

Scripture Reading:

Acts 8: “25 So when they had testified and preached the word of the Lord, they returned to Jerusalem, preaching the gospel in many villages of the Samaritans. 26 Now an angel of the Lord spoke to Philip, saying, "Arise and go toward the south along the road which goes down from Jerusalem to Gaza." This is desert. 27 So he arose and went. And behold, a man of Ethiopia, a eunuch of great authority under Candace the queen of the Ethiopians, who had charge of all her treasury, and had come to Jerusalem to worship, 28 was returning. And sitting in his chariot, he was reading Isaiah the prophet. 29 Then the Spirit said to Philip, "Go near and overtake this chariot." 30 So Philip ran to him, and heard him reading the prophet Isaiah, and said, "Do you understand what you are reading?" 31 And he said, "How can I, unless someone guides me?" And he asked Philip to come up and sit with him. 32 The place in the Scripture which he read was this: "He was led as a sheep to the slaughter; And as a lamb before its shearer is silent, So He opened not His mouth. 33 In His humiliation His justice was taken away, And who will declare His generation? For His life is taken from the earth." 34 So the eunuch answered Philip and said, "I ask you, of whom does the prophet say this, of himself or of some other man?" 35 Then Philip opened his mouth, and beginning at this Scripture, preached Jesus to him. 36 Now as they went down the road, they came to some water. And the eunuch said, "See, here is water. What hinders me from being baptized?" 37 Then Philip said, "If you believe with all your heart, you may." And he answered and said, "I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God." 38 So he commanded the chariot to stand still. And both Philip and the eunuch went down into the water, and he baptized him. 39 Now when they came up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord caught Philip away, so that the eunuch saw him no more; and he went on his way rejoicing. 40 But Philip was found at Azotus. And passing through, he preached in all the cities till he came to Caesarea.”

"Phillip Preaches Jesus to the Eunuch"

We continue on this morning with our journey through the Book of Acts. We will see how the Holy Spirit continues to use Phillip and there will be some important lessons for us to learn about seeking and knowing God's will in our lives... and a reminder that we are to see Jesus in ALL of the Scriptures! Luke's orderly account is now showing us how the command of Jesus to the disciples to be His witnesses is being carried out: The Spirit of God has used the same evil counsel that killed the Lord of Glory to kill Stephen and this, along with the persecutions of Saul of Tarsus, have driven the Saints out of Jerusalem so that the Good News is taken to all of Judea and Samaria and then to all the world.

- Luke uses Phillip as only one example of the events that took place as the Kingdom progressed.

We hear nothing about the actions of the other five men who were called to serve tables like Phillip and Steven, but we know they would have gone forth along with literally thousands of other Christians.

- What Luke does clearly show is how the Church advanced to include not only the Jews, but the Samaritans and Gentiles as well.

This would have been difficult for the Jews of that day to understand and so the Holy Spirit clearly demonstrates that this is exactly what is happening:

- He did it with great signs at Pentecost for Jews...
- Now with great signs in Samaria as we saw last week...
- And soon with the Gentiles which we will study in Chapters ten and eleven with the conversion of Cornelius and his family.

The Jews, the Samaritans and the Gentiles were three very distinct groups that did NOT get along and the Spirit is showing how the work of the Son is one of reconciliation as Paul teaches the Church at Corinth: II Corinthians 5:17 “Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new. 18 Now all things are of God, who has reconciled us to Himself through Jesus Christ, and has given us the ministry of reconciliation, 19 that is, that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not imputing their trespasses to them, and has committed to us the word of reconciliation. 20 Now then, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were pleading through us: We implore you on Christ's behalf, be reconciled to God. 21 For He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.”

And again Paul stresses the unity of the Saints in chapter three of his letter to the Galatians:

“27 For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ. 28 There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus. 29 And if you are Christ's, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise.”

Here in Acts we see this worked out as Jews, Samaritans and soon the Gentiles are brought into the Kingdom, made one in Christ.

- We should also note that Luke makes seven references to women being baptized or part of the Church as well, since this would be another major stumbling block for both the Jews and Gentiles of that day!
- Freeman and slaves are addressed in the Book of Philemon

Now some argue that the Ethiopian Eunuch was the first Gentile convert but I don't believe this was intended. We will soon see almost two entire chapters devoted to the Gospel going to the Gentiles, so I think it better to see this Ethiopian Stewart as a Jewish convert. Luke specifically says that he had gone to Jerusalem to worship so we have one more group to be included in the one Church *[the last group we will encounter will be the disciples of John in chapter 19]*

So Luke is telling the story of how the Holy Spirit will fill the earth with the Kingdom of Jesus and now he gives us this account about Phillip...

- Phillip is later called Phillip the evangelist, so we know what his calling was and the account of his preaching in Samaria last week would confirm this gift.

It is interesting how God chooses to use His gifted Saint in this morning's text & it should give us encouragement as we seek to serve God faithfully! In the midst of the great revival taking place in Samaria, the Lord sends an angel to Phillip with further instructions:

- Phillip is to head south!

I am sure there was a little hesitation on Phillip's part, perhaps thinking but Lord there is so much fruit here in Samaria! Especially when we consider the instructions that were given here: Not only is he to head south to Gaza, but he is to take the less traveled road to Gaza: The one that passes through a desert and the Angel also seems to say he should go at mid-day when it will really be deserted! Why we might ask?

- Because God wanted Phillip to convert this Ethiopian Eunuch!

God knew this man had come to Jerusalem to worship

God could have had any one of the twelve Apostles witness to this man!

God also knew that this man would be returning home via this deserted route at mid-day so that he would have the time and quiet to read the scroll of Isaiah on his journey. I think it is possible that he had purchased the scroll while in Jerusalem and even likely that he was reading the 53rd chapter because it would have been hotly debated in Jerusalem at this time:

- Was Jesus the promised Messiah that the Prophet had foretold?
- The Apostles and other Saints would have been making the case that He was and the religious leaders had obviously rejected such an interpretation!

In any case this is where we find this man when Phillip approaches having obeyed the instructions given to him by the Lord through His angel. Now be honest: If WE were planning the early years of the Church so it could take over the entire world...

- Would we have sent an evangelist to just one man?
- Surely with Phillip's talent he should be speaking to vast crowds
- The work in Samaria had been SO successful, would it not have been better for it to continue?

It is natural to ask and ponder such questions, but here is where we must also remember the truth and wisdom Moses gave the children of Israel as they approached the Promised Land:

“The secret things belong to Jehovah our God, but those things which are revealed belong to us and to our children forever, that we may do all the words of this law.” Deuteronomy 29:29

Neither the Scriptures nor history give us any hint of what fruits laid ahead in the life of this single convert that Phillip was sent to save:

- God has clearly chosen to have that be one of the secret things that we simply cannot know.
- What we can and do know is that Phillip was obedient and was brought to this man at just the right time!

This is the first important lesson for us to take away from this account this morning...

- We must seek and follow the Lord's direction for our lives!

Now we know from the rest of the Book of Acts, all of Church history and our own experiences today that God rarely sends an angel to deliver specific instructions!

- But we DO know that throughout the Book of Acts, all of Church history and in our day God does lead His people!
- We can know this because He promised to do so and because we often do see the evidence of how He has led us, often after the fact. *[tell the story of moving to Sacramento]*

And even with these reflections we know that we still see through a glass darkly and I am sure we will be amazed to see how God has used us! But here is the important thing to remember:

- Whether God sends an angel with specific instructions or uses circumstances to direct us, we must be ready and willing to obey!
- We must follow the example of Phillip where Luke tells us, “so he arose and went.”

Children: How will God give you guidance in your lives?

You have the Bible and your parents and Church family to guide you!

- Do you believe that God will use them to guide you?

If you want to go in some direction and your godly mother or father says it would be wrong to do so, or even that it would be wiser to go in a different direction what should you do? It does not change much as we grow older and in fact this is perhaps one of the most important areas for us ALL to be those little children Jesus said we had to be in the Kingdom. One of the great dangers of growing up is beginning to believe that we have things figured out and don't need all these other people or even the Bible telling us what to do!

- If we are not faithful & obedient, soon we will begin to think that the Bible is 'so out of touch'...
- Begin to think that our parents are old fashioned...
- Begin to think those people at church just don't understand what is going on in MY life!

This is why we must study and meditate on the book of Proverbs and the other wisdom literature that we find in the Bible!

- You cannot ignore God's Word, reject the wisdom of your parents and avoid good Christian counsel and then say you are rightly following God!

In this season of ordinary time, this is the simple lesson we must return to over and over again: Trust & Obey!

So Phillip has obeyed and comes along side this man from Ethiopia: Someone who would be like the Secretary of the Treasury today. I again suspect that with whatever doubts Phillip might have had, now the light would come on as he would think, OH, now I see why I needed to be on this road at this time! He follows one last instruction from the Spirit and approaches the man as he reads from Isaiah chapter 53: Phillip asks the eunuch if he understands what he is reading and Phillip is invited into the carriage to help [*discuss chariot!*]

Before we talk about Phillip's ministry to this man, I should point out another simple lesson here about reading our Bibles!

- God honors our faithfulness!

This man was reading even though he did not fully understand what was being said AND he was not afraid to ask for help! IF we are faithful in our daily reading of the Scriptures and if parents are faithful in instructing our children, there will be times where we come to questions we cannot answer! Should we expect anything else when we consider that this Book, given to us by the God who created all there is in six days,

- When we consider that this Book is a revelation of who He is and His great plan of salvation!
- IF we do not have questions from time to time, then we are not being serious about our study of God's Word!

That applies to your Elders as well as we prepare sermons to preach!

So if questions are a good thing, there is another simple lesson here:

- It is not too much of a stretch to say that the answer is always Jesus!

In fact, this truth is one of the most important and comforting lessons from this account!

This Book... The Bible, is God telling His story!

- The story of His great Salvation
- And His great story of salvation centers on His beloved Son Jesus:

As we heard the Father say at the Baptism of Jesus, “this is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased!” We know that Jesus now reigns as the King of Kings and Lord of Lords: The Apostle Paul declares to the Philippians: “Therefore God also has highly exalted Him and given Him the name which is above every name, 10 that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those in heaven, and of those on earth, and of those under the earth, 11 and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.”

And thus we read in our text that Phillip, beginning with a passage in the Book of Isaiah, tells this Eunuch the good news about Jesus! Phillip did this without the benefit of ANY of the New Testament books! Can we preach the Good News about Jesus from the Old Testament?

We thank God for the full revelation that we now have with the completed cannon, knowing that ALL that God needed to reveal is right here between these covers... But sadly we have done a few things that have hindered our ability to see Jesus in all of the Scriptures!

As Mike often rightly points out, we have added a very destructive page in the middle of our Bibles: The one that divides the testaments: In our studies Bibles there is often an entire section in between the testaments. These testaments, or testimonies are not divided or contrary: They are two testaments about the one great covenant of salvation!

The other problem is thinking we were wise to put the ‘words of Jesus’ in red: Are there are red letters in the Old Testament part of these Bibles? Did Jesus have nothing to say in the Old Testament? We must see the salvation we have in Jesus promised and foreshadowed in the Old Testament and fulfilled and advancing in the New.

- IF we focus on finding Jesus in one without the other, we will find the real historic Jesus in neither!

We know this has been true with the Jewish people down through the ages where they reject all of the New Testament and thus their Messiah. And sadly it has become a problem in the other direction with much of modern Christianity that ignores or is embarrassed by the Old Testament.

How can we have a proper understanding of what Jesus came to save us from, if we do not understand how man was made in the image of God and fell into sin with Adam’s fall in the garden? How do we understand the gravity of sin if we do not see, understand and accept God’s judgments shown throughout the Old Testament? How do we really see the amazing love of God without the promises of salvation that begin in Genesis chapter three and continue throughout the Old Testament?

- We learn to expect Jesus to be the conquering King who will crush the head of Satan
- But also see Him as the Lamb of God, who as the suffering Messiah has come to take away the sin of the world!

Over and over again in the Old Testament we see major themes from the life of Jesus, like death and resurrection, or men pictured as a second Adam, we often see the second born son being exalted and, It is difficult to count how many times God is remembered as the great deliverer of His people!

- These are all revealing the person and work of Jesus if we have eyes to see Jesus, just as Phillip did!

Jesus, the Apostles, Steven, and now Phillip had no problem using the Old Testament Scriptures to share the Good News and neither should we!

- This IS God’s completed revelation and ALL of it is God’s Word for all of life...

Teaching us about the great salvation that we have in God's Son Jesus AND teaching us how His salvation impacts ALL areas of our lives and ALL periods of history!

- **My prayer is that we will be known as a people of the Word!**

We quickly see the fruit of Phillip work in the life of this Eunuch. They come to water and this man wants to be baptized. Having given his confession that Jesus is the Son of God there is nothing to hinder him and so he and Phillip go down into the water together.

We will certainly agree with our Baptist brethren that this Scripture confirms the need for adult converts to make a profession of faith! However, we should note that there was no need for long membership classes or memory work before he was allowed to be baptized!

- **ALL those who come confessing Jesus and trusting in His finished work should be baptized.**

However, I will not agree with our Baptist friends who argue that this passage teaches that we did not use enough water in baptizing little Jack this morning: They argue that because they went down into the water we must use immersion, but this is no more persuasive than my arguing that there could not have been enough water to baptize thousands by immersion in Jerusalem at Pentecost. Neither text is teaching us anything about the mode of baptism... We must show Christian charity when expressing our conviction about the proper way to baptize or understanding the views of others.

- **The important point is that God has declared that the promise is to us and to our children, so all those who make a profession of faith are to be baptized...**
- **AND they may claim God's promise and sign of the covenant for their children as well.**

Phillip the evangelist was called upon to save this man from Ethiopia, whose name we are not even given. Phillip was not to disciple him because he is called quickly away to other work in perhaps a miraculous way.

We are told that the Eunuch went on his way rejoicing and as I already pointed out we will have to wait until we are in heaven to know all that God had planned for this man! We are given a bit more information about the work of Phillip the evangelist: He began at Azotus and worked his way up the coast sharing the Good News and settled in Caesarea which may well have been his home.

We will see him there some twenty years later when Paul is returning to Jerusalem.

- **I trust that we are beginning to see how the Book of Acts is the story of the advance of God's Kingdom.**
- **How the Kingdom of Jesus is beginning to fill the earth as foretold by the prophet Daniel!**

The Apostles have been witnesses for Jesus in Jerusalem and now in Judea and Samaria... Next week we will turn our attention once again to Saul of Tarsus as God begins to use him as the Apostle to the Gentiles...

- **A man who will turn the world upside down as he obeys the call of Jesus!**

We will see Paul going to the Gentiles as Jesus instructed him so "they may turn from darkness to light and from the power of Satan to God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins and a place among those who are sanctified by faith in me."

That task under the Great Commission continues to be ours today...

At the conclusion of our worship service we will be commissioned to arise and go, just as Phillip was...

- **May we be faithful in all that God calls us to do this week!**