

First Sunday in Advent
November 28, 2021
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INI - SDG

Through Jesus We are Not Consumed

Exodus 3:1-5 Now Moses was tending the flock of Jethro his father-in-law, the priest of Midian. And he led the flock to the back of the desert, and came to Horeb, the mountain of God. ² And the Angel of the LORD appeared to him in a flame of fire from the midst of a bush. So he looked, and behold, the bush was burning with fire, but the bush *was* not consumed. ³ Then Moses said, "I will now turn aside and see this great sight, why the bush does not burn." ⁴ So when the LORD saw that he turned aside to look, God called to him from the midst of the bush and said, "Moses, Moses!" And he said, "Here I am." ⁵ Then He said, "Do not draw near this place. Take your sandals off your feet, for the place where you stand *is* holy ground."

When we are hiking my wife likes to stop and look at every bird she can find. There are people who like to stop and read all those historic signs by the road. I know a guy whose goal was to visit every Red Lobster in America. We all have different reasons for stopping. We have different sights we like to see.

Moses stops in his journey to take a look at something really wonderous. A bush that was on fire but that did not burn. But he finds something even more incredible. He finds a picture of the coming Christ. He finds a picture of the incarnation, when God became Man in the person of Jesus and lived among us.

Luke 2 reminds us that there were shepherds out in the field the night Jesus was born and an angel of the Lord appeared to them. Here also we have a shepherd out in the field and the Angel of the Lord appeared to him.

In Exodus chapter 3 God comes down from heaven to speak to a man. John chapter 1 reminds us "the word became flesh and dwelt among us." In the person of Jesus God came down to speak to men.

There are a lot of similarities in this account that foreshadow the coming of Christ. But the most important image here is this burning bush, which foreshadows the Christ who was to come.

These are two things that can't exist together. A bush, and a fire, it doesn't work. My in-laws have a fireplace where flames are constantly burning logs that are never burnt up, but we all know those are fake logs. This is a real bush it ought to burn but it doesn't.

This bush is a picture of Christ. In the person of Jesus there are two natures which should not exist together. We just confessed in our creed that Jesus is both true God and true man.

Colossians 2:9 ⁹ For in Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily;

How is this possible? How can you take all the eternity of God and stuff it into a man? How can the glory and power of God dwell in a man and not consume it utterly? It makes no sense, yet this is what we have received in the person of Jesus.

Matthew 1:23 ²³ "Behold, the virgin shall be with child, and bear a Son, and they shall call His name Immanuel," which is translated, "God with us."

Moses turned aside to see a burning bush we turn aside this morning to see something greater. God become Man.

The burning bush is not only a picture of Jesus but also a reminder of our relationship with God. The bush is on fire but is not consumed. God is a consuming fire yet we are not consumed.

We are like a dry bush before the fire of God's holiness. What choice does a bush have other than to be consumed by the fire.

Hebrews 12:29 ²⁹ For our God *is* a consuming fire.

Deuteronomy 4:24 ²⁴ "For the LORD your God *is* a consuming fire, a jealous God.

The word jealous there refers to God's attitude towards sin. A forest fire burns everything which is burnable in its path. Nothing remains untouched except that which cannot be burned. Just as a fire is jealous consuming everything which is flammable, so God is jealous consuming everything which is sinful.

Nahum 1:6 ⁶ Who can stand before His indignation? And who can endure the fierceness of His anger? His fury is poured out like fire,

The bush is on fire, but it is not consumed. The Lord is a consuming fire, yet we are not consumed. Jesus reminds us in John 3:17

John 3:17 ¹⁷ "For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved.

In our gospel reading Jesus did not consume the city of Jerusalem but rode meekly lowly, riding to die, so that Jerusalem would not be consumed by the fire of God, so that we will not be consumed by the fire of God.

Moses saw a bush that was not consumed by the fire, but we see a greater sight. We ourselves are not consumed by the fire of God's holiness

Moses must remove his sandals.

Moses' sandals would have been caked with mud and sheep dung. The sandals were the dirtiest part of all the Moses wore. They must be removed in the presence of God as a symbol of the truth that the filth of our sin needs to be removed before we come into God's presence.

Jesus told Peter: **John 13:8** "If I do not wash you, you have no part with Me."

this reminds us of the need to strip away sin before approaching God,

In India they have this same custom. I had to remove my shoes whenever I was in a church. We have different customs to remind us that we are in the presence of God, the black robe, the altar, silence before the service. All these things serve a purpose if they remind us of the truth that sin must be stripped away before God. If they become customs that we do simply because that is the way we do them than they no longer have any purpose.

Moses had to remove his sandals, but Christ yet again at Christmas the opposite was true, it was Christ who stripped away, or at least set aside not only his sandals but all the glory and power of God and became man

When the shepherds come to see Jesus they are not commanded to remove their sandals. It is instead God who has removed his sandals and not just his sandals but all the glory and power of being God. Jesus "strips" himself of his divine power and glory.

He did not give it up. He was still God. Yet he chose not to make full use of that glory and power. Philippians 2:7 says that he "**took the form of a servant.**" He appeared as a man without the power and authority of God. He covers the glory of God in the rags of humanity. We saw this also in our gospel reading. Jesus was riding into Jerusalem without the appearance or the power and authority that was his.

Moses had to take off his sandals to enter the presence of God but Jesus "removed" his glory and power, that is to say it was for a time hidden, so that he could come among us and even die for us.

Moses has to take off his sandals because it is holy ground. Why is it holy ground? Because God is present there. It is not the ground that is special but only that God choose to be present there. The ground was sanctified by God's presence

Jesus chose to become a man, so that we are sanctified because He chose to live among us. His presence makes us holy. Not because there is anything special in us, but because He chose to sanctify us by His presence.

Titus 2:14 who gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from every lawless deed and purify for Himself *His* own special people, zealous for good works.

So then we are holy ground, if He continues to dwell among us.

Exo 19:5 `Now therefore, if you will indeed obey My voice and keep My covenant, then you shall be a special treasure to Me above all people; for all the earth is Mine.

John 8:31 "If you abide in My word, you are My disciples indeed.

This is a wonderous and amazing thing. A thing well worth turning aside to see. A bush that is on fire but not consumed. A person who is fully God and fully Man. A God who is a burning fire yet a people who are not consumed. A people made Holy because he chose to dwell among us. Moses stopped for a burning bush, we have a sight more amazing, Immanuel, Jesus, God with US. **Amen**