

Sun., April 11: First Sunday after Easter

Series: "Strange Fire"

Memory Verse: "The Lord your God is an all-consuming fire. He wants you to worship only Him." -Deuteronomy 4:24

Message: Strange Fire #1: Easter Starts a Strange Fire -Pastor David

Text: "While they were discussing these things, Jesus Himself arrived and joined them on their journey." -Luke 24:15

Sermon Scriptures: John 21:1-19

Reading of Scripture: John 21:15-19

Blurb: Easter started a strange fire that continues to burn. God is again revealed as an all-consuming fire. On Easter the two disciples on the Road to Emmaus felt their hearts burning. Two weeks later, Jesus shows up at the side of the Sea of Galilee and kindles a fire. At that fire, He reinstates Peter (and them all) and re-commissions them to their calling. Living as Easter people means following our God of all-consuming fire and living as people of the Strange Fire!

[Recorded Worship Beginning]

WELCOME -Pastor Andrew

1. The Easter Proclamation:

Leader: Christ is risen!

People: He is risen indeed!

Leader: Christ is risen!

People: He is risen indeed!

Leader: Christ is risen!

People: He is risen indeed!

Alleluia!

MEMORY VERSE: -Pastor Andrew

"The Lord your God is an all-consuming fire. He wants you to worship only Him." -
Deuteronomy 4:24

ACOLYTE & DOXOLOGY: Lighting the candle symbolizing the presence of God -Pastor Andrew

WORSHIP MUSIC SET -Sanctify

Empty Grave

Refiner's Fire

Worship prayer -Pastor Andrew

[Live Worship Beginning]

GATHERING SONG: *Ls* -Sanctify

WELCOME -Pastor David

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[Both Recorded & Live Worship]

SCRIPTURE READING: John 21:15-19 (CEB) -Reader:

Jesus appears to the disciples a third time after His resurrection. This time it is by the shore of the Sea of Galilee. After they eat breakfast, Jesus turns to Peter and reinstates him by giving Peter three opportunities to express his love for Jesus. John 21:15-19,

15 When Jesus and the disciples had finished eating, Jesus spoke to Simon Peter. He asked, “Simon, son of John, do you love me more than these others do?”

“Yes, Lord,” he answered. “You know that I love you.”

Jesus said, “Feed my lambs.”

16 Again Jesus asked, “Simon, son of John, do you love me?”

He answered, “Yes, Lord. You know that I love you.”

Jesus said, “Take care of my sheep.”

17 Jesus spoke to him a third time. He asked, “Simon, son of John, do you love me?”

Peter felt bad because Jesus asked him the third time, “Do you love me?” He answered, “Lord, you know all things. You know that I love you.”

Jesus said, “Feed my sheep. 18 What I’m about to tell you is true. When you were younger, you dressed yourself. You went wherever you wanted to go. But when you are old, you will stretch out your hands. Someone else will dress you. Someone else will lead you where you do not want to go.” 19 Jesus said this to point out how Peter would die. His death would bring glory to God. Then Jesus said to him, “Follow me!”

GENERATIONAL BRIDGE: -Pastor Andrew with children.

MESSAGE: Strange Fire #1: Easter Starts a Strange Fire

PP#1: Easter Starts a Strange Fire

“The Lord your God is an all-consuming fire. He wants you to worship only Him.” - Deuteronomy 4:24

Easter Starts a Strange Fire. Deuteronomy 4:24, “The Lord your God is an all-consuming fire. He is a passionate [a jealous] God. [He wants you to worship only Him.]”

PP#2: *Image of creation where God is forming/shaping the lights into the sun*

“1 In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth. 2 The earth didn’t have any shape. And *it was empty*. There was darkness over the surface of the waves. At that time, the Spirit of God was hovering over the waters. 3 And God said, ‘Let there be light.’ And there was light. 4 God saw that the light was good. He separated the light from the darkness. 5 God called the light ‘day.’ He called the darkness ‘night.’ There was evening, and there was morning the first day.” (Genesis 1:1-5)

And then, on the fourth day of creation, God organized the lights of the sky, making the larger light to rule the day. God created the blazing, burning star called the Sun to give light to the earth.

Creation reveals—reflects—God, and the burning sun each day shows how our God is Light, and Life, and Good, and Fire.

PP#3: *Image of the burning sword of fire God places at the entrance to the Garden of Eden*

When Adam and Eve sin and are exiled from the Garden of Eden, God’s presence is posted at the entry to hide it. Genesis 3:24 says, “The Lord God drove [Adam and Eve] out and then placed angels on the east side of the garden. He also placed there a flaming sword that flashed back and forth. The angels and the sword guarded the way to the tree of life.”

God’s presence is the Tree of Life, and a flaming sword. Our God is an all-consuming fire! When God made His covenant with Abraham, God appeared in a vision in the form of fire. Genesis 15:17-18 says, “17 The sun set and it became dark. Then a burning torch and a pot filled with smoking coals appeared. They passed between the pieces of the animals that had been cut in two. 18 On that day the Lord made a covenant with Abram. He said, ‘I am giving this land to your family who comes after you. It reaches from the River of Egypt to the great Euphrates River.’”

PP#4: *Image of the burning bush and Moses*

God appears to Moses. Do you remember how? How? [In the form of a burning bush!] Exodus 3:1-3 “Moses was taking care of the flock for his father-in-law Jethro, Midian’s priest. He led his flock out to the edge of the desert, and he came to God’s mountain called Horeb. 2 The Lord’s messenger appeared to him in a flame of fire in the middle of a bush. Moses saw that the bush was in flames, but it didn’t burn up. 3 Then Moses said to himself, Let me check out this amazing sight and find out why the bush isn’t burning up.”

When Moses leads the Israelites out of Egypt, the Lord led the way. Do you remember how God was there? Exodus 13:21-22 “The Lord went in front of them during the day in a column of cloud to guide them and at night in a column of fire to give them light. This way they could travel during the day and at night. 22 The column of cloud during the day and the column of fire at night never left its place in front of the people.”

PP#5: *Image of Mt. Sinai with God’s presence on it looking like fire*

God leads them to Mt. Horeb (Sinai), where God confirms the covenant of life with the people, where God gives the Law and the 10 Commandments. Moses goes up the mountain, and God comes down to meet with him. How does God appear on the mountain? Exodus 24:17, “To the Israelites, the Lord’s glorious presence looked like a blazing fire on top of the mountain.”

And so, Moses teaches the people—in Deuteronomy 4:24—that “The Lord your God is an all-consuming fire. He is a passionate [a jealous] God. [He wants you to worship only Him.]”

God is pure. God is holy. God is fire. God is life. And so, when the people sin, God’s anger, as it is often described in the Bible, “burned against them” (Exodus 32:10). Think of Sodom and Gomorrah. How did God punish them? He rained down fire and sulphur (Genesis 19:24).

PP#6: *Image of the tabernacle or temple with the burning altar, altar of incense or menorah*

We see God as fire in the Tabernacle and Temple. Sacrifices given to the Lord were to be burned on the altar. Leviticus 6:12-13 says that the fire on the altar was lit directly by the hand of God and was never permitted to go out. Then, inside the Holy Place, in front of the Ark of the Covenant was an altar of incense, that burned fragrant offerings, as well as the Seven-branched Lampstand, the Great Menorah, which was to burn every night, all night long. The Israelites knew that their God was a burning fire.

PP#7: *Image of Ezekiel’s image of creatures (or holy figure) with lots of fire*

The prophets talked about God’s holiness as a cleansing, refining fire: Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Daniel, Malachi. When Ezekiel sees a vision from God, he sees a great cloud flashing with fire, with fire at its very center (Ezekiel 1:4). The holy creatures he sees look like torches with fire darting all around like lightning (1:13). The holy figure he sees has fire burning above and below His waist (1:27). Ezekiel sees winged creatures, and there is fire between them (10:7). The fire of God was everywhere in Ezekiel! And, remember the story of Elijah on Mount Carmel? God came down as fire from heaven and burnt the offering, the wood, the stones, the water, and even the ground! Now, that’s God as an all-consuming fire!

PP#8: *Image capturing the darkness when Jesus hung on the cross*

We see God as fire in the Easter story. Ironically, as Jesus is on trial inside, Peter is warming himself outside by a fire—symbol of truth and godliness, right?—as he denies knowing Jesus three times. And then, as Jesus hangs on the cross, God places on Him all the sins of all people of all time. It's the moment of the great sacrifice of eternal atonement. And notice what happens with God's light hung in the sky (the sun that burns to give light to the earth). The Bible says that at the moment when God's very presence turns away from His one and only Son—as He is dripping in sin—God's presence (being only holiness) withdraws: and that is displayed in creation as the sun that God had placed in the sky, goes dark. Mark 15:33 says, "At Noon, darkness covered the whole land until 3 p.m.," when Jesus dies.

PP#9: *Image of the angels at Jesus' tomb glowing bright like lightening*

Easter erupts at dawn. As the sun rises in the sky, the Son of God rises from the tomb! The angels who roll the stone away, the Bible says, the two angels have clothes that strangely burned white like lightening (Luke 24:4). That's the same imagery as the swords at the Garden of Eden, the pillar of fire, on the mountain, and throughout the prophets.

God, who is an all-consuming fire, burns brightly, and victoriously again at Easter. Darkness is pushed back. Death is defeated. Life glows brightly!

PP#10: Easter Starts a Strange Fire!

Easter starts a strange fire! When Jesus appears to the two disciples on the road to Emmaus and explains the Scriptures to them, they feel their hearts burning within them. Because of Easter, God's fire burns within each of Jesus' disciples. We see that at Pentecost. The Holy Spirit comes into the room as a rushing fire and then separates into tongues that come an rest on each disciple. Easter starts a strange fire!

We see fire appear again in the Easter story, almost in passing. If you're not watching for it, you'll miss it. Let's turn to John 21. In John 20, Jesus had appeared to the disciples in the Upper Room twice. The first time was Easter evening, but Thomas wasn't there. He is skeptical and says he wants to see Jesus for himself. So, the next Sunday evening, Jesus appears there again, and Thomas is there to see Him.

Well, after that, the disciples go back to Galilee. This was what the angels and Jesus had told them to do on Easter morning: go back to Galilee. Why? Because that was where their normal lives were. They had been on a three-year excursion with Jesus, following Him every day. But now, Jesus was leaving them and going back to His heavenly home. And Jesus tells them to go home, too. Go back to where you live your daily lives!

Does Easter stay in the special experience, at the retreat where God feels close, off in the special time and place? Or does Easter come back and affect you in your daily lives? Does it come and change things at home, too? That's the real question, isn't it? Does God's strange fire burn at home?

PP#11: John 21:1-19 (CEB)

21 After this, Jesus appeared to His disciples again. It was by the Sea of Galilee. Here is what happened. 2 Simon Peter and Thomas, who was also called Didymus, were there together. Nathanael from Cana in Galilee and the sons of Zebedee were with them. So were two other disciples. 3 "I'm going out to fish," Simon Peter told them. They said, "We'll go with you." So they went out and got into the boat. That night they didn't catch anything.

Let's go to John 21, starting with the first verse. "21:1 After this, Jesus appeared to His disciples again. It was by the Sea of Galilee. Here is what happened. 2 Simon Peter and Thomas, who was also called Didymus, were there together. Nathanael from Cana in Galilee and the sons of Zebedee were with them. So were two other disciples. 3 'I'm going out to fish,' Simon Peter told them. They said, 'We'll go with you.' So they went out and got into the boat. That night they didn't catch anything."

Okay, they're back up in Galilee. Quite likely they are back in Capernaum, Peter's home town. Peter—who used to be called Simon—is there, and probably his brother Andrew, although unnamed. No-longer-doubting Thomas is there, sometimes called "The Twin." Nathanael from the neighboring village of Cana was also there. John calls him Nathanael, but he is called Bartholomew in the other Gospels. Goodness, what's up with the confusing names? Wait, one more: The Sons of Zebedee, also sometimes called the Sons of Thunder, are there, too. These are the brothers James and John. John here is the writer of this Gospel. Simon Peter and his brother Andrew had a fishing business, and they had a partnership with another fishing family, Zebedee and his sons James and John. So, it seems they're all back in town, and Peter says, "Well, let's go fishing again!" It was their livelihood. It was their normal lives, before they met Jesus. Jesus has come and gone, and now all the men are back home. Does Easter affect their daily lives? Does God's fire burn back at home?

When Jesus first appeared to them three years before, He found them after a long night of unsuccessful fishing. He told them to put their nets down on the other side of the boat. Of course, that made no practical sense. But when they obeyed, their nets were full of fish. Jesus used that to call them to follow Him and fish for people.

PP#12: John 21:1-19 (CEB)

4 Early in the morning, Jesus stood on the shore. But the disciples did not realize that it was Jesus.

5 He called out to them, "Friends, don't you have any fish?"

"No," they answered.

6 He said, "Throw your net on the right side of the boat. There you will find some fish." When they did, they could not pull the net into the boat. There were too many fish in it.

We go back to the story, verse 4, "4 Early in the morning, Jesus stood on the shore. But the disciples did not realize that it was Jesus. 5 He called out to them, 'Friends, don't you have any fish?' 'No,' they answered. 6 He said, 'Throw your net on the right side of the boat. There you will find some fish.' When they did, they could not pull the net into the boat. There were too many fish in it."

PP#13: John 21:1-19 (CEB)

7 Then the disciple Jesus loved said to Simon Peter, "It is the Lord!" As soon as Peter heard that, he put his coat on. He had taken it off earlier. Then he jumped into the water. 8 The other disciples followed in the boat. They were towing the net full of fish. The shore was only about 100 yards away. 9 When they landed, they saw a fire of burning coals. There were fish on it. There was also some bread.

This sounds very familiar! And it's not lost on the disciples...well, at least John. Verse 7, "7 Then the disciple Jesus loved [His best friend...let me name him: John] said to Simon Peter, 'It is the Lord!' As soon as Peter heard that, he put his coat on. He had taken it off earlier. Then

he jumped into the water. 8 The other disciples followed in the boat. They were towing the net full of fish. The shore was only about 100 yards away. 9 When they landed, they saw a fire of burning coals. There were fish on it. There was also some bread.”

Now, did you notice the Easter fire? The risen Jesus had come to visit them for a *third* time. And on the *third* time, He came to *their shore* and *started a fire*. Hmmmm....could this be a symbol? Jesus came to rekindle the burning fire of God within them! So, Jesus cooked breakfast: fish and bread, like when He fed the multitudes.

PP#14: John 21:1-19 (CEB)

10 Jesus said to them, “Bring some of the fish you have just caught.” 11 So Simon Peter climbed back into the boat. He dragged the net to shore. It was full of large fish. There were 153 of them. But even with that many fish the net was not torn. 12 Jesus said to them, “Come and have breakfast.” None of the disciples dared to ask Him, “Who are you?” They knew it was the Lord. 13 Jesus came, took the bread and gave it to them. He did the same thing with the fish. 14 This was the third time Jesus appeared to His disciples after He was raised from the dead.

Verse 10, “10 Jesus said to them, ‘Bring some of the fish you have just caught.’ 11 So Simon Peter climbed back into the boat. He dragged the net to shore. It was full of large fish. There were 153 of them. But even with that many fish the net was not torn. 12 Jesus said to them, ‘Come and have breakfast.’ None of the disciples dared to ask Him, ‘Who are you?’ They knew it was the Lord. 13 Jesus came, took the bread and gave it to them. He did the same thing with the fish. 14 This was the third time Jesus appeared to His disciples after He was raised from the dead.”

Jesus found them as exhausted, empty fishermen again that morning. By His miracle, they suddenly have 153 large fish. Jesus tells them to bring some of their catch to the fire He had kindled. And they eat together again. Jesus fills them.

PP#15: Easter Starts a Strange Fire!

1. Easter burns back at home

Easter does affect them back at home! Jesus stokes the godly fire back where they live. It feeds them, fills them, burns again in their hearts. They had gone off and had this amazing experience with Jesus. They experienced the miracle of His resurrection. But Easter starts a strange fire. It starts a fire back at home! God doesn't stay “out there” or “in that experience.” We may have special memories of spiritual mountaintop experiences when God felt close. But we learn here that the risen Jesus also comes back home with us! He shows up where we live! We see in Scripture how God is an all-consuming fire, but the good news is that God comes to us and burns within His people! God consumes *them* and their lives! We are included, all of our lives: not just when things are going well or we feel holy. God brings His burning fire to rekindle our hearts in the dailyness of our lives, drawing us closer to Him. Spiritual high experiences are great, but notice that the Easter fire burns in your day-to-day, too!

PP#16: Easter Starts a Strange Fire!

1. Easter burns back at home
2. Easter rekindles our calling

Jesus is there on the shore to re-commission them to spreading the fire of Easter. In the

same way as three years prior, Jesus again calls them to follow Him and follow into His work. Go fish for people. Jesus tells them to bring some of their catch: to personally invest in what He is calling of them.

They had gone back home. The adventure was over. They had failed. They had deserted Jesus, all of them. And even Peter, who hung around a bit longer, while warming his hands by a fire, denied Jesus *three times*. Certainly they were out of the program. Their fires had grown cold.

But remember what Jesus said to Peter? *Three times* Jesus asks him, “Peter, do you love me?” *Three times* Peter says, “Yes, Lord, you know that I love you.” *Three times* Jesus tells Peter to carry on His shepherd’s work. This was when Jesus appeared to them the *third time*.

Jesus allows Peter to overcome his failure, his denial. Jesus kindles the flickering love that was in Peter’s heart. The strange fire of Easter grew and glowed! And this burning fire would not falter, for Peter would be faithful and some day be willing to die for his love for Jesus. So would all the others.

Jesus again calls out to them, “Follow me!” (verse 19). The strange fire of Easter rekindles all of us who follow Jesus. Jesus re-commissions us, even when we falter and fail. He comes to us again, feeds us, fills us, helps us remember our love for Him. And then He calls us to recommit to following Him. Bring some of your fish. The invitation continues! We are called to follow Jesus.

PP#17: Easter Starts a Strange Fire!

1. Easter burns back at home
2. Easter rekindles our calling
3. Easter calls us to “play” with fire

We see again that our God is an all-consuming fire. That means we let the fire burning within us have it’s way. We ask God to burn away the sin and dross in our lives. We then “give it our all,” we *give Him* our all! God does not give us a detailed plan for our lives. We don’t get to know all that is coming. But we don’t need to! We know our God, who walks out in front. We trust. We keep up. We let Jesus pick the path. Life becomes an adventure. It turns into a dance, and we follow. Life becomes fun and joyous and exciting and meaningful. Living as Easter people, being followers of the risen Jesus, means that we learn to play with godly fire!

Part of that means being open to discovering anew how God is an all-consuming fire. So, that’s going to be our journey for a while together. We’ve started this series, “Strange Fire,” and from now until Pentecost (May 23) we are going to dig into the Bible to learn better how God is an all-consuming fire. Then, from Pentecost into July, we’ll discover how God burns in each of our hearts by the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. Being a Jesus-follower means that we have holy heartburn! And then, later in the summer, we’re going to take a closer look at Daniel for a few weeks, so we can learn how to live as God’s faithful people, even while facing the fiery furnaces of life. So, we begin our discipleship of discovery of the strange fire that Jesus rekindled within us at Easter, right into our personal lives. We answer Jesus’ calling to follow Him and live as people of the Strange Fire! Let’s burn!

Amen.

PRAYERS -Pastor David

Adapting “Prayer To Keep The Fire Of God Burning Inside Of You”
by Daniel, at DailyEffectivePrayer.com

Let us pray.

O God, you are an All-Consuming Fire! We bow in your presence and ask your fire of life

to burn within us. There is no distance between us when we are joined by your Spirit and we thank You for your passionate love for each of us.

Burn your cleansing fire in our lives. Purify us from all ungodliness. Purge us from sin and our bent to sinning. Take up residence within us and glow brightly there, consuming everything that does not please you.

Give us your light to see where the fire may have dimmed or gone out in our lives. We ask you to rekindle passivity, cooling, and any drop of being lukewarm in our zeal for you. Stir up and kindle the fire for you that is already in our hearts, reigniting the love we once had.

Keep the fire ablaze like never before! May it burn continually within us and not dim. Lord, stir us up with heart and passion ready to take on any assignment You give us. Burn within us brightly for all to see. Make us shining examples of a genuinely passionate disciple serving You with a fire that cannot be put out!

We pray all this in the name of Jesus, the Light of the World. Amen.

[IN-PERSON WORSHIP ONLY] CLOSING SONG: *Blessed to Be a Blessing* -Sanctify

OFFERING: -Pastor David

-Easter offering: UMCOR!

-Give of your monies to God's work through this church. You can give in person, mail it in or, most conveniently, you can make an automated transfer or a debit card payment on the church website or by using the "square" on the bulletin.

ANNOUNCEMENTS -Pastor David

Next Sunday's message: "Strange Fire: All-Consuming!"

MEMORY VERSE -Pastor David

"The Lord your God is an all-consuming fire. He wants you to worship only Him." -
Deuteronomy 4:24

BENEDICTION -Pastor David