

“Sharing the Good News”—Acts 8:35-38

The text for this sermon, the theme of which is, “Sharing the Good News”, is Acts 8:35-38 → *Then Philip opened his mouth, and beginning with this Scripture he told him the good news about Jesus. And as they were going along the road they came to some water, and the eunuch said, “See, here is water! What prevents me from being baptized?” And Philip said, “If you believe with all your heart, you may.” And he replied, “I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God.” And he commanded the chariot to stop, and they both went down into the water, Philip and the eunuch, and he baptized him.* This is the text.

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ Jesus:

Returning from the LWML Convention in Pittsburgh in 2013 I boarded the plane to discover one seat left against the back wall of the plane between two young ladies, whom I guessed to be in their 20's. After settling in my seat I greeted the young woman on my right, clearly an attendee of the convention since she was all decked out in purple. I greeted the young woman on my left by asking, “Were you here for the LWML Convention?” When she responded by asking, “What’s an LWML Convention?” my brain immediately smiled with an opportunity!

After explaining LWML she asked me what we do at these

conventions? I told her that we have worship services and Bible studies through which we grow in our faith in Jesus and praise Him. She told me that she really didn't believe in God anymore. I inquired about her "faith journey" to learn that she had been brought up Serbian Orthodox. Asking more questions and listening provided the opportunity to remind her that she had not been baptized Serbian Orthodox but rather she had been baptized Christian. The Holy Spirit used this baptism connection in such a manner where she was willing to engage me for the next two hours on that flight. He gave me the opportunity to share the Good News of forgiveness of sins and faith in Jesus with her.

The Holy Spirit constantly places us in situations which provide opportunities for sharing the Good News—specifically the Good News about Jesus! While I was guided into this situation because I bought an airline ticket to the convention, Philip in our text was specifically guided by *an angel of the Lord* (cf. Acts 8:26) and the Holy Spirit (cf. Acts 8:29) to join an Ethiopian servant who was reading Isaiah 53. When the servant inquired about whom the prophet was speaking, verse 35 of our text says: *Then Philip opened his mouth, and beginning with this Scripture he told him the good news about Jesus.*

What is *the good news about Jesus*? While we are not told specifically what Philip shared with this man, we do know it had something to do with Jesus' crucifixion since Isaiah 53 is a prophecy

graphically depicting His suffering and death for sinners. This is exactly what makes *the good news about Jesus* **good**. It is good news for the terrified conscience—that is, for those who experience the guilt and sorrow over their sin, fearful of the just punishment which they deserve with eternal suffering in hell for their sin.

Various statements in Isaiah 53 present this good news: *Surely He has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows* caused by the guilt of our sin. *He was pierced for our transgressions; He was crushed for our iniquities; upon Him was the chastisement that brought us peace with Yahweh, and with His wounds we are healed*—that is, restored to a “healthy” relationship with God where we are *accounted righteous in His sight* because *He poured out His soul to death as the LORD . . . laid on Him the iniquity of us all*. It’s the *good news* of God’s final perfect sacrifice for your sins in the Person & Work of Jesus, the Christ!

Apparently there was more to this good news which Philip shared with this Ethiopian as we hear what transpired next. Verse 36 of our text says *as they were going along the road they came to some water, and the eunuch said, “See, here is water! What prevents me from being baptized?”* The *good news about Jesus* which Philip shared must have included some kind of teaching about the importance of baptism in relationship with Jesus. Why? Because baptism is the way Jesus has provided to be connected to the benefits of His death and resurrection

for the forgiveness of sins and eternal life. It is a means by which the Holy Spirit appropriates the work of Jesus to sinners.

The importance of baptism in the Christian life must never be underestimated. Jesus says in John 3:5 → *Unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God.* Thus, whenever someone came to faith in Jesus they were immediately baptized. Since *the promise is for you and for your children* (cf. Acts 2:39) Scripture also records converts having their families and households baptized with them. (cf. Acts 10:47-48; 11:14;16:15,33) When Paul encountered some disciples of Jesus who had *not even heard that there is a Holy Spirit* he immediately asked them: *Into what then were you baptized?* (cf. Acts 19:2-3) Thus, when the Ethiopian inquired about being baptized Philip replied in verse 37 of our text: *If you believe with all your heart, you may, to which the Ethiopian replied, "I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God."* Philip then immediately baptized him.

The importance of belonging to Jesus Christ through baptism must always be accompanied by a **continuing faith** as confessed by this Ethiopian eunuch. This is why Jesus said in Mark 16:16 → *Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved, but whoever does not believe will be condemned.* The unfortunate struggle in the midst of spiritual battle with the presence of satan, the world and your own sinful nature is that you are tempted to turn your back on your baptism by failing to continue

believing in Jesus **as God has revealed Him in His Scriptures.**

Too often you may encounter people who confess they believe in Jesus yet understand that faith on the basis of imaginations and notions dreamed up in the drama of life. When confronted about their concepts of faith they immediately wave the banner of “That’s just your interpretation!” and discredit the revealed Word of God which, according to John 20:31, was *written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in His name.* Notice our text records Philip **connecting the Person & Work of Jesus with the written Old Testament Scriptures** as he shared *the good news about Jesus.* Faith in Jesus is always based upon the written Word of God.

Beware—one may verbally say he still “believes” even though he refuses to submit to the Scriptures which define such faith. When confronted with his refusal to obey Christ and insists he still believes, this is not the confession of a person who belongs to Jesus. Neither is it the confession of a person who recognizes his sins and his need for the forgiveness which is dispensed on Christ’s terms. It is the confession of one who has been baptized, yet does not actually believe **on God’s terms.** The Holy Spirit continues to call such a person to repent and *believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God.*

Jesus once told a Jewish scribe, *You are not far from the kingdom of God* as he affirmed Jesus' quoting the Old Testament Scriptures. (cf. Mark 12:28-34) This scribe had faith in Yahweh as did the Ethiopian eunuch in our text. In one sense, they were "half way there," needing someone to connect their faith in the Creator and Lord of the universe with *the good news about Jesus*. Because there are so many who have been baptized but are not continuing in the faith, you have an opportunity to open up discussion to share *the good news about Jesus* with them by pointing them to their Christian baptism. As you listen to them share their "faith journey" along with their struggles you have opportunity to bring Jesus to bear on those struggles so they can hear *the **good news** about Jesus!*

After Philip's encounter with this Ethiopian we have no record in Scripture of his life or activity. We would hope that he would have taken his new faith with him into the daily vocations of his life as he continued to serve the queen of the Ethiopians. Philip was blessed to see the result of the Holy Spirit working faith in Jesus in this man. Many times when sharing *the good news about Jesus* you will not get to see such results. I have no idea what spiritual fruit the Holy Spirit produced in the young woman's life I encountered on the plane that day. However, we trust His continued working on those people with whom we've shared *the good news about Jesus* to produce the results to God's glory in His due time.

Amen.

*In your hearts honor Christ the Lord as holy,
always being prepared to make a defense to anyone
who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you;
yet do it with gentleness and respect.*

(1 Peter 3:15)

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