

Acts 8:26-40 "You Are Taller When You Kneel to Christ"

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 14 January 2024

Preacher: Rev. George Sinclair

[0 : 00] Hi, my name is George Sinclair. I'm the lead pastor of Church of the Messiah. It is wonderful that you would like to check out some of the sermons done by Church of the Messiah, either by myself or some of the others. Listen, just a couple of things. First of all, would you pray for us that we will open God's Word well to His glory and for the good of people like yourself?

The second thing is, if you aren't connected to a church and if you are a Christian, we really, I would really like to encourage you to find a good local church where they believe the Bible, they preach the gospel, and if you have some trouble finding that, send us an email. We will do what we can to help connect you with a good local church wherever you are. And if you're a non-Christian checking us out, we're really, really, really glad you're doing that. Don't hesitate to send us questions. It helps me actually to know, as I'm preaching, how to deal with the types of things that you're really struggling with. So God bless.

Let's just bow our heads in prayer. Father, as we look at your Word, we ask that your Holy Spirit would lead us and guide us into all truth. Father, we know that we need the gospel and your Word to become more and more real to our hearts and our minds, so that we will have a reformation and renewing and revitalization of our mind, that we might know the truth, that we might avoid lies, that we might flee all foolishness and idolatry, and knowing you and knowing the truth, that we would learn to walk in freedom. Father, we ask that you would continue to do this wonderful work in our lives, and we ask this in Jesus' name. Amen. Please be seated. I think Victor forgot his glasses up here, actually. Or somebody did. When I was ordained 100 million years ago, in the Diocese of Ottawa at the time, I mean, the Diocese of Ottawa still exists, but I'm no longer obviously in the Diocese of Ottawa. They didn't pay starting clergy very much. We were paid quite poorly, actually, some of the lowest in the country. And I really felt that I was called to be a minister.

But what I wasn't prepared for, I'd never owned a car before, by the way, actually. We'd just lived downtown, and we walked or took public transit everywhere. And one of the conditions of my employment was to get a car, which ended up being a rust bucket that kept breaking down.

And I was prepared to learn all of the different, you know, stresses of being a minister, and how to be a minister, and how to lead people, and preach, and all of that type of stuff. But what caught me by surprise was struggling with having no money, with having very little money, and not being able to do very much about it. Because one of the conditions of my employment was that I had to have a car, and another condition of my employment was that I wasn't allowed to have another job.

[3 : 20] And I remember it was very hard. We weren't living paycheck to paycheck. We were, we would get into debt, and then, anyway, you don't have to hear all my tales of woe.

But I have such clear memories of looking around. We were just living in a little dinky sub, little dinky condo subdivision. And, and it sort of felt as if it was impossible that I would ever get ahead. Like, I actually really remember, with the house that we were renting, has, it was a house that included a fridge and a stove. And I, I was worried that if I went to my, my next posting, and I had to buy a fridge and a stove, we couldn't afford to buy them, buy one. I, I remember very clearly how, how hard that was for us. And there's a lot of people in our, in our society today that would be very similar. And probably some of you have also lived through times like that. And sometimes the biblical teaching comes across to people in a way which is very dispiriting. It, it, it, it isn't hopeful, but it sucks hope out of you. And the story that we're about to look at today is a story that at first glance is one that would suck hope out of you and could easily dispirit you if you don't understand it in the right context. So it would be very helpful if you open your Bibles. We're going to be looking at Acts chapter 8 verses 26 and following. Acts chapter 8 verses 26 and following.

And what's just happened in, in this book, as I said before, Acts is, was originally written as an eyewitness-based history of the first 30 or so years of the Jesus movement. It was written while many eyewitnesses were still alive and could comment on it. We have this, this version of it. And, and so in this story, what's just happened is they've told this remarkable story of this fellow Philip who had to flee Jerusalem because of a profound persecution that was causing Christians to be thrown into jail or even killed. And he is one of the people who flees that. And as he flees, he tells people about the story of Jesus, why this story of Jesus, who he is, what he taught, what he, why he died, his resurrection, why this is profoundly good news for people. And he comes to this place, as I talked about last week, the main city in Samaria. And he tells this story. And as he's telling this story, God used him in a very powerful way. There were many miracles that were done through Philip's prayers. There were demons that were oppressing people, that people were released from demonization. And the number of

Christians went from just Philip being there, and I'm guessing probably he had a wife and some kids, but that little family to all of a sudden, there was a very large number of people who all were now calling themselves Christians and, and really growing in the faith. And this is where the story takes up. That's sort of the context. And then we come to this very next verse, which is verse 26.

Now an angel of the Lord, an angel of the Lord said to Philip, rise and go toward the south, to the road that goes down from Jerusalem to Gaza. This is a desert place. Now just sort of pause here.

[6 : 50] Here's where Christianity, how stories in the Bible can be very dispiriting to people. I mean, like just, just imagine for a second, we sent somebody out to be a church planter, and they go to a particular city and, and, and there's no, no like church. And then before you know it, there's like 100, 200, 500, 1,000, 2,000 people. And then all of a sudden, this person connected to our church calls us up and says, you know, I think God's telling me to go to this place.

And, and we say, oh, I've never heard of that place. And he said, oh, well that, that's because it's a wilderness area. There's no people there, but I think God's calling me to go there. What, what advice would we give him? We'd say, I don't think you're hearing God right.

Just be honest. That's probably what we would say. We'd probably say to him, it makes absolutely no sense to go from a place where there's, I don't know, a thousand people now who are following Christ, and you're having this great success. Why would you leave that and go now to a wilderness area, a desert area where there's no people? All there are people occasionally going down this road.

This, this is the road that would take people from Jerusalem to Egypt and you have to go through a desert wilderness area. And we would say that that probably is just not hearing God.

And, and part of the reason we think that way, well, you know, obviously you have to, you have to be careful when you think you're hearing from God. And, but, but we also have to be careful about our advice. You see, the, the primary cultural story of Canada, not the primary, one of the main cultural stories of Canada, the stories that we Canadians believe is that we want to get better. We want to progress. We want to, we want to, you know, we want to manage our time better. We want to get promotions. We want to have more money. We want to have a nice house. We want to have, you know, the right number of kids, you know, after we have the married, the right person. And, and so there's lots of stuff in the newspapers and other types of places. These are the types of degrees you should get. These are the workshops that you go to. This is how you learn how to network. This is how you learn how to manage your money. This is how you learn to manage your diet and manage your exercise and all of these types of things. And so the goal of all of it is, is that you, you will get those promotions. You will get those advancements. You will get the house. You will get all of these types of things. In some ways, my unhappiness when I was starting out ministry was because I believed that cultural story. And where I was right now, it didn't seem as if it would ever lead to it.

[9 : 34] And so because we believe this cultural story, when we look at something like this, God appearing, God telling Philip to leave all of this success to go to a desert place.

Well, you know, we Christians, we go, okay, well, we have to believe this, but it's a very dispiriting type of thing. Is God calling me to diminish myself? Is God calling me to not take that promotion, but in fact to ask for a demotion? Like, is God asking me to do things that are going to diminish me, that are going to hurt me? And there have been lots of people within the church throughout the years who have in fact said that, right? There's been whole strains of spirituality that say that, you know, the highest Christian life is the life that you never marry.

For instance, you take a vow of lifelong celibacy and you take vows of poverty. And those are people who do that are in fact the spiritually elite, and that's what you should strive for. So there have been voices within the church that have really emphasized this aspect of being profoundly counter-cultural.

But both are in error in different ways. First of all, the Bible does not mean to dispirit you. It means to give you hope. It's not going to be up on the screen because I didn't think of asking her to put it up, but there's this very wonderful text in Romans, Romans chapter 15, verse 4 to 6, that goes like this. It's a very good verse to memorize or to meditate upon.

And it goes like this, Romans 15, verses 4 to 6. For whatever was written in former days was written for our instruction, that through endurance and through the encouragement of the scriptures, we might have hope.

[11 : 24] May the God of endurance and encouragement grant you to live in such harmony with one another, in accord with Christ Jesus, that together you may with one voice glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. So God doesn't give stories like this to...

He's giving us wisdom. Here's a couple of things. First of all, money and positions of power are in many ways, from a Christian point of view, neutral.

We Canadians don't really accept that. I mean, we're good Canadians, so we would say that we accept that obviously people who live in a rich area of the city aren't better than people who live in a poor area of the city.

That the single mom trying to deal with her kids and having to be on social assistance isn't somehow lower than the really well put together, polished people who live in a richer part of the city.

As good Canadians, we wouldn't want to say that the poor person is defective in any type of way in a moral sense. But we're not really being honest when we say that.

[12 : 37] It's almost always the case that for those of us who have money, those of us who are healthy, those of us who have positions of power, that on one level, we and others do tend to think that we are somehow better than others.

We do put moral worth on money. The Bible puts no moral worth on money. None. A rich person is not more moral than a poor person, per se.

Having lots of money isn't making you more morally worthwhile than those who don't have as much money. In some ways, as well, even things like physical health and having power and prestige are in many ways morally neutral.

As we all know, you can get sick and have all sorts of problems that will lead to your death. And that doesn't mean that you're somehow inferior to those who make lots of money. The Bible paints a very, very different type of picture.

One of the things which makes it hard for us to understand the Christian faith is to understand that God is playing the long game with us. He's not giving you these instructions so that you will be massively successful in the way that Canadians understand success.

[13 : 52] God wants to form you to live with him for all eternity in the new heaven and the new earth. That's how God wants to form you. That's what he does.

That's his long-term plan. I mean, we live in such an immediate time that to have our needs frustrated or to not be able to accomplish some of these things can be very discouraging.

Like, it's very interesting. Like, in those times when I was very, very heavy-hearted about this, I didn't think of the fact that when I came to the church, there was no youth group.

And by that point in time, this was about, like, I remember thinking about this a lot between my second and third year because I was thinking about the fact that I was going to have to move. But by the time I left that church, I had two youth groups, junior high and a high school group, centered around the Bible.

It's funny. I didn't sort of think to myself, well, God's actually using me in this profound way to make a difference in these teenagers. All I was thinking about was that I couldn't afford a fridge because I couldn't afford a fridge or a new car.

[14 : 55] There was somehow something fundamentally bad with me, not that God was using me with having very little money to make a difference in the kids and whatever else I might have done, you know, with my sermons and other types of counseling.

The point of all of this is that we're based on an understanding of human life that says that sometimes to get higher up, you've got to go down.

Not sometimes. To go higher, you've got to go lower. It's teaching us that if I want to truly be tall, I will never be truly tall unless I bow to Jesus.

That when I get on my knees before Jesus, I am taller than when I stand upright, ignoring Christ or even defying him or pursuing some type of idol.

And that's because we understand that this profound story that is in fact the good news that makes us right with God is this. That God, the Son of God, in complete and utter harmony with the Father and with the Holy Spirit, in a union of profound love, that God, the Son of God, seeing this profound need of human beings made in God's image, and that we could not save ourselves, that God, that God, the Son of God set aside his appearance as God, his prerogatives, the worship that he was due, the honor that he was due.

[16 : 33] He set all of those things aside, but remaining fully God, he went down. He came down from heaven, so to speak. And he humbled himself to the point of taking into himself not just our human nature in an abstract sense, but that he came down so low that the one who created the entire universe, actually the flesh that he took into himself began not with a mighty warrior, not with the wisest, most powerful human being on the planet, not the strongest, but as I got, a fertilized cell in the womb of Mary.

How low could God go? But the story continues. This wonderful story continues as God can go even lower than that. In fact, he will do lower than that to pursue you because he loves you.

He will live a fully human life, but not as a rich person or a powerful person or a person with lots of prestige, but as a lower working class person. In an obscure part of the Roman Empire as a people who are conquered.

And he will live that life until his public ministry begins when he is 30-ish. And then he will have this three or so year ministry where he performs miracles.

He teaches wonderful things. He makes profound differences in people's lives. But it all culminates with while he's doing all of those things, not only are some people enamored with him and drawn to him, but many people, very powerful people, come to hate him.

[18 : 07] And so he comes to die upon the cross. And so we see that God, the Son of God, as he descends lower and lower to the point of being a zygote and then a human being, because all human beings begin as a zygote.

That's how every human being is. We begin as a zygote and we go until we die. That's what it means to be a human being. And Jesus dies on the cross. He actually experiences death.

And part of this profound good news is that we understand that when Jesus dies this death, that he himself had never rebelled against God. He had never done anything wrong in his entire life.

There was no person who could say to him validly and fairly that he had ever hurt them. He had only done good. He had only told the truth. He had been, in a sense, pure.

And so when he dies on the cross, this profound mystery is that he's dying as a sacrifice for you and me, who are far from perfect and who are all going to die and have done things that should not have been done and have failed to do things that should really be done.

[19 : 12] And understand shame and wrongdoing and being wronged and reproof and confusion and foolishness and idolatry and all of those things.

And Jesus dies for us. He dies for you and me. And when he dies for you and me, it means that, in a very real sense, all of that comes on him and the punishment that you and I deserve is laid on him.

And so he dies the death of a wrongdoer, even though himself, he has never done anything wrong. And he dies. And how much low can he go? He can go even lower than that because he goes and he dies and he tastes everything there is to taste of death.

But at the end of tasting everything there is to taste of death, he rises from the dead. There have been many people who have died, clinically died, and come back to life.

It's called near-death experiences. There's lots of medical literature around that that really happens. In fact, if you're curious about it, the latest Sean McDowell video is of a doctor who thought that those things didn't happen but studied it and now has come to the conclusion that people really do die.

[20 : 18] And have this, and then are in a period of time with death and then come back to this side of life and talk about it in ways that can't be explained scientifically. It must be something that happens.

But Jesus is very different. He dies and experiences everything there is to experience of death. But then he emerges on the far side of death, alive.

He does not die again. And now, so it is that even now, 2,000 years later, when you hear the story of Jesus and you know that he is alive, he's ascended into heaven, he's going to come again.

You can call out to him and you can ask him that he will be your savior and your lord. That his death will stand for your, that I can call out to him and say, Jesus, may your death, your life and death and resurrection, may you take me for yourself.

May it stand for me. May I be yours. May I believe that this is the plan of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit and the action of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit so that human beings like me who are far from God can be made right with you.

[21 : 22] May it help me to, Father, I believe it. I want that. You've led me to want it. I give myself to you. And Jesus does.

But notice, then, you come to have this understanding of that what reconciles you with God is this profound story of dissent, of dissent, of dissent, of dissent.

But the result of all of that dissent is this offer that lifts you high. That it doesn't matter if you're a Down syndrome believer.

It doesn't matter if you're on the edge of dementia. It doesn't matter if you're very rich. It doesn't matter if you're brilliant. It doesn't matter if you're poor. It doesn't matter if you're physically broken or physically excellent.

Every single one of us, we were really made to know our creator and to be with him forever. And there is no other way of being made right with our creator other than putting our faith and trust in the Lord Jesus Christ.

[22 : 17] And when we put our faith and trust in him, the final word about you or I will not be physically broken, physically incapable, poor, broken, Down syndrome, dementia.

The final word about us when we die is that Jesus will look at you and he will look at me and he will say, Welcome, daughter. Welcome, son. I am so glad that you are now here and you will be with me face to face forever.

As the father smiles at us. That's the final word about us in Christ. So we're taught this very profound story of... See, in a sense, what happens is in our Canadian cultural story, we want to progress, we want to progress, and we want to progress.

But unless that's tempered by some just very, very basic virtues, unless it's tempered by us being willing to die to things, die to our anger, die to our greed, die to wanting to despise others, die to seeing people as rivals.

Unless we're willing to die to those things, even our possessing more money or getting more power will often come at the expense of just becoming more alone. And living a more empty life.

[23 : 39] And so what we see here in this particular story, the very heart of the story, there's another heart that we're going to get to in a moment. The whole story begins because God tells Philip to do something that in his flesh would not seem right.

But the Lord asked Philip to die to himself and say yes. And that's how the story begins.

This act of him being willing to say yes to the Father's command. You know, the whole Christian life is that God...

It isn't that God wants to diminish you. The whole Christian life is that we don't realize the way to real health. Every single person in Canada wants to be generous.

But nobody wants to give away their money. And we all want to have power, but we also want to have power and have people like us. We want to have our own way, but we'd like to be married and have a love relationship.

[24 : 51] You know, you go on and on and on and on. There's all these things that require us to have a type of death if we're to actually succeed in getting what we really want. And the gospel gives a context for that.

It gives a story. And not just a story, but a presence. Christ is with us. See, here it's a very, very different thing if Christ says to me, George, just remember who I am.

How much I love you. Like, I love you so much, George, that I left heaven for you. I became a human being for you. I took my human nature, your human nature.

I suffered for you. I died on the cross for you. I tasted all of death for you. I did all of that for you because I love you. And I am the God, the Son of God.

I, with the Father and the Holy Spirit, I'm the one who created all things and saw human beings when they fell and brought ruin into their own life. And I pursued you because I love you. So will you trust me with my teaching on money?

[25 : 55] Will you trust me that you have to give some of your money away for the local church and for the furtherance of the gospel and for the relief of the poor?

Will you trust me? Will you trust me in the area of your sexuality? Will you trust me? Will you trust me in how you spend your time that your life will be not more unfulfilled because you give up time on Sunday and for spiritual friendships?

Will you trust me? Will you trust me? Remember how much I love you. You see, that's the context for it. You see, human beings in their flesh understand on one level that there's this riddle or enigma in existence that you can get all the promotions and make all the money and end up with a terribly alone and meaningless life and die with no friends.

That you can get to that point where you're not even sure if you can marry somebody if they want to marry you because of your money or if they might want to marry you because they actually love you.

And you can get in positions of power and you wonder if people ever tell you the truth or are they just trying to flatter you? And so they understand there has to be some types of deaths that go on where you don't get your own will all the time, where you listen, where you're kind and where you're generous.

[27 : 25] And one of the things which the gospel sets forth is that we have this person, Jesus. We have his teaching and his example and his presence to help us navigate those things and to set really helpful limits on them.

So the story continues and it continues in addressing another very important fear and need that we have. So you look at it again, God asks us, God asks Philip to do something that makes, well, it just doesn't seem right.

But Philip trusts the Lord that the Lord Jesus Christ loves him and that the Lord Jesus Christ is preparing Philip to spend eternity with him.

And so in verse 27, Philip rises and goes. And there was an Ethiopian eunuch, a court official of Candace, queen of the Ethiopians, who was in charge of all her treasure.

He had come to Jerusalem to worship and was returning seated in his chariot and he was reading the prophet Isaiah. And the Holy Spirit said to Philip, go over and join this chariot.

[28 : 43] So Philip ran to him and heard him reading Isaiah the prophet and asked him, do you understand what you're reading? Just as a bit of an aside, I'm not up to date on all my scholarship, but I understand that in the Confessions of Augustine written in the, I think, late 300s, there's a famous scene in there where he observes somebody reading silently.

And it, I believe, unless it's been changed, it's one of the first times in literature that people observed somebody reading silently. They hadn't figured that out. Everybody read out loud.

Nobody would have just sat in the living room reading quietly. They would have read out loud. That's just how you read. That's how he knew. He didn't have a word of knowledge in this case. He just knew, he knew the Ethiopian eunuch was reading Isaiah because he could hear him reading it and he knew the Bible.

He knew the quote. So Philip, verse 30 again, heard him reading Isaiah and the prophet and asked, do you understand what you're reading? And the eunuch said, how can I, unless someone guides me?

And the eunuch invited Philip to come up and sit with him. Now the passage of the scripture that he was reading was this, like a sheep he was led to the slaughter and like a lamb before its shearer is silent, so he opens not his mouth.

[30 : 05] In his humiliation, justice was denied him. Who can describe his generation for his life is taken away from the earth? And the eunuch said to Philip, about whom, I ask, does the prophet say this about himself or about someone else?

Now just sort of pause here for a second. See, one of the things which is very profound about this story, which we desperately need to hear, see, people can be in very, very large churches and they can hear about all these successful Christians and all these other things that are going, but they themselves might feel, does God actually really care about me?

See, one of the things which is so important about this story is that Philip leaves the nameless crowds to go to one man because this one man matters to God. Right?

You matter to God. You and your uniqueness, your particularity, your struggles, your sins, your hopes, your dreams, your fears. You matter to God. Christ comes not to pursue humanity in general.

He doesn't come to pursue a crowd. He came to pursue Louise, to pursue Josiah, to pursue Diane, to pursue George, to pursue Victor.

[31 : 26] He comes to pursue you. And we see this very powerfully formed just in that the story structures us to understand that he comes and seeks particular people.

but he also comes to pursue those people who, through their own actions or just through the way that life has beaten them up, now feel very far from God.

And that was this Ethiopian eunuch. You have to know a few other things in background to understand this. This Ethiopian eunuch was obviously, even though he was from Ethiopia, he was part of the Jewish world.

He might have been born Jewish or whatever it is, he was part of the Jewish world. And a eunuch means that he's been castrated. And in the religious practices of the day, it means that he could never become a full Jew.

He could never worship at the heart of worship in the Jewish faith. He couldn't. And in fact, whether he had originally made this decision, he could never make decisions all the time, you know, I could pursue the promotions and pursue all of those things and it might damage my marriage, but at the end of the day, I'd much rather have these promotions than my marriage.

[32 : 49] People don't normally consciously say that, but they unconsciously act that way. Sometimes they consciously say it. And they end up making choices and choices and choices, which leaves them alone.

And in that particular world, today you could be the head of the Privy Council or the head of Apple and you don't have to be castrated. But in those days you had to be. And he would have just said, you know, it's worth it.

It's worth it. The food, the cultural experiences, the allure of power, the clothing, the house, the servants, it's worth it.

And so maybe sometime after that he now has a bit of a serious reflection upon all of that. Those of you of a certain age remember Paul Henderson and Paul Henderson became very famous in Canada in the 70s.

He was already a good hockey player, but he got the tie-breaking goals to help Canada come back and beat the Soviet Union in the first ever contest between Canada and the Soviet Union in hockey.

[33 : 53] He got the three goals that won the last three games that they needed to win the series. He won all of them. He got all of those goals. In fact, Wilfrid Laurier University used to be called Waterloo Lutheran University, and this was all just after Paul Henderson did these things.

They did a poll of the university students about how they wanted to rename the university, and the clear winner was that it should be called Paul Henderson University. But the Board of Governors nixed it and said it had to keep the same letters, so they made it Wilfrid Laurier University.

But Paul Henderson became a Christian because he'd reached the pinnacle of hockey and fame, and he said, is that all there is? Is that all there is? Is that all there is?

And so this man who's willingly probably pursued castration so he could have this senior level of government comes later on to this tragic state of affairs where he now wants meaning, but he actually, when he goes to Jerusalem to worship, and he's rich enough that he can afford a scroll of Isaiah, which means he's become very wealthy to be able to afford his own scroll of the book of Isaiah, but when he went there he couldn't be fully in the temple, he had to be in the outskirts in the temple of the Gentiles.

He longed to be close to God but could not be close to God. And so this part that he read, and he probably was reading it over and over and over again because when it says in verse 33, in his humiliation justice was denied him, who can describe his generation for his life is taken away from the earth?

[35 : 31] What that is actually saying is this man died before he could have any children, no progeny, nobody to follow him. That's what that means. He died so it means he will have no children or grandchildren or great-grandchildren.

He dies in a sense childless. And this is obviously, that's partially why he's probably saying, who's he talking about? Is the prophet talking about himself or someone else? Because in some ways he understands he's talking about himself.

You see, this is the other thing why this story is so profound about how in fact there's a God who wants to bring the losers of the world, the ones who've been defeated and crushed by the Canadian cultural story, and been created by, that have been devastated by the idols that we have followed.

followed. And now at some point in time we feel like our life is over and we're a failure and we're far from God and far from our hopes and far from our dreams and God comes and says there can be new life for you.

There are many people in this connected to our church who would love to have children and can't. Either because they can't find someone to marry or because they married and discovered that they were childless.

[36 : 41] they just can't have children. And if that children are a great good but if children become an idol to you and the Canadian cultural story becomes an idol to you, it deepens your disappointment and that feeling like you just are second or third or fourth or fifth class.

And it can be very, very hard. I speak as a man who felt that how could I ever afford a fridge? And we also live at a cultural moment where many people in pursuit of what they think is the good life are turning themselves into eunuchs.

And all of the smart people of Canada say that if you as a young man want to cut off your penis, that's a good thing and will support you.

If you're a woman and you want to remove your breasts and remove your vagina, that that's a good thing for you. And those things, the statistics show they're still depressed afterwards.

And you end up feeling far from God. And you end up feeling far from God. And you end up feeling far from God. And you end up feeling far from God. And you end up feeling far from God. This part that he is reading is from one of the most, maybe the most profound part.

[38 : 08] You should go back and read it later. Isaiah 52, verse 13 to chapter 53, verse 12. It's maybe that nobody reading that can understand that it refers to anybody other than Jesus.

And it describes this good story that I began the whole sermon with about how Jesus comes and pursues you. And he doesn't look at you and say, I'm not interested in you because you're childless.

I'm not interested in you because you haven't been able to marry. I'm not interested in you because you've made yourself into a eunuch. I'm not interested in you because you've ruined your life with alcohol.

I'm not interested in you because you've ruined your life by pursuing power and prestige. Jesus doesn't come and say that. He comes and says, dear one, I love you.

I died for you. And if you put your faith and trust in me, you will not be far off. I will bring you to the Father's heart.

[39 : 05] the Holy Spirit will indwell you. And in me, you will be part of my people and you will be part of the new heaven and the new earth that goes on for all eternity.

And that's my heart for you. That's my heart for you. Verse 35, then Philip opened his mouth and beginning with the scripture, he told the eunuch the good news about Jesus.

And as they were going along the road, obviously there's some time that's passed, an hour, two hours, three hours. They come to some water and the eunuch said, see here is water. What prevents me from being baptized?

He's given his life to Christ. And the eunuch commands the chariot to stop and they both went down into the water, Philip and eunuch. And Philip baptized the eunuch.

He was not far from God. He belonged to Christ. He was close to the Father's heart. He knew the Father's profound love for him.

[40 : 18] You see, in Christ, the final word about you will not be failure. It's hard when God asks us to do things in his word that goes against our inclinations.

And a lot of times we don't do it. And hopefully over time we learn to do it more and more. but he, and he hasn't given us stories like this so we will feel like failures, but to encourage us to remember Jesus, to remember that in Christ we can come together on a Sunday morning saying together, Father, you are our refuge and our strength.

I haven't had a good week and I give you thanks and praise that in Christ you will never let me go. And I give you thanks and praise that my final destiny is to be yours. Thank you that Jesus will be with me this week and let's live this week.

I thank you. Make your hope of glory more real to my life. That's the Christian life. That's the power of this story. Invite you to stand. Just whether here or online, just want to encourage you.

Jesus, I want to give you a prayer of this. And I want to say to you, Jesus, I've heard this about you. Be my Savior and my Lord.

[41 : 54] Help me to lay my whole life, give me my whole life to you. Be my Savior and Lord. And Jesus takes you. And in some ways the rest of the Christian life is also just saying that. Not that we become his. Once he takes us, he never lets us go.

But, you know, that's in a sense what we do on a Sunday. Jesus, I want you to, you know, this week I often live by my own desires and my own plans. And I would have been way wiser if I just trusted you as my Savior and Lord.

So, Father, forgive me. Help me to walk this week trusting you as my Savior and my Lord. You begin and you walk the same way. Let's pray. Father, thank you so much for Jesus.

Thank you that he doesn't just care for us as a church or because we're all from Canada, we're all from Africa, we're all from Europe or wherever, Father, that you love each of us particular and in an individual way that you know us not in general, but you know us.

You see our lives, you see our past, you see our present, you see our future and you love us and you are for us. You are for us in your Son.

[43 : 04] And we ask, Father, that this story of who Jesus is and what he did for us, that that might become more and more real to our hearts and form how we view money and how we view sexuality and how we view family life and careers and time.

Father, may that form us. And Father, we give you thanks and praise that it's not just a story that informs us, but that the Holy Spirit is present in our lives and we believe in Christ and that Christ walks with us.

And Father, we ask that you help us to keep in step with the Spirit and to trust that our loving Savior, Jesus, is with us as we do each day and we do each moment in each day.

So Father, we ask that you help us to die to ourself and obey you, learning to live for your glory, knowing that as we bow to Jesus, you make us tall. And we ask all these things in the name of Jesus, your Son and our Savior.

Amen. Please be seated. We don't have any formal intercessions, but we should spend some time in prayer. So if you would just take a posture of prayer, let's just, what I'm going to say is, Lord, in your mercy.

[44 : 10] And when I say, Lord, in your mercy, if you would respond, hear our prayer. Let's pray. Father, we give you thanks and praise for the country of Canada. We know, Father, that there are things in Canada which are very sinful.

But Father, we give you thanks so we can be part of this country. We commend into your hands our Prime Minister, the Premiers of Ontario and Quebec, the Mayors of Ottawa and Gatineau.

We commend into your hands all who work on Parliament Hill and all who work in the civil service. Father, we commend them into your hands. We commend into your hands the business leaders and the leaders of the arts and education and all that make Canada Canada.

Father, we commend them into your hands. We ask that your Holy Spirit, Father, would help them to pursue that which leads to true peace and prosperity and justice and mercy in our country.

And that our prosperity would be used, Father, to help those around the world who are in great need. Lord, in your mercy, hear our prayer. Father, we know that there are many Christians who are suffering persecution.

[45 : 21] We know that today in places like India and Pakistan, in North Korea and in Iran and China, that there is much persecution of our brothers and sisters in Christ.

Father, we commend these, our brothers and sisters, into your hands. We ask that you would protect them, that you would suckle them, that you would give them courage.

Father, we are humbled by their courage. And we ask that you would turn their persecutors away from persecution and turn their hearts to Jesus. Lord, in your mercy, hear our prayer.

Father, we give you thanks and praise for our church. We thank you, Father, that we are not the only church in the city. We ask that you would grow the bonds of affection between our church and all gospel-shaped, gospel-sharing churches in this city.

And we ask, Father, for ourselves, that you would grant us reformation and renewal and revival. Lord, in your mercy, hear our prayer. Father, we thank and praise you for churches around the world.

[46 : 25] We thank you for our unity with churches all over, Father, through the Global Anglican Futures Movement. We thank you, Father, that we are part of a diocese.

But most of all, Father, we thank you for missionaries. And we ask your blessing upon those in our congregation that have gone out to be missionaries and those whom we support as missionaries.

Lord, in your mercy, hear our prayer. Father, you have put us in positions where we have obligations to pray for people, for our neighbors, our family members, our friends, our co-workers.

Father, we ask that you teach us and help us to pray for them. Lord, in your mercy, hear our prayer. Father, we pray for those who do not yet know Jesus as Savior and Lord.

We ask that you would lead us to pray for certain people and give us opportunities to share the good news of Christ, not trusting in our own power or wisdom, but trusting in your word and the moving of your Holy Spirit.

[47 : 27] Lord, in your mercy, hear our prayer. Father, we come before you with our own needs, needs for direction, needs to help to deal with alcohol or addiction, needs to do, Father, around our personal lives and decisions about jobs and futures, particular sins that are really oppressing us.

Father, we commend ourselves into your hands at this time. We bring our own needs before you. We ask that your Holy Spirit would move and work in our lives so that we might live free lives for your glory.

Lord, in your mercy, hear our prayer. We ask all of these things in the name of Jesus, your Son and our Savior, our only mediator and advocate. We ask all of these things in the name of Jesus.

Amen. We ask all of us for the next Lord, our welcome. We ask all this things in the frente e every time that we pray for our people, our Lord, our mercy with us through our God, the Father, our Lord, the Lord with the■■■■■, your■■, your heart, the God, our God is the continuit of the kingdom to the kingdom of desire and the soul, our trust.

It's so sweet. We ask all the people that they read to do today. Remember, call on faith, the Lord, what we are going to happen to be ■■■■■city in the guild.