

Far back in the stream of history, a man who had renounced a kingdom to identify himself with his own people was herding his flocks in the foothills of the Mountain of God.

With swift, bold strokes let us sketch the background of his life for our meditation. He was born under the cruel threat of death imposed by the "Pharaoh who knew not Joseph" upon Joseph's enslaved kinsmen. Because God has purpose for life, he caused this little one to be preserved, by leading others to introduce him into the very household of mighty Pharaoh himself. He was reared in the favored position as an heir to the throne. He was educated in all of the learning of the Egyptians. He became one of the leading commanders of Pharaoh's army, and led Pharaoh's troops in battle.

In time, he became conscious that he was of the blood of God's people -- the children of Abraham. He saw their burdens, and walked in their midst and came to know their problem. The time came when he had to make a decision -- the throne and all of the favor of man upon one side' -- loyalty to his own people and to his heritage as one of God's chosen on the other. A decision, which is prophetic of that, his Master had to make many years later as he wandered in the wilderness and was tempted by the evil one. He made the decision: for his own people and to fulfill the purpose of God. He killed an Egyptian in defense of one of his own and then fled into what he had been reared to think of as a wilderness -- the southern part of the Sinaitic peninsula.

Here he found a man of God, Jethro a priest of Median. He became his son-in-law and a member of Jethro's family. On this occasion he Jethro as he was head of the flock's of his family, called those of the clan, up into the green foothills of that mountain whose top was often shrouded in clouds emitting thunder and therefore known as the Mountain of the Voice of God.

You do not need for me to name this man's name -- every one of you know Moses-' history too well not to have known from the beginning of whom I was speaking. Moses, the exile of Egypt, the savior of his people, known by the world as the "lawgiver."

On this occasion as he walked among the green clad foothills he saw a bush aflame, but it was not consumed. He turned aside to note this wonderful sight. We read of it from sacred scripture in these words:

Let us underline certain thoughts here. It was when Moses turned aside from his daily tasks and gave God attention that God became real to him, and he heard God's voice--.

God becomes real to us when we give Him attention. Jesus demonstrated this to us because The Father was always so real to him, because he gave God his constant attention.

We see that Moses saw God in the unexplainable. As Ella Wheeler Wilcox put it:

"Every common bush is aflame with God,
But only he who sees takes off his shoes."

Many bushes about us are aflame, and we do not see in them the beauty of God, for we want some explanation, which we may equate to one of our own limited experiences. By the same token we will not hear the voice of God from in the midst of the burning bush until we are willing to see in the beautiful, the good, the lovely, the truthful and the merciful the symbol of the very presence of God as Moses saw Him symbolized in the burning bush.

To illustrate this we could draw many parallels and examples. The best one we find in the lives of the disciples themselves. They were near the most illuminating flame God ever gave to man -- the perfect light -- yet they knew it not because they' were so busy making their own plans. They wanted to sit at his right hand in his: kingdom. They did not want to even think about a crucified Lord. They planned and schemed to make him king, not realizing he was king from the beginning into eternity. It was only when they saw the miracle of death overcome by the miracle of life that they stopped and gave God attention. We do

the same things. We make our plans. We seek position in his kingdom. We dislike the idea of sacrifice. We want to defend the "truth" of what we believe. We must see the bush aflame with God and draw aside and give God attention and let Him speak to us and we must answer him if we would really be of service to Him.

We note in our scripture that when Moses saw the bush aflame, and drew aside from his daily chores and gave God attention, then God spoke to him, and he answered. God said, "Where art thou?" and Moses said, "Here I am." Now, we know that God knew where Moses was. He did not need to ask, but Moses needed to volunteer- to surrender himself into the will of God that God might reveal himself and his will for Moses.

When Moses answered: "Here am I," God said: "draw not nigh hither; put off thy shoes from off thy feet, for the place whereon thou standest is holy ground."

Ever afterward, as you will read in partly in the Bible and partly in Jewish history, taking off one's shoes was a pledge of fidelity and truth, as these people remembered this great event in the life of their leader when he took off his shoes to commit himself unto the will of God.

God told Moses what he wanted him to do, and as we know, Moses tried to "beg off," to say he wasn't capable of doing what God wanted done, but in the end his commitment remained ~ the purpose of his life- as he served God by saving others.

Now, I say, that if we give God attention He becomes very real to us, and that when we hear His call if we answer to volunteer to his purpose we become instruments of His purpose, and when we give him our attention and ourselves, that place is indeed holy ground.

A friend of mine who holds a very high place among his fellows recently commented upon the fact that courthouses do not have prayer rooms. Another friend of mine who with his associates recently completed one of the tallest buildings in Dallas installed on the topmost floor of that building a chapel and prayer room so that those who work in the building or who visit there can go apart and give God attention.

I think these ideas are fine and exemplify the best thinking in our today's world. But I know from using courthouses many years of my life, and from sitting upon the bench in them, that you do not have to have a prayer room. That you can mentally go apart and pray and give God your attention and listen and hear His voice. I know that in other areas of life it is not always possible for us to have the physical surroundings the most conducive to prayer and meditation, but that for a few moments you can close the world from your mind and see the wonderful sight of the burning bush that is not consumed, and to know that the place whereon thy standest is holy ground.

In this day of rapid change, of world wide communication, and of world wide movement the command to love thy neighbor as thyself is the key to our only salvation from destruction by forces we ourselves have unleashed. Tremendous innovations and inventions are accepted as almost daily occurrences. We watch the Chancellor of the Federal Republic of Germany review-a parade on Congress Avenue in Austin and less than one-half day later he is in his own capital city of Bohn. Khrushchev kisses Gagarin on the cheek and we see it by means of television within a matter of minutes. It is obvious that our neighbor is no longer just the man across the street, but the man on the next continent. That whether we wish to be or not, we must be concerned with the welfare of our brethren in Africa, Asia and down under.

There is a force of great power, evil in its nature, but evangelistic in its zeal, governing millions of people and millions of square miles of area in the world today. We call it communism in our age. It has been known by many names in history, since that day in the long ago that an arrogant Pharaoh commanded that all boy babies born to the Hebrews be destroyed. Many people have devised many ways to defeat it. Some say capitalism is the way. Others think in

terms of free enterprise. Others say a zeal to destroy it is needed, and we see abroad in the world today an organization which has attracted some very fine people, that is bottomed principally upon the idea of hate. It is easier than People are attracted to this way because it is easier than the only effective way, which is so hard. You must love your neighbor as yourself. No man has ever done this that did not first give God his full attention, and when God calls, answers "Here am I - use me, mold me, make me according Thy Will, let me lose myself in Thee, that it shall not be me but Thee who lives in me." This was the way Christ showed us to do. He who gave God attention always, and was always standing upon holy ground.

Our society is beset by many problems. There is restlessness, fears and doubt, uncertainty as to what is right and what is wrong. While perhaps this may not be, in some ways anything that has not always been true, they are communicated so quickly and upon such a far flung front that it multiplies their effect many times. We need to turn aside a moment and see the burning bushes about us that are not consumed. This one, for instance, group of men who act in the name of their common faith in God, transporting little unknown child from Chili to New York, security of the great surgeons of this age to perform delicate heart surgery, and when she is well return her to the bosom

'I of her home, all without thought of reimbursement or hope of reward other than feeling that because we have one Father we must be brethren. Or, perhaps this one, that during this time terrible evil power that is abroad in the world, slayed by the thousands of youthful students in Hungary, one man trained in medication borrowing a little medicibe, some medical and surgical I instruments and going almost alone into the jungle lands of Viet Nam to save the lives of a people of another race of whom he had hardly heard until a year or so before. Or, again, this one, that at the beautiful hospital sometimes known as 'Little!' Warm Springs, at Gonzales Warm Springs Rehabilitation center, within a few miles of where evil and hatred reigned a century and a quarter ago when Santa Anna caused the men of Fannin's command to be brutally slgughtered near Goliad4 ~ and I were by there the~c , and the wonderful doctors and nurses had taken a little, four year old Mexican boy who was born without feet and by their God-given skill and the love in their hearts they made him feet and I saw him walk on them. What a contrast. These are but b~ning bushes about us, that are not consumed, and mark holy ground This beautiful place where we now are might be thought of in this fashion too. That a gracious Christian lady, who has but recently joined her Master in the realm of eternal things, was moved to give this land that we might go aside and give God attention in this place. As we do we can almost hear a voice spealng to us:

off thy shoes from off thy feet, for the place whereon thy standst is holy ground.hIf communism is overcome today it will not be by the use of power or hate, but by Christian love. Wherever we have shown our love for others there we have made firm, fast friends. We have found4courage and strength. So, instead of trying to promote hate, let's go aside and listen to the voice of God as he calls us to some service in this battle, and volunteer as did Moses, "Here am I." Then you will be standing on Holy Ground, and God has never lost a battle yet.

If we would strengthen our society today against that which troubles our youth, and rides us with doubt, and causes fear to reign all about us, lets go aside and examine the burning bushes and give God attention and let him speak to us.

If we would find solutions for the manifold problems of this day, let us pay God attention, let Him speak, and be obedient to Him. Its amazing what you can do. The Hebrews could never have defeated Pharaoh in battle, but they were saved by the grace of God. We cannot defeat evil with evil, but we can be saved by the love of God if we give him attention and let him become a real fource in our life.

Let us then take this lesson from the life of this one so beloved of God. Let us turn aside daily from our usual tasks, and watch for the beautiful and the lovely and the true about us, and attunie our ears for the voice of God, and hear Him calling: "Where art thou?" And Answer Him: "Here am I, Lord, yours to do with as Thou will." "Then off thy shoes from off thy feet for the place whereon thou standst is holy ground."