

## Acts 8:26-40

A young preacher tried not to show his surprise when only one member showed up for the Sunday Service. The weather was very bad, and one old farmer sat in the pew all by himself. The young preacher carried on anyway. He sang the hymns with the farmer, led him through the liturgy, and gave the sermon he had prepared. After church was over, the farmer on his way out, said to the preacher, *“If only one hog comes to the feeding trough when it’s time to eat, I don’t give it the entire bag of food.”*

It’s a good thing for the Ethiopian eunuch that Philip did not share that farmer’s philosophy. He dumped out the whole feed bag for him. Beginning with the Prophet Isaiah, Philip took that eunuch through all six chief parts of Luther’s Small Catechism. And this is long before the Catechism was even written.

It didn’t bother Philip that the Holy Spirit called him to preach to a congregation of only one, and to a member who wasn’t even baptized yet, who knew nothing about Jesus Christ. Philip did not go in the opposite direction as Jonah had. He climbed up into that eunuch’s chariot and he did what he was put there to do. And after the two men parted ways, the angels in heaven were rejoicing. The Bible says, not that the angels rejoice when a large crowd shows up on Easter Sunday, but when one sinner repents. And if you are here today to repent of your sins, the angels are rejoicing today, not because of anything you and I are doing, but that God has drawn you to His House to repent of your sins and to receive His mercy, His forgiveness, through Word and Sacrament.

Now think for a minute...what would you have done, what would you have said if you had been in Philip’s shoes? The door into the eunuch’s heart was open. He was reading the Scriptures. When asked if he understood what he was reading, he said, *“How can I, unless someone guides me?”* What if you were that “someone?” Would you be able to *“give an account for the hope that is in you,”* and *“proclaim...Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light?”* Or are these words from the Book of Hebrews more applicable? *“For though by this time you ought to be teachers, you have need again for someone to teach you.”* If you are not sure what you would say to someone who asks you about the Christian Faith, it’s good that you are here in God’s House, but should you not also be in Bible Class?

When Philip left the eunuch, do you suppose that man, when he got home, tossed the scroll of the Prophet Isaiah into the back corner of his bookshelf? More likely he read the Scriptures daily, which explains to us the “why,” and the “how”--as church tradition tells us--that the eunuch brought the good news of Jesus to his fellow countrymen, and that Christianity spread throughout Ethiopia.

One sinner repented, and through that one man many others were led to Jesus Christ. If only we had been there, hearing what Philip said to the eunuch, then we would know what to say and what to do today. Oh but we do know! For when the two men came upon some water near the road, the eunuch desired to be baptized. And so Philip, who began with Isaiah 53, telling the man the good news of Jesus who suffered and died upon a cross, also told him about Baptism--why Baptism was necessary, that he was a sinner and that he needed the forgiveness, life, and salvation Baptism gives.

What Philip said to that eunuch is the same thing which is taught by confessional Lutherans today. And that is this...that what Jesus did, He did for you; that what Jesus gives, He gives for you. That eunuch wanted to be baptized. It was his idea. *“Look,”* he said, *“here is water! What prevents me from being baptized?”* Philip had taught that man that salvation wasn’t just for others; it was for him.

He had taught him that Jesus suffered and died not just for others, but also for him. That eunuch knew that he, too, was included; that Baptism, forgiveness, and the mercy of God was also for him.

And that's why God has brought you here today. You could be out working in your garden, or tinkering in your garage, or just relaxing on your couch. But God drew you here today because you are as precious to Him as that eunuch was. And your Lord is giving to you the same thing He gave to the eunuch through Philip.

Each and every week Philip is here before you. Just as the Holy Spirit brought him south to the road leading from Jerusalem to Gaza, so the Holy Spirit brought Philip south from Iowa to the road leading into Augusta. We're not told how long Philip was with the eunuch in the chariot, but this Philip has been here with you for more than ten years. That eunuch went on his way rejoicing, not on account of Philip, but because God, through Philip, gave Jesus to him. For more than 150 years a Philip has stood here in this pulpit giving Jesus to you. A Philip has stood before this altar distributing Jesus' body and blood to you. A Philip has stood at the font baptizing sinners like you into Christ Jesus. But the reason you go on your way each week rejoicing is not because of Philip, but because God speaks and works through His Philip's.

You are no different from the eunuch in that you, too, are sinners in need of mercy. If you were not, God would not have drawn you to His House, nor would He have brought this Philip into your chariot. The difference today between you and the eunuch is that he was just one person with Philip, and you are many more than one. But know this for certain...when this Philip says to you that all of you stand guilty before God on account of your sins, I mean each and every one of you. And when this Philip says that God has had mercy on all of you; that He sent His Son to die for all of you, it means that each and every one of you, from the oldest to the youngest, from the best to the worst...each one of you is forgiven by your merciful God. When you come up to the altar, Jesus who died for each one of you, through this Philip, gives to you, one by one, His true flesh and blood for the remission of your sins.

Just as the eunuch went home rejoicing, each one of you can do the same today. For here you have confessed your sins. Here God embraces you in love because Christ died for you. Here He convinces you that each one of you is precious to Him; that He has declared all of you forgiven in Christ. So go on your way rejoicing today, and through you, as He did through the eunuch, God may lead many others, or even just one--one sinner--to life and salvation in Jesus. Amen.