

Title: “Consuming Fire”

Text: Exodus 3:1-4 NKJV; Hebrews 12:28-29 NKJV

Proposition: The Lord craves our entire heart, soul, mind, and strength and His love inspires this

Purpose: Bring us to repentance

Event: Pinecroft Baptist Church – Senior Pastor

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1 “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.”

Exodus 3:1-4 NKJV

28 “Therefore, since we are receiving a kingdom which cannot be shaken, let us have grace, by which we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear.

29 For our God is a consuming fire.”

Hebrews 12:28-29 NKJV

“For the LORD your God is a consuming fire, a jealous God.”

Deuteronomy 4:24 (NKJV)

I. Introduction: The Nature of Fire

What can we say about fire. It is one of the most intriguing substance on the earth. It is so fascinating that some people can't seem to keep themselves from playing with it or even igniting fires as entertainment. Fire moves like seemingly nothing else, starting and stopping and dancing up in seemingly every direction. But it's the impact of fire that is one-of-a-kind.

It's so interesting to me that God describes Himself as fire. This means that when the Lord made fire and released it into the earth, He encoded it with attributes that speak to His nature, His heart, His Spirit. So, let's explore some elements of fire and its nature to reveal what God is saying to us in the Holy scriptures when He calls Himself a “consuming fire.”

- **Fire Burns:** It hurts! When fire touches you, there is an immediate reaction. It makes you move because of the pain that it inflicts. In the same way, the Lord seeks to move you into deeper and deeper relationship and intimacy with Him, by causing you to leave sin and the sin nature in exchange for the goodness of God and His eternal blessings.
- **Fire Burns The Outside And Reveals The Inside:** When fire consumes something, it's impacting what's nearest to the outside of that thing. It eats away at what covers and conceals and gets to the root and the core of what it consumes. God wants to get beyond the veil and mask that you wear. He seeks to get to the heart of the matter. Allow Him to search you and know you.
- **Fire Transforms:** Nothing is touched by fire and remains the same. Fire literally triggers chemical changes at the atomic level. Fire is changing things at the invisible level. God's fire seeks to transform you into the image of His Son Jesus. A humble servant full of undying love even for those who don't deserve it. But most importantly, He seeks to make you into a more intimately connect lover who chooses Him for who He is: I AM. When something is burned at certain levels, it is unrecognizable when compared to its former state.
- **Fire Is Intimately Close With What It Burns:** And at the point of contact when fire can appear invisible. Isn't that interesting? Fire is present but not visible to the naked eye at the closest point of combustion. The closer you allow the Lord to get and the deeper you allow Him into your heart, the more and more He will remove from your heart that doesn't belong there.
- **Fire Gives Light:** Of course, we know fire produces light. The Lord wants to be the source of your light and illuminate your path. He also wants you to become enveloped with His truth, which is light in a dark world. Additionally, the Lord seeks to reveal Himself to you, essentially illuminating Himself so you can become more and more acquainted with His heart.
- **Fire Gives Warmth:** When we are out in nature and bitter cold, it's phenomenal how much difference a fire makes. The Lord wants to be your shelter from the harmful impacts of this world. The Lords wants to be your source of comfort. He wants to be the one you turn to, run to, seek, and nestle beside in the coldest of life's winters.
- **Fire Needs Fuel:** Fires must have something to burn, or they don't exist. God needs a human being who is willing to allow Him to dwell and rule and reign. In order for the Lord to be active in the earth, He needs us to surrender to Him and allow Him to take residence in us, our entire being. He needs you. He yearns for you. His revelation in the earth depends on you allowing Him to take over.

- **Fire Produces Smoke And Aroma:** Fires can produce some of the most noxious and most indelible odors, depending on what's burning. An expensive candle can fill an entire room and beyond with the sweetest and most pleasing smells. Smoke, of course, can create a space where it's impossible to breathe. It makes things cloudy and hard to perceive. In the same way the Lord can fill your heart with indescribable peace and joy. He can also cloud your vision when you are out of step with Him in hopes you will turn back to Him.
- **Fire Destroys & Kills:** Fires are deadly. They typically don't produce instant death. It's a slow and painful, progressive removal of life by a perpetual crawling over the body. There are levels of destruction. 1st, 2nd, and 3rd degree burns that occur prior to death. Allow the Lord to burn away the fat of your life and you will see yourself dying slowly on your own cross as you surrender your heart to the Lord. He wants to remove the wickedness and replace with reliance on His holiness! The Lord wants to kill the sensual nature that has no value and replace it with His Spirit.

All of this is occurring simultaneously. You're being changed through this painful, yet beautifully satisfying dance that provides comfort and direction and reveals the beauty of the Lord that is actually offensive and painful to your human nature. But this is necessary for you to become the masterpiece you were created to become. You were created to suffer in this world as you become acquainted with the fellowship of the sufferings of Christ.

To be like Him you must suffer as He suffered. Suffering is surrender. And surrender is suffering. You must decide to embrace the discomfort of love for God above everything else. Because without this constant tension, you are actually a friend of this fallen world. And one who loves the world does not know the Lord.

In other words, the know the Lord, you must see just how antichrist this world is and choose to hate this world so you may REALLY know Christ. Love is not what you say, it's what you do. To love Jesus, you must give over your entire life.

II. Surrendering To “I AM”

When Moses saw the burning bush, he discerned something invisible. He discerned someone invisible. He discerned Jesus. What I marvel at is how Moses wasn't afraid, but he decided to go investigate what he didn't understand. And when he heard the Lord's voice, he wasn't afraid like the Israelites. He was captivated. From this point forward, we see Moses enamored with God. He felt the gentle love of Jesus. He felt His comfort and peace. And Moses literally threw away his entire former life in order to walk with the Lord who called Himself “I Am.”

Who is “I Am” to you? Is He really your “EVERYTHING?” That's what Jesus was saying. I. AM. EVERYTHING. I am everything you've ever hoped for, Moses. I'm everything you've been searching for. I am the satisfaction you have not been able to find. You won't find satisfaction anywhere else except in Jesus. You won't find freedom, or peace, or love, or joy. You won't. All of these things are spiritual. They come from a spiritual realm. They originate from “I Am.”

“He has made everything beautiful in its time. Also He has put eternity in their hearts, except that no one can find out the work that God does from beginning to end.”

Ecclesiastes 3:11 NKJV

You were created with a homing beacon inside of you. It's a search engine. And it's only desire is to find God. False gods won't do it. Food. Friends. Family. Sports. False religions. Horoscopes. All these things are counterfeits and actually have demons perverting them and manipulating them to take over the heart that has always belonged to God. That's where the term “lost” comes from. When you don't have Jesus, you're wandering like Cain. You're a vagabond. You're far from God in your heart. But your heart is still yearning to be near Him. This is the source of our dissatisfaction.

But it's not just with faith. We have these idols that we worship that we've been convinced will be more satisfying than God. This is spiritual adultery. It's actually illegal in the spirit realm. It's sin.

"But he who doubts is condemned if he eats, because he does not eat from faith; for whatever is not from faith is sin."

Romans 14:23 NKJV

Cigarettes, gambling, sexual sin, lying, cheating – they all can become idols when we fear not doing these things more than we fear God. **THE LORD IS JEALOUS.**

*"(for you shall worship no other god, for the Lord, whose name is **Jealous**, is a **jealous** God)"*

Exodus 34:14 NKJV

Fear is a sin. When we fear man's opinion more than God. When we fear telling the truth about our issues. When we are afraid to be kind to someone. When we're afraid to forgive someone because we fear not getting vengeance. We're afraid to be free because we fear that the thing we're addicted to is more satisfying than God and God will disappoint us. We're afraid to repent because we fear what people will say about us. We're afraid to say, "I was wrong" because we fear not being right in our own eyes.

Friends, we must humble ourselves. Jesus is the only way to salvation. He is the only living water. You will forever thirst, if you don't give your EVERYTHING to Jesus. Everything else is actually idolatry and adultery. It does not please God it breaks His heart. His lover is in the streets parading around proclaiming she is in love with Jesus, when it's really a show. And when you cheat on Jesus, there are consequences. The most glaring of which, is you hurt the Lord and grieve His Spirit. You've breached the contract of marriage and you're showing no remorse or motivation to change. You just keep pretending to love Him, when you're more in love with yourself.

III. You Must Repent In Order To Follow

When we talk of revival, I don't think we truly understand what that means. Revival is repentance. Period. It is mourning before the Lord over your sins as you think about His rapturous beauty. It's seeing your sin in light of His faithfulness. It's seeing His glory and realizing you don't deserve it. And when you see how beautiful His grace and mercy are, you surrender to it and vow to never leave Him. Where you're coming from doesn't have life. Where you're coming from can't satisfy and you're sorry for leaving the Lord or never even trying to walk with Him. You have to see the Lord for who He is just like Moses.

You must be willing to change. You must accept the fire that transforms as it burns. You must surrender the fire that consumes everything that you are and leaves only what looks like Jesus. It's like the thief on the cross next to Jesus. He looked like He was with Jesus, but His heart wasn't truly with the Lord until he repented.

39 "Then one of the criminals who were hanged blasphemed Him, saying, "If You are the Christ, save Yourself and us."

40 But the other, answering, rebuked him, saying, "Do you not even fear God, seeing you are under the same condemnation?"

41 And we indeed justly, for we receive the due reward of our deeds; but this Man has done nothing wrong."

42 Then he said to Jesus, "Lord, remember me when You come into Your kingdom."

43 And Jesus said to him, "Assuredly, I say to you, today you will be with Me in Paradise."

Luke 23:39-43 NKJV

Paradise is on the other side of repentance. What you're looking for that you just can't quite put a finger on is on the other side of your beautiful surrender. The life you've always doubted you can have in Christ is on the other side of your "yes," and your crying out to the Lord for forgiveness and for His heart to be knit with yours.

The only one who can repent from your sin is you. And the only way to follow Jesus is for you to repent:

17 "From that time Jesus began to preach and to say, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand."

18 And Jesus, walking by the Sea of Galilee, saw two brothers, Simon called Peter, and Andrew his brother, casting a net into the sea; for they were fishermen.

19 Then He said to them, "Follow Me, and I will make you fishers of men."

20 They immediately left their nets and followed Him."

Matthew 4:17-20 (NKJV)

The fire of God's ravishing love will kill you but preserve you. Repentance is the dying. Following is the life or righteousness. But you won't find the love of God and intimacy by remaining and adulterer. You must confess and repent and lose everything in order to gain everything that really matters.

"He who finds his life will lose it, and he who loses his life for My sake will find it."

Matthew 10:39 (NKJV)

"For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake and the gospel's will save it."

Mark 8:35 (NKJV)

"He who loves his life will lose it, and he who hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life."

John 12:25 (NKJV)

The preaching of the Kingdom of God was a message of repentance and salvation in Christ. You won't find the Kingdom if you're still operating in Satan's kingdom. Give the Lord your heart.

⁷"Hypocrites! Well did Isaiah prophesy about you, saying:

⁸These people ^[4]draw near to Me with their mouth,

And honor Me with their lips,

But their heart is far from Me.

⁹And in vain they worship Me,

Teaching as doctrines the commandments of men.' "

Matthew 15:7-9 NKJV

The offering is where we find the fire of God. In the Temple and Tabernacle is where the Lord would fall on the offering for sin. Where people would come the Lord and present themselves as sinners and provide Him with tribute and blessing and praise, this is what pleased the Lord. And the offering was presented all day and night. You please the Lord when you present yourself as a living sacrifice. You're no longer in love with this world because you've found satisfaction only lies in the "I Am."

"A fire shall always be burning on the altar; it shall never go out."
Leviticus 6:13 (NKJV)

To follow Jesus means a life of repentance:

1 "Therefore, leaving the discussion of the elementary principles of Christ, let us go on to perfection, not laying again the foundation of repentance from dead works and of faith toward God, 2 of the doctrine of baptisms, of laying on of hands, of resurrection of the dead, and of eternal judgment. 3 And this we will do if God permits. 4 For it is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted the heavenly gift, and have become partakers of the Holy Spirit, 5 and have tasted the good word of God and the powers of the age to come, 6 if they fall away, to renew them again to repentance, since they crucify again for themselves the Son of God, and put Him to an open shame."

Hebrews 6:1-6 (NKJV)

- **Do you truly appreciate the cross of Jesus? Do you acknowledge His sacrifice ?**
- **Are you in love with Him and returning the favor out of a cheerful heart?**
- **Have you given Him your whole heart ?**
- **Are you God's offering?**
- **Do you see Jesus as worthy of your whole heart ?**

IV. Conclusion: Give The Lord Your Unbelief

What are you afraid of? If it's anything besides God, it's an idol and you must find peace with God by repenting from that mindset so you can find a vivid life in Christ and His love. Remember, the burning bush was burning, but it was not eliminated. It didn't disappear. It wasn't negatively impacted at all.

The Lord simply wants to dine with you. The Hebrew word for "consume" means to "eat." He enjoys taking away your sin. He enjoys your surrender. He enjoys searching your heart and taking residence there and making you His home and dwelling place. The Lord's satisfaction comes from your repentance and seeking Him day by day.

As I prepared this sermon, I heard the Lord say, "Unbelief is a sin." Sin is simply where you've missed the Lord's heart. Your heart is far from His. There's distance between your heart posture and His heart. It's where pride resides and tells us we are self-sufficient, and we know better than God. Where you have not believed the Word of God, you need to repent. Where you've been stiff-necked, you need to turn toward Jesus. His yoke is easy. But it's still a yoke. His burden is light, but He's still a consuming fire. Where you've refused or made excuses not to pray and spend time with the Lord, love your neighbor, or read the Word of God, it's time to repent.

⁴ *"Hear, O Israel: ^[a]The Lord our God, the Lord is one!*

⁵ *You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your strength."*

Deuteronomy 6:4-5 NKJV