground. Remove your sandals.’ Moses follows the direction then drops to his knees in the dusty soil.

Next the voice identifies itself – “I am your ancestors’ God, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob.” At this, Moses

falls flat on the ground with his face buried in the dirt. He doesn't dare look.

Childhood memories return to him, stories he heard of how this God intruded into his ancestor's lives. He knows of this God from old stories – but he'd never encountered God before this – not in dreams, no visions, and especially not in broad daylight while he was tending the sheep! Moses' heart was racing and thumping – what is he to do now?

Full of emotion, the voice goes on – “I have seen the misery of my people! I have come to rescue them from Pharaoh! I will bring them into a broad, fertile land where milk and honey flow. You Moses, will lead my people out of Egypt!”

Moses is reminded of more memories – how he had been raised on the palace grounds as a family member. One day he left the safety of the grounds curious to learn about the world outside the palace. He encountered a world of oppression – he saw his own people, Israelites, his flesh and blood – how they were treated – beaten every day and died long before their time. Moses was filled with rage – he assaulted an Egyptian overseer who he found beating an Israelite – Moses buried the overseer in the sand. But word of what he had done spread quickly – betrayed by the Israelite he had rescued – so Moses fled to Midian.

There, Moses married again and began a family. He was busy with home and his family – he was contented. He forgot about the Israelites he'd left behind in Egypt. He no longer thought or felt as they did.

And now, out of nowhere, the God of his ancestors tells him to leave his comfortable home and return to Egypt and bring his people out of bondage. The God of his ancestors tells Moses to be a hero.

Moses makes excuse after excuse – he doesn't get this call. But nothing can silence that voice, that call from the burning bush. God promises God will not desert Moses and that someday the free Israelites will worship on this very spot. God even reveals to Moses God's awesome, earth-shattering Name - God's Name as the Lord of every age, past and future and as the God who meets us now.

Our reading today ends here – but it's not the end of the story of Moses, nor the end of your story or mind.

Moses accepts God's call – he will no longer be centered on his own ego, his own satisfaction – rather he will focus on God's instructions. His life will no longer be safe or secure. Moses will give himself to a life of faith and in doing so receive a great reward.

Through the time ahead, Moses bears the people's grumbling, their addiction to slavery, their readiness to flee from freedom. Can you imagine the stress he was under – yet he became a person able to act for others. Many days he felt dry and brittle, wondering what the forces of the Divine mystery were about – he was blown around like our fall leaves here in New Hampshire – but in the end, he will be remembered as God's own friend and confident.

But – isn't there always a but? - bushes didn't just blaze for Moses -

They blaze for us – when a bush blazes, we must respond, we must turn from our pre-occupations and discover what awaits us.

Perhaps it is a terrible burden that leads us to investigate the blazing

bush in hope of a better life. Maybe it is a sense of wonder that leads us there –

In any case, we must draw near if we are to hear a voice call from the bush to us and set us on a new path.

So, I ask, what are the blazing bushes in your life? A bush may blaze when something – a person, place or situation – insistently calls to us. A burning bush blazes when in our living we are faced with pain, challenges, must have patience – and be able to laugh and grief all together hearing Heaven's Voice. A bush blazes when we are asked to put aside a mask we've been wearing and learn to live from a center deep within us. A bush blazes when we take action for others. Bushes blaze every single day in each of our lives. Let's dare to listen to them. Amen.