

1968

WHAT THE CHERRY TREE SAID TO THE BRAMBLE BUSH

Children's Sermon - Temple Beth Am
February 2, 1968 Given By
Rabbi Dr. Herbert M. Baumgard

God has his uses for each and every thing in the world. No matter how small something may be, it has a big purpose. No matter how ugly something may seem to be, it has its own kind of beauty. This is the message of the story of the cherry tree and the bramble bush.

You all know what a cherry tree is. It is a lovely tree that produces sweet-smelling leaves just before it gives its fruit which is the red and sweet cherry. Everybody likes the cherry tree because it is both good to look at and a maker of delicious fruit.

A bramble bush, on the other hand, seems to be a great deal of nothing. It does not produce any kind of fruit, nor is it pleasing to the eye. On the contrary, the bramble bush seems to be a meaningless twisting of branches that point nowhere. In short, the bramble bush doesn't seem to be good for anything, as far as people are concerned.

Yet, there is a very interesting story about these two trees. It seems that there was an open field in which grew many different kinds of trees. In one section of the field, a cherry tree and a bramble bush grew side by side. Children running through the field would stop to look at the beautiful cherry tree, and they would pick some of the fruit to take home to their mother to make into tasty pies or cakes. The bramble bush, standing exactly at the side of the cherry tree, was not even seen by most people. It was almost as if it were not there. Sometimes a child would notice it and say, "Oh, look at that skinny tree. Look how its branches twist and turn, but there is nothing on them."

You can imagine how the bramble bush felt when it heard this kind of talk. It pretended not to care when it saw everyone so excited about the cherry tree. The bramble bush was sometimes jealous, however, and as you might imagine, it was sometimes sad.

The Cherry Tree- Page 2

Still, the bramble tree was a very proud tree, for it had a special secret that gave it strength and hope. Whenever the bush thought of its secret, it would raise its head high and grow a little taller towards the sky, and the bush would send its roots even deeper into the ground.

One day, the two trees began a conversation as trees do when they are alone in the field. The cherry tree said, "You know, I am happy when people stop to say how nice I look, but I am happiest when I remember the story of George Washington". "George Washington?", asked the bramble bush, "what kind of story is that?" "Well", said the cherry tree, "my great-great-grandfather was a tree that lived in the backyard of a boy whose name was George Washington. One day, George cut down the cherry tree with an axe. His father came out and was very angry. He asked all the kids in the neighborhood, 'Who chopped down my cherry tree?' No one seemed to know. Finally, George, who knew that his father would be very angry at him, said, 'I did it, father. I cannot tell a lie.' This truthful boy grew up to become the first President of the United States." "Did you know that, Mr. Bramble Bush?", asked the cherry tree. The bramble bush had not known that. In fact, it had never heard the story before. The bramble bush found it very interesting.. For a moment the bush was very happy; then, it became silent again.

Smiling at its neighbor, the cherry tree asked, "Do you have a story to tell?" The bramble bush did not answer for a while. Should it tell its secret? Finally, it decided that it would enjoy telling its story. The bramble bush began in this way, "Long, long before the time of George Washington, a bramble bush was growing in the desert in a small country near what is now called Israel. Nearby, the bramble bush could see a shepard grazing sheep. It was the kind of picture that the bramble bush saw every day in its quiet life. Then, suddenly, the bramble bush felt as if it were on fire, but it was a strange fire, indeed. For a while the bush smelled the fire and the smoke and saw the flames, but it did not feel any pain, and its branches were not burning up! Then the bramble bush heard a voice, which seemed to come from inside the bush, calling to the shepard. The voice called, 'Moses, Moses', and the shepard named Moses came over to the fire to watch this unusual sight. 'Take off your shoes', said the voice to Moses, 'for this is holy ground.' "

The Cherry Tree- Page 3

The bramble bush got more and more excited as it told its story. The bush could see that the cherry tree was thinking deep thoughts. Everyone had heard the story of Moses and the burning bush, but no one stopped to think that the bush was the bramble bush, the least pretty of all bushes, the bush that seemed to be the least important! Even as the bramble bush told its story, the cherry tree was thinking to itself, "Why did God choose the bramble bush as the place to appear?"

The bramble bush's story went on; "Then Moses heard God say, 'I have heard the cry of My people in Egypt. Go, now, and help them. You shall serve as My helper!' " The cherry tree was familiar with these words. The tree thought to itself, "Just as Moses was God's helper, so the bramble bush was God's helper. Everything has its purpose..to help God, to do what God has placed it on earth to do ... to be the best it can be!"

Now the bramble tree was through with its story. It could see that the cherry tree had liked the exciting tale. Indeed, from then on, the cherry tree looked at its neighbor with new respect. The tree told the story of the bramble bush to all the other trees and tried to impress them with the importance of the bramble bush. Perhaps, you and I ought to look at things around us a little more closely in the future. Perhaps, we ought to try to learn their story. We might learn, as the cherry tree did, that no matter what something looks like or how useless it seems to be, it has its special use; it has its wonderful secret; and it is still very important in the eyes of God.