



*His winnowing fork is in his hand, and he will clear his threshing floor and will gather his wheat into the granary, but the chaff he will burn with unquenchable fire. – Matt. 3:12*

We have seen enough of fire over this past week. As of Monday, the fire report was as follows:

Flat Rock Fire at 52,500 acres with 35% containment; Remington Fire at just over 196,000 acres with 0% containment; Constitution Fire at roughly 25,000 acres with 28% containment; and the House Draw Fire at about 175,000 acres with 88% containment. That's just under 450,000 acres that have been burned in NE Wyoming. Not to downplay the scope of the disaster, but the good news is that no lives or homes were lost, although people did lose grassland and cattle, and wildlife was also lost.

The Bible has something like 630 references to fire – some good, some bad, and some just as a matter of fact. Fire can help or it can harm. It can comfort or it can terrorize. It can help create and it can destroy. We know this all too well.

In the above passage, John the Baptist is preparing the crowds for the coming of the Messiah. It sounds like a hell-and-damnation sermon: “Get right with God or be prepared to burn.”

But chaff is the name given to the outer husk of things. It's the protective coating around the seed. In this passage, what is being burned isn't the good wheat but the outer husk. I think of this as the wheat being all the good things that we give to God and all the good fruit we produce. The husk, that which is burned, is all the other stuff we use to shield ourselves or the images we project to protect ourselves.

We tend to be fiercely independent people, surrounding ourselves with a protective outer husk, which is just so much chaff. But in the aftermath of these fires, what I have seen is a lot of chaff that has been burned. What is left is the wheat – the wheat of a community coming together to help those in need; the wheat of people offering spaces for

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people to set up camp as needed; the wheat of one landowner opening up their land for others to send cattle; the wheat of companies pooling resources for the common good.

Fire can be devastating, but it can also burn away the chaff so that the good wheat can be gathered up. May we continue to be the good wheat.

Blessings,

Todd+

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