



RESTORING EDEN

"There the angel of the Lord appeared to him in a flame of fire out of a bush; he looked, and the bush was blazing, yet it was not consumed." ~Exodus 3:1-2

THE BURNING BUSH

Fall is coming and some leaves are already beginning to turn a fiery red. Sumacs and Nandinas tend to be especially brilliant red in the fall. Looking at them, one cannot help but remember the story of Moses and the burning bush. And that brings up an interesting question - what kind of bush did God speak from anyway?

It turns out that the burning bush and the location of the events that surround it have been subjects of scholarly debate for many years. Exodus 3:1 says that Moses encountered the burning bush on Mount Horeb; however, Deuteronomy (33:16) refers to the bush as being on Mount Sinai. On this point the scholars find ample room for disagreement, with some believing Horeb and Sinai to be the same place with different names, while others believe they are actually different mountains. Complicating matters further is that no one can, with any certainty, know where either mountain was, or is, today as the names of landscape features in the region have changed many times over the centuries. Most scholars today consider it an irresolvable matter.



In the 4th century, Helena, the mother of Emperor Constantine I, ordered that a Chapel of the Burning Bush be built around a "burning bush" at the base of Mount Saint Catherine which was, at that time, believed to be the biblical Mount Sinai. This chapel came to be known as St. Helen's Chapel. During the 6th century, the Emperor Justinian ordered the construction of Saint Catherine's Monastery to encompass it.

Today this monastery still surrounds the burning bush and the tradition of the monastery holds that this is the same bush seen by Moses. The bush is actually a bramble of the blackberry family. Given the Latin name *Rubus sanctus*, it has been given the common name of sacred blackberry and it is very widespread

in the region. In a very unflattering turn of events, the sacred blackberry is now included as a weedy species in the Global Compendium of Weeds.



Is this type of blackberry bush, now considered a weedy species, the same kind of bush used by God to speak to Moses? It will never be known. But it would be just like our God to take an ordinary "weedy" blackberry bush, of a kind that can thrive in many places, and light it with a fire that would not consume it. God often takes people or things that are common and ordinary and uses them for extraordinary purposes. So often we look for the spectacular, thinking that that is where we will see God best. But God built the Hebrew nation with a shepherd boy, and sent the Savior of the World in the guise of a carpenter. And today He's using us, just plain ordinary people, to accomplish His work.

There is nothing too insignificant to be used by God. The scriptures tell us that God is always near. When we do not feel His presence, it may be difficult for us to believe that He is close by, perhaps even in a blackberry bush. But He is there. Remember the words of Psalm 24:1-2. *"The earth is the Lord's and all that is in it, the world, and those who live in it; for He has founded it on the seas, and established it on the rivers."*

These are powerful words for us to remember when we consider our stewardship of the earth. All that we have was made by him, and all of it belongs to Him. He is everywhere we go. We are always standing on Holy Ground. Let us treat it so.

WHAT OTHERS HAVE SAID

"This is my Father's world: He shines in all that's fair; in the rustling grass I hear Him pass, He speaks to me everywhere."

Maltbie D. Babcock
(1858-1901)