

***“Keep the Fire Burning” by Pastor Ed Terry***

***SERMON: delivered on 08 18 19***

*Acts 2: 1 - 12 ; Acts 2: 42 -47; 1 Peter 2: 1 – 10; Leviticus 6: 8 - 13(Sermon)*

Have you heard someone say, *“That church is really on fire”* or, maybe you have heard; *“That person is really on fire for the Lord.”*

Our scripture lesson is an encouragement for all of us to keep the fire of The Lord burning in our life and in the life of our church.

There are several questions we need to think about as we consider the fire that is spoken of in our scripture lesson from Leviticus.

First of all; what is the fire?

Secondly, whose responsibility is it to insure that this fire does not go out?

Thirdly, how can we keep the fire from going out?

And lastly, why should we keep the fire burning?

The fire spoken of in our text from Leviticus represents the presence of The Lord God Almighty.

There are a number of passages in The Bible that speak about the fire symbolizing The presence of The Lord.

When Moses was in the desert near Horeb Moses saw a bush that was on fire but the bush was not being consumed.

***“The angel of The Lord appeared to Moses in flames of fire from within a bush. Moses saw that though the bush was on fire it did not burn up,”*** (Exodus 3: 2)

Then in Exodus 13:21 – 22 we read; ***“By day the Lord went ahead of them in a pillar of cloud to guide them on their way and by night in a pillar of fire to give them light, so that they could travel by day or night. Neither the pillar of cloud by day nor the pillar of fire by night left its place in front of the people.”***

Here again we read that The fire represents the presence of The Lord God Almighty.

Just before The Lord gave Moses the Ten Commandments Exodus 19:18 tells us; ***“Mount Sinai was covered with smoke, because the Lord descended on it in fire. The smoke billowed up from it like smoke from a furnace, and the whole mountain trembled violently”.***

Exodus 24:17 says; ***To the Israelites the glory of the Lord looked like a consuming fire on top of the mountain.”***

Numbers 11:1 says; ***“Now the people complained about their hardships in the hearing of the Lord, and when he heard them his anger was aroused. Then fire from the Lord burned among them and consumed some of the outskirts of the camp.”***

And Numbers 16: 35 tells us; ***“And fire came out from the Lord and consumed the 250 men who were offering the incense.”***

John the Baptist said he baptized with water but Jesus would baptize people with the Holy Spirit and with fire. (Matthew 3:11)

And in our lesson from Acts we read on the day of Pentecost ***“suddenly a sound like the blowing of a violent wind came from heaven and filled the whole house where they were sitting. They saw what seemed to be tongues of fire that separated and came to rest on each of them. All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit enabled them*** (Acts 2:2 – 4)

The Holy Spirit came in what seemed to be tongues of fire.

Again the fire represented the presence of Almighty God.

It wasn't the burning bush that made the ground holy that Moses was standing on; it was the presence of Almighty God.

God Himself led the children of Israel through the wilderness for 40 years.

It wasn't the emotional moment of the day which created the fire the disciples saw at Pentecost; it was the presence of The Lord.

When you give your life to Jesus Christ, He places a fire within you to grow and become more and more like Him.

And if we are not careful that fire will begin to die down and the fire will become a flickering flame.

The next question we want to consider is; *whose responsibility is it to keep the fire burning in our hearts and in this church?*

Leviticus 6:12 clearly states that it was the priest's responsibility to keep the fire burning.

If we would apply this principle to the church today it would be the spiritual leader's responsibility to keep the fire of The Lord burning in the church.

So, it is the pastor's responsibility, the Elder's responsibility, and the Deacon's responsibility.

However, The Book of 1<sup>st</sup> Peter 2:9 is addressed to all Christians.

***“But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that you may declare the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His wonderful light.”***

So you see it is the responsibility of every Christian to keep the fire burning in our hearts because we are all priests of The Lord.

A visitor can quickly tell if the fire of The Lord is present in a church as soon as they walk through the front door.

Walmart knows the importance of having a Greeter at the front door.

Walmart want you to feel you are welcome and that you are important.

That is why it is critical for churches to have Greeters at the front door every Sunday.

It is my belief that being a Greeter is one of the most important jobs in the church. The questions everyone should ask are; *“Am I doing my part to make visitors feel welcome at Mt Paran?”*

And *“Am do my part I supporting and encouraging everybody in our church family?”*

You see it only takes a spark to get a fire going.

It is all our responsibility to keep the fire of The Lord burning in our hearts and in our church.

The next question is *how do we keep the fire of The Lord burning in our hearts and in our church?*

As you know the secret to building and maintaining a healthy relationship is good communication.

And communicating with The Lord in prayer is the primary way for us to build and maintain a healthy relationship with The Lord.

We keep the fire of The Lord burning brightly in our hearts through prayer.

And as you know prayer consists of listening to The Lord as well as talking to the Lord.

1<sup>st</sup> Thessalonians 5:17 says for us to pray continually.

And Ephesians 4:6 tells us to pray about everything.

We need talk with The Lord throughout our day.

*“Lord, keep me close to you and focused on your presence, your power, and your plans for me today.*

*“Lord, show me where you are working today so I can be a part of your work today.*

Talking with The Lord throughout the day is one way to keep the fire of The Lord burning in your heart.

How do you think our Lord feels when we don't spend quality time talking with Him?

Or how do you think He feels when we say a quick prayer in the morning and forget to converse with Him at any other time during the day?

A second way to keep the fire burning in our hearts is by reading and studying our Bibles each day.

Remember The Word of God will keep you from sin.

And sin will also keep you from The Word of God.

We are all busy but not having time to study our Bibles is not a time problem, it is a love problem.

A third way to keep the fire burning in our hearts is by serving The Lord.

Remember we are servant of The Lord. Jesus said; ***“It is more blessed to give than to receive.”*** (Acts 20:35) and ***“worship The Lord your God and serve Him only”*** (Luke 4:8)

The fourth way we keep the fire of The Lord burning is by telling other people the difference Jesus has made in your life.

Jesus said ***“you shall be my witnesses.”*** (Acts 1:8)

And in 2<sup>nd</sup> Corinthians 5:2 we are told that we are all ***“ambassadors for Christ”***.

Remember the old saying *“if you are not telling other people about Jesus, you need someone to tell you about Jesus.”*

We keep the fire of The Lord burning in our church going through prayer, Bible Study, preaching The Word, evangelism, ministering to our community, and missions.

Ephesians 4: 11 – 13 says; ***“So Christ himself gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the pastors and teachers, to equip his people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ.”***

These verses are clear the spiritual leaders have the responsibility for providing opportunities for the congregation to participate in all of these areas.

But it is every Christian’s responsibility to keep the fire of The Lord going by taking advantage of these opportunities.

Finally, *why do we need to keep the fire of The Lord burning?*

First and foremost God said do not let the fire go out.

When I was living at home my father said; *as long as you live in my house and put your feet under my table you have to live by my rules.*

Now, my father never put unfair expectations on me; but, as long as I was in his house I lived by his rules.

Even after I was grown I respected his authority because I loved Him and I wanted to please my father.

As long as we live in the universe Almighty God created and owns we need to live by His rules.

As long as we put our feet under the banquet table of The King of Kings and The Lord of Lords, we need to do what The Lord says.

And The King of Kings says do not let the fire go out.

Secondly we need to keep the fire of The Lord burning is because there are people all around us who are spiritually lost and they will end up in hell if they do not accept Jesus as their savior.

We live in a world darkened by sin and lost souls need to see the light of Christ.

The prophet Jeremiah said; ***“His word is in my heart like a fire.”*** (Jeremiah 20:9)

Remember The Great Commission; ***“Go and make disciples of all nations .... and teach them to obey everything I have commanded you.*** (Matthew 28: 19 & 20)

Finally we all need to keep the fire of The Lord burning to be a living example to our children and grand children.

In Deuteronomy 11:18 – 19 we read these words; ***“Fix these words of mine in your hearts and minds; tie them as symbols on your hands and bind them on your foreheads. “Teach them to your children, talking about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up.”***

And Ephesians 6:4 is a commandment; ***“Fathers do not exasperate your children; instead bring them up in the training and instruction of The Lord.”***

It is one thing to tell our children about The Lord however showing them is a more powerful way to guide them on their journey of life.

We need to keep the fire burning for those who will come behind us.

The footprints that we leave will guide our children to believe and the lives we live will inspire our children and grandchildren to obey The Lord.

It is difficult for us to keep the fire of The Lord burning all the time.

But think how hard it was for the priests to keep the fire from going out as they were walking through the desert for forty years carrying that flame.

It would have been much easier for the priest to carry a few burning coals as the Children of Israel moved from place to place rather than to carry a flaming fire.

But they did not give into that temptation because God said; ***“the fire must not go out”*** (Leviticus 6: 12)

And Jewish historians tell us that the priest kept the fire burning for well over a thousand years until the Babylonians captured Jerusalem.

God’s word to us today says; keep the fire of The Lord burning brightly in your heart and in the life of our church.

Do not let the fire go out!

What about you will you make a commitment to The Lord to keep the fire in your heart burning brightly?

Will you be faithful in praying that The Lord will keep the fire going in our church so that people in our community will be drawn to Mt Paran Presbyterian Church?

**AMEN**