

September 20, 2015

Pillar of Smoke

Back in 2011, the first year of the drought, I remember turning off US 287 at Estelline and heading for Quitaque. I love that stretch of road that winds along the top of a tall ridge through the rolling plains along the Ox Bow Ranch. But that particular day, the expansive view was marred by four pillars of smoke rising up from grass fires scattered across hundreds of square miles.

In the Bible, we hear lots of stories about Israel's sojourn in the desert and the Pillar of Fire and Smoke that rested above the Ark of the Covenant in the Tabernacle of the Lord.

Whenever it came time for the people to strike their tents and move to another campsite, the Pillar would move and the people would follow.

As I drive the ridge, I meet a firetruck and a water wagon. I wave but the drivers don't notice. Their faces are grim and their eyes are set on the road as they speed by. I would expect nothing less. Wild fires put people on high alert. Teamwork, communication, and organization are top priorities and wasting time and losing focus have immediate consequences.

I imagine the same skills and intense attitudes were found among the people of God during those forty years in which they wandered the Sinai wilderness. Living in close proximity to burning fires and pillars of smoke is bound to have an effect.

How does your current state of mind reflect your proximity to God? Chances are, if you're clear about your objectives, if you're focus on where God is leading you, you're taking care of business, as they say. However, if you're a bit confused, uncertain, and looking back to Egypt as opposed to the Promised Land that lies ahead, well, you might want to take a cue from those guys on the firetruck heading as fast as they can to a Pillar of Smoke rising above the plains.

Our God is not a God who stays in one place. He is a God on the move and He expects us to move with Him. A Pillar of Smoke by day. A Pillar of Fire by night. This is how He led the Israelites of old. And this is how He leads us today: with focus, with intensity, with the Promised Land up ahead.

Keep your eyes peeled. Keep your eyes open for signs of fire.