

Philip & Ethiopian

Acts 8:26-40

Intro

Prime example how God through HS direct the mission of the Church

Three point sermon for a change

How does God direct?

Who does God invite?

How does God convert?

How does God direct?

The main thread of the story follows Philip as the Holy Spirit directs him

Through an angel

v26

Very precise instructions!

go to this road at this junction

but no reason

The angel is a give away that this is from God, but we would like to know why

It is a long enough journey by foot, for him to pack, say goodbye to the congregation he has founded

and leave them

Peter and John had visited, ministered and disappeared back to Jerusalem

Did he have to commission new leaders at Samaria?

we don't know

But Philip obeys

And the timing is critical as we see in the rest of the story

Through direct speech

v29

The next direction is through direct speech to Philip

he has arrived, or he is walking along the road as instructed

Is he getting frustrated? What am I doing here Lord

There is nothing in this wilderness!

And then he sees the carriage

In the passage we hear some background about who he is.

But Philip would not have known this yet

Instead the HS speaks to him

Walk next to the chariot

And he does and he observes

Through words of knowledge

v30

Still wondering what Philip is doing he hears someone reading a passage of Isaiah

it may have been read to him by a servant or slave

At least Philip could hear

Drawn by cattle not horses so walking pace

Could he see in the chariot?

Asking if he understood what he was reading

He may have had the sense that the person did not understand

Or was it a word of knowledge: 'he does not understand'

So he asks the question!

And gets quite an irritated response back and an opportunity to step in

Through physical circumstances

Look here is water!

v36

Water in the desert?

Again the timing in all these steps seem to have been critical

Timing - Kairos time

God's time

From asking Philip to the water being there... everything was God's timing

Obedience!

God invited Philip into a strange adventure

And he obeyed

Like Mary

Like Jesus with Lazarus

he waited three days before going to visit

to be in God's timing

Keeping responsibilities lightly

Philip was willing to handover his responsibilities on a spur of the moment so he could do what God asked

Trusting that if God asks, he will also provide for what Philip leaves behind

Finally this story leads into a complete new direction for Philip

Finding himself in Azotus, on the coast north of Gaza, making his way to Caesarea

Where we find that he settles down, has a family,

Prophesing daughters

Acts 21:8-9

Who does God invite?

The Ethiopian

He was

Was excluded from fully participating in Jewish faith

He was not a Jew - he was a stranger

He was castrated

No one who has been emasculated by crushing or cutting may enter the assembly of the Lord.

Deut 23:1

Like the Samaritans he was on the edge of the Jewish community

But the Samaritans had chosen not to be part of temple worship

The Ethiopian was barred from entering

Jesus opens the way

So here in Acts we see that the gospel is available for all

Those who are related Jews but have been rejected and are rejecting

Those who seek God earnestly, like the Ethiopian, but is barred from entry

And later with Cornelius, those who live outside of Israel but seek God

It are the ones that seek God, wherever they are from or whoever they are that Jesus embraces

How does God convert?

God HS converts with Scripture

The Eunuch was reading Isa 53 - the suffering servant

has many passages that foreshadow Christ

And we use this passage a lot over Advent

4 Surely he took up our pain and bore our suffering, yet we considered him punished by God, stricken by him, and afflicted.

5 But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was on him, and by his wounds we are healed.

But also with the help of other Christians

31 "How can I," he said, "unless someone explains it to me?"

And he invites Philip

It is by invitation that we do mission

But the HS gives us the opportunities

But we need to know our Bibles

As Philip was able with this passage and others to explain Jesus to the Ethiopian

But the phrase Philip "began to speak" / "Philip opening his mouth" (lit) may indicate that the Spirit was speaking through Philip

v35

The Ethiopian does not ask for a general explanation though

Who is the prophet talking about, himself or someone else

The Jewish interpretation would be that the Nation of Israel is the Suffering Servant

But the E. not being Jewish has already discarded that

God has already made him realise that His Word is for other than Israel

So which person

Does the chosen passage also show an affinity of E. with the suffering

As he wants to know God, but is not allowed

Or that he himself had to sacrifice something from his body

For the task that he has been given

He may still have been a slave

He may also have had to suffer through his humiliation - and he recognises part of himself in this passage

And therefore in Jesus

How many of us come to Jesus because we recognise some of our suffering in his

And therefore instinctively know that he can heal us?

Sacrament

So when water comes, the E wants to be baptised

Acts 8:37 Some manuscripts include here *Philip said, "If you believe with all your heart, you may." The eunuch answered, "I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God."*

But not all and therefore it is a foot note

Another surviving set of words have not made it in translations either, but may help us to understand the surprising ending

When they came up out of the water, the Spirit fell upon the eunuch, but an angel carried Philip away

This may be a later clarifying edit, that has not be carried over, even as a footnote

But it would explain the rejoicing of the Eunuch

Although it is much nicer to have Philip snatched away, vs carried by an angel

But regardless, The HS converts people through Scripture, others explaining it and the HS coming upon people

What does this mean for us

1. Are we willing in our hearts to be directed by the Spirit in the way that Philip was?

Like a dance where the Spirit is leading, but we step along?

Would this happen to us?

Or does it not because we are not open to give up everything, on the prompting of the Spirit

Maybe this is only for a time in our lives - like Philip

But still are we willing to take risks, when the Spirit prompts us

Maybe if we are willing - he will prompt us more!

2. Are we in danger of excluding those who seek Jesus

People we do not feel classify

Jesus invites in a very special way!

3. Are we prepared to help someone find God?

Through explaining Scripture

To be there at the right time

HS guidance

To let the HS lead and use the opportunities given?

As the story of Philip demonstrates, we, believers in Christ, are the body of Christ

Are we willing?