

Sermon for Sunday, June 25, 1978, by Andrew A. Jumper, D.D., Pastor
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"HOW GOD MAJORS IN THE BUSH LEAGUE"

Exodus 3:1-12

Text: "And the angel of the Lord appeared to him in a flame of fire out of the midst of a bush; and he looked, and lo, the bush was burning, yet it was not consumed." Exodus 3:2

In spite of my title, I am not going to talk about baseball as such this morning. I am not even going to mention a certain owner of a major league team who thinks most of his players are bush leaguers. I don't know how the term "bush" league got started. According to the dictionary the term simply means the minor league. I suppose some baseball players started so far down in the minor leagues that they were playing out in the bushes. Anyway, to call a baseball player a "bush leaguer" is about the most insulting thing you can say to him. It means he has no talent, no ability, and is not fit for the big time in the major leagues. As time has gone on, however, the term "bush leaguer" has taken on a more general application. To call any person a "bush leaguer" is to affirm that he is an unqualified, inept, amateur. It means he has no talent and no future.

Well, when it comes to living out the Christian life, I want to say that every person here this morning is a bush leaguer--and that includes myself! Do you think you will ever make the major leagues in the Christian life? Do you really think you will ever achieve all those characteristics and qualities so that others will look up to you as a model, as a saint of God? Well, I don't think it will happen to me either. That's why the Bible is such good news for us spiritual bush leaguers. It tells us that Jesus has hit a home run on Calvary and we are all brought home safely. The Bible tells us that Jesus is the only man to ever make the spiritual majors because he is the only man to live a perfect life, a life without sin. But the Bible goes on to tell us that he died on the cross to get us across home plate. Jesus died for you this morning. A lot of us are standing around on first base--because that is about as far as a lot of us have gotten in the Christian life--wondering how in the world we will ever score, how we will ever make it home, and all the time Jesus has hit a home run and knocked sin over the outfield wall. He did that on the cross for you and he did it for me. We are free to go all the way around to home plate--we are free to go to heaven--because he has paid for our sin and has brought us home.

Well, that is exciting news! The Bible says that while we were yet sinners Christ died for the ungodly. That means just as we were in the bottom of the ninth, losing the game and two outs, Jesus wins the game. That's what happened on the cross. Jesus died for your sins and mine. A lot of us players in the game of life are standing around not realizing that the game has been won. As the Bible puts it, "Thanks be to God who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus." Some of you this morning may be standing around wishing you could make it home to God. I know that there is a lot of hurt and agony in your lives this morning. All of us are suffering from various forms of failure or rejection or loneliness or sickness or pain. But listen, if a ball player was on first base and the next batter hit the ball over the wall for a home run, wouldn't you think the man on first would be foolish just to stand there, not believing it had happened, afraid to move for fear he would be out? A lot of us are doing just that. You can believe that Jesus died for you. If you will accept his death on the cross, if you can believe he is the son of God and that he died for your sins, you can trot on around the bases. You can cross home plate right into heaven, not because of what you did, but because of what Jesus did for you.

Well, I am really off my subject. I sort of got carried away by that analogy. The first point I want to make this morning is this: God is the kind of a person who majors in bush leaguers like you and me. I know I will never make the spiritual

major leagues and probably you won't either. But the Bible tells us that God takes bush leaguers like us, he takes insignificant, inadequate amateurs, and he uses people like that to change the world. Look at Moses in our scripture for this morning. The Bible says that Moses was a hired hand for his father-in-law out tending sheep on the back side of a mountain in a desert area. Now, that is about as bush league as you can get. Moses didn't think much of himself and when God was trying to move him up to the major league, he said to God, "who am I that I should go to Pharaoh?" He said, "What if the people won't believe me?" He said, "But, Lord, I am not eloquent and I'm not good at public speaking." I tell you, I don't know why God put up with that cry baby Moses! Yet, God took this bush leaguer and carved his name indelibly on the history of mankind.

Or look again at Martin Luther. He was a humble monk who thought so lowly of himself that his superiors got impatient with his constant whining at confession over real and imagined sins. Yet, God took that bush leaguer and used him to initiate the Protestant-Reformation and to change the history of the western world.

Or look at Joan of Arc. A simple peasant girl who never learned to read or write and who had been burned at the stake before she was hardly out of her teens. Would you ever imagine that God would take a person like that and use her to inspire a nation and single-handedly make it rise to greatness? Yet, God took that little bush league girl and did an incredible thing. Yes, God majors in bush leaguers. He takes inadequate, inept amateurs and does great things. What could God do with you life this morning if you were totally surrendered to him?

The second thing I want to say this morning is this: in order to major in the bush league, the first thing God needs is a bush. You know there are a lot of people in the world that God wants to get their attention. When God wanted to get Moses' attention the Bible says that God appeared to him in a flame of fire out of the midst of a bush. And when Moses saw that bush burning the Bible says of him, "And Moses said, 'I will turn aside and see this great sight...'"

Let me ask you this morning, are you a bush burning for God? Is there anything about your life--are there any qualities about you--that would make someone turn aside to take a second look? Probably neither of us will be a Moses or a Luther, an Augustine or a Calvin, but we can live lives that are burning for Jesus. And what will happen when men turn aside to see? Let me share with you just one such illustration that came to my attention recently. Back in 1858 there was a man named Kimball who lived in Boston. He was not much of a success as the world counts success, but he gave his heart to Jesus and became a Sunday School teacher. Probably you never heard his name before or if you did you forgot it. But this man was a burning bush. Jesus had said, "Let your light so shine before men that they may see your good works and glorify your Father who is in heaven," and he took those words literally. His life burned for Jesus. Now listen to what happened because God had himself a burning bush. Mr. Kimball led a Boston shoe clerk to give his life to Jesus. That clerk, Dwight L. Moody, became an evangelist and in New England in 1879 his sermons touched the heart of F.B. Meyer, the pastor of a small church. Mr. Meyer, preaching on an American college campus, led a student to Jesus. That student's name was J. Wilbur Chapman. Mr. Chapman became active in YMCA work and hired as an assistant a young former baseball player named Billy Sunday. Billy Sunday became a great evangelist and once held a series of services in the Charlott, North Carolina area. A group of local men were so enthusiastic about the services that they planned another evangelistic series for their area and brought in a preacher named Mordecai F. Hamm to led the services. During that series of meetings a young boy heard the good news about Jesus and gave his life to him. His name was Billy Graham. Yes, who ever heard of Mr. Kimball of over a hundred years ago? Yet because God had himself a bush to burn, lives are still being touched today. Who knows where it will end? God needs bushes this morning. He needs men and women who are on fire for Jesus. He needs boys and girls, young and old, all kinds of people,

whose lives are such a light for Jesus that people will turn aside to see such a great sight.

Yes, is your life a bush burning for God? The third thing I want to say this morning is this: when God has himself a bush to get people's attention, he takes second-rate people, real bush leaguers, to do first rate jobs. Let me give you just one illustration. Back during the early days of the Protestant Reformation, a young man named Calvin was on his way to a safe place to pursue the quiet life of a scholar. He was a meek and timid person who liked to work quietly in the background. He did not like the clash and clamour of the fighting in the front lines of the Reformation. But as he passed through Geneva, a man named Farel confronted him and demanded that Calvin join him in Geneva in the struggle for the Christian faith. When Calvin refused, God spoke to him through that burning bush. "Farel, you are concerned about your rest and your personal interests...therefore I proclaim to you in the name of Almighty God whose command you defy: Upon your work there shall rest no blessing... therefore let God damn your rest, let God damn your work!" Calvin's biographer writes: "Wide-eyed, Calvin stared at the small lips which had thrown this horrible curse at him. His whole body trembled. A terrible clearness illumined him. It was not the man who stood before him that spoke, but the Lord Himself through his mouth. He felt the presence of the Invisible..." A tear rolled over Calvin's cheek as he replied, "I obey God." Yes, in that weak bush leaguer, lay the seeds of the modern intellectual renaissance, the roots of the industrial revolution, the base of modern western government, and the spiritual renewal of the world. When he saw God in a burning bush and obeyed, God could do a major thing.

Is God speaking to you this morning? Is God calling you to some work, some task, some service? Is there some young person that God is calling? Is there some housewife, some businessman, some college student, who knows he is confronting some burning bush, who knows he is standing on holy ground? Will you obey God?

A. J. Cronin, the famous novelist, tells of visiting in Rome and one day driving by himself he got lost. He found himself in a poor section of the city and seeing a small grey stone building that he took for an administrative building of some sort, entered to ask directions. Instead he found himself inside a very ancient church. It was a bare, simple church and as his eyes adjusted to the darkness he saw a plaque set in the floor. As he read the inscription he suddenly realized he was in the chapel of Quo Vadis. According to legend, on that exact spot the apostle Peter had once stopped. He was fleeing from pagan Rome where the Emperor Nero was terrorizing Christians and slaughtering them by the thousands. Here, on the spot of this little chapel, God had spoken to him and asked the question, "Quo vadis?... whither goest thou?" Yes, "where are you going?" According to the legend, Peter turned and walked back toward the burning city of Rome, there to lay down his life for Jesus.

Yes, God majors in the bush league. God takes simply, ordinary lives and he does great things in the world today. From lives that burn for Jesus God speaks to men and says "quo vadis...where are you going." He speaks to a Moses, to a Peter, to a Calvin and to you. As you think about who you are, what you are, where you are going with your life this morning, I would like to ask you God's question from the burning bush..."Quo vadis?" Where are you going?