

## A Mission of Divine Appointments

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Ass Ass 1, 2, there we go. Acts chapter 8, if you didn't hear that.

And by the way, you know, there's just some songs I think I could sing every single week. That last, really all three of the ones tonight are ones that I think I could sing every, one being reminded that God has our plans made out and they're good even when we don't understand them.

All my ways are known by him. Holy, holy, holy and the goodness of God. So I hope tonight's worship through music has stirred your heart and ready for worship through the proclamation of his word.

So Acts chapter 8. Hey, one quick note. I do want to, in the announcement earlier, that is just women's coats, just women's coats. If you've got men's coats that you want to get rid of, Fred said he'd be glad to take those.

So just women's coats for our coat drive. So Acts chapter 8, we're going to be looking at a fairly lengthy passage this evening. But for our scripture reading, we're going to begin at verse 26 and read down through the end of the chapter.

[1:53] And so let's get after it. So if you're able to stand, please do so. As we honor the reading of God's word, Acts chapter 8. Luke is writing this book under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit as he gives us the acts of the apostles and the early church.

He writes this, And the spirit said to Philip, Go over and join this chariot.

So Philip ran to him and heard him reading Isaiah the prophet and asked, Do you understand what you're reading? And he said, Well, how can I unless someone guides me?

And he invited Philip to come up and sit with him. Now the passage of scripture that he was reading was this. Like a sheep, he was led to the slaughter. Like a lamb before its shearer is silent.

So he opens not his mouth. In his humiliation, justice was denied him. Who can describe his generation? For his life is taken away from the earth.

[3:17] And the eunuch said to Philip, About whom I ask you, does the prophet say this? About himself or about someone else? Then Philip opened his mouth and began 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 he commanded the chariot to stop. And they both went down into the water, Philip and the eunuch, and he baptized him. And when they came up out of the water, the spirit of the Lord carried Philip away.

And the eunuch saw him no more and went on his way rejoicing. Let's pray together. Lord, we thank you for this opportunity to be under the authority of your word.

And pray, God, that you would speak to us tonight. There's so much in this passage that I trust we're going to not only learn, but be encouraged by. I'm convinced that every single person that's in this place tonight and everybody that will be watching online or listening in some way, you have a word for them.

[ 4 : 24 ] There is something, Lord Jesus, you want to speak to them by your Holy Spirit to us. And so would you give us ears to hear and hearts to receive your word to us tonight.

And we will glorify Jesus alone. And we ask it in his name. And God's people said, Amen. You can be seated. It was supposed to be just another routine flight to San Antonio.

Bill assumed everything would be normal. He'd made this trip numerous times. But when he arrived at the terminal on this particular day, he experienced everything he hates about flying.

First of all, the flight was overbooked. Add to that, the terminal was crammed with people. Add to that, his flight would end up being delayed. Then when he finally boarded, someone was in his seat and the overhead luggage compartment was full.

Nothing, for those of you that fly, you know those are all the reasons you hate flying. Nothing was going according to Bill's plans. When he finally sat down in his newly assigned seat, he prayed that prayer.

[ 5 : 38 ] I'll be honest with you. I've prayed this prayer before. You've prayed this prayer before. Lord, if there is only one empty seat on this plane, let it be the one next to me.

You've prayed that prayer. Don't look all spiritual. And Bill prayed that prayer. Oh, just let no one be next to me. And as soon as he had prayed that prayer, a voice from above him said, Excuse me, sir.

I'm in that seat next to you. When Bill looked up, he almost gasped. Before him was a mid-20s-year-old man in a red kind of jumpsuit whose body had been severely disfigured with burns.

His face had been reconstructed. Most of his nose removed. Many of his fingers were missing. He was a mutilated man.

As the plane taxied down the runway, both of these two men sat silent. In Bill's mind, he's racing. He's everything from compassionate towards this man to curious about this man.

[ 6 : 52 ] And finally, he felt one of those, you ever had one of those nudges from the Lord? It's called being led by the Spirit of God to start a conversation. And so he turns over and he says, What's your name?

John, the man replied. They chatted a little bit more. And then finally, Bill said, Do you mind telling me what happened to you? And John said, I don't mind at all.

In fact, I'd far rather people ask me than stare at me. For the next several moments, John began to share how he and his father had been involved in a gas tanker accident that had left him severely burned.

He had spent, listen, he had spent three years in the hospital, four years in seclusion, with over 130 operations just to stay alive.

After he finished telling the story, Bill felt another one of those nudges from the Lord. And he asked John this, After everything that you've been through, have you stopped to consider God?

[ 8 : 02 ] There's a little bit of a pause. And then John replied, I've wondered about God. Like, why did he spare my life? But if I'm honest, I haven't considered God much.

And for the rest of the flight, Bill shared with John about a Savior who knows physical suffering. About a Savior who even willingly and intentionally came into a world of physical suffering for us.

And by the time the plane landed, a mutilated man found hope and salvation in a mutilated man.

I want to ask you this evening, Faith Family, do you believe that conversation was a coincidence? Do you believe that conversation just so happened?

That Bill just happened to have his seat double booked? That he ended up in the seat next to John? That they both happened to just be on that plane on that day to have that conversation?

[ 9 : 13 ] You see, if I know anything about the mission of Christ, it is this, Faith Family. it is full of divine appointments. Here's what I mean.

Those situations or conversations that are unmistakably, there's no other way to explain it. They are designed by God. And at first, they feel like interruptions, do they not?

This isn't what you planned. It's not where you wanted to sit. This is not how you would have designed it, and yet God designed it for a purpose. That interaction with the waitress at Applebee's.

Running into the person at the grocery store of all people. That random, out of nowhere conversation that you had at the coffee shop. Showing up at church on that specific day to hear that specific message.

Notice this on the screen, Faith Family. A life on mission does not live by coincidence. It lives by providence. And all God's people shouted, Amen.

[ 10 : 21 ] If we are going to be on mission for Jesus, as Acts teaches us, we are going to have to learn we don't live by coincidence. We live by divine providence.

That God is orchestrating our lives in such a way for the mission of Christ. That we are to live in the daily awareness of the opportunities that God has brought our way.

It is exactly what we see here in Acts chapter 8. In fact, here in Acts chapter 8, Luke shows us, I believe, the divine providence that's guiding this mission.

This mission is not happening by the strategy of man. This mission is happening by the divine providence of God. And nothing and no one will stop it.

I see three things in this lengthy text that I'm going to unpack for the next few moments. First is the divine expansion of the mission. We'll see that early in chapter 8. Next, the divine exposing of the mission.

[ 11 : 22 ] That's midway through. And then lastly, as the chapter ends, the divine encounters of the mission. Let's take these one by one. First, the divine expansion of the mission.

Here in Acts 8, Luke is showing us that the mission, and we've been seeing this already in the book of Acts, it's expanding. It's growing. It's moving forward. It's moving outward. And it's happening according to the providence of God.

God is sovereign over his own mission. Now, the reason why I say that this is according to the providence of God is that on the surface, this would appear as anything but successful.

If you're writing this story, it's not how you'd write it. It doesn't seem like anything amazing is happening. Let me tell you what I mean. Remember the context of where we left off last week.

Who just died last week? I don't mean like they died last week. I mean last week in the book of Acts, who died? Stephen did. And Stephen is one of the church's great leaders.

[ 12 : 24 ] In Acts chapter 6, we see he's one of the men that helps take care of the crisis with the distribution of food. He's one of the greatest leaders in the early church is now dead.

Second, the church, according to Acts chapter 8, is scattered, which we'll see here in just a moment. The Christians are now scattered in other regions and stop for just a moment and realize how big of a deal that is.

For example, that's the loss of friendships, the loss of community, the loss of support. Might I remind you in Acts 2 and Acts 4 how these people have been taking care of one another?

Do you remember how they've been selling their possessions to take care of anybody that was in need? Well, now that network is no more. They are scattered all around.

Add to that, thirdly, a powerful and prestigious leader by the name of, anybody want to take a guess? Saul wants these Christians destroyed.

[ 13 : 27 ] Now, I want to ask you this. Does that, by any normal measurement, seem like success? Based on what I described, does it seem like the church is winning? Not at all.

Okay, would you describe this as successful for a church? The pastor dies. Don't amen that, okay? Some of you might be like, amen, that'd be successful. The pastor dies, the church is dissolved, and the police are searching for you.

Would you say, wow, revival really broke out in that church? No, that's not how you would describe success or think about in a business. The CEO goes to prison, everybody gets laid off, and the IRS is investigating.

Would you describe that as successful? No. And yet, I'm telling you that on the surface, by all physical measurements, is what's happening to the church. But look how Luke describes it.

Verse 4 of chapter 8. Now, those who were scattered went about preaching the word.

[ 14 : 29 ] Do you know what Luke wants the reader to understand? It's this. Notice it on the screen. The authorities thought they were shutting Christianity down. In reality, they were sending Christianity out.

Do you see what God is doing? God wants the gospel to get to other regions. So how does he do that? He sends Christians there.

We're going to advance this thing. We're going to move it forward. And all the while, Saul will think he's winning. The government will think they're winning.

And all the while, by divine providence of God, the kingdom will advance. That's what's going down here. On the surface, it feels like persecution.

But behind the curtain, it's divine providence. It's God moving the mission forward. Let me give you three, I think, practical implications that I hope will encourage you from this point.

[ 15 : 33 ] The first is this. We talk about this a lot here at Faith Family. And anytime I bring it up, it's always like, you know, somebody's here tonight for this specific point.

This may be the only point that you take away. I hope not. But it's a good one. And it's this, that God is sovereign over our suffering. I want you to stop and think about that from the perspective of the early church.

See, when it's your life that's being scattered, it feels like there's no purpose. I mean, do you think these early Christians were like, yes, we get to leave our homes and life as we know it without any idea where we're going to end up and how we'll take care of ourselves?

See, we so romanticize sometimes the scripture like we think these Christians are just whistling on their way to other regions like, you know, God is just so amazing and so sovereign.

No, they're scared. Their being scattered was suffering. And yet Luke is showing us it was according to the divine providence of God.

[ 16 : 33 ] But being on mission means we have to embrace God's plan over ours. Are you with me? So let me say this.

Let me say this. Okay? And I know this is crazy. A lot of preachers won't preach this way. But let me say this to you. To get the gospel to one company, God may have you lose your job to get you to that next company.

And what does it feel like to you? Unemployment. I lost my job. This stinks. This is not the way I wanted it. I don't understand any plan or purpose in this at all.

But when you live on mission, you realize that God is simply redirecting you somewhere else for the sake of the gospel. These Christians didn't understand why they're being scattered.

And you may not understand why you were laid off from work. You may not understand why you had to move to a different neighborhood. You may not realize why you're having to go through so many treatments at the hospital.

[ 17 : 37 ] But it may very well be God has you right where he wants you for the sake of the mission because otherwise that nurse would never hear. Otherwise, that neighbor would never know.

You see, you can either look at your life according to your plans or you can look at your life according to the fact that I am on mission under the hand of a sovereign God and that means I'm going to go places I never thought I'd go.

And I'm going to go through things I never thought I'd have to go through. This will preach. I've got to hurry up. This is going to be a long message if I don't speed it up. Here we go. Notice this on the screen. But I hope this will land on you.

Your suffering may be the path to someone's salvation. Your scattering, your suffering may actually be the pathway to someone else's suffering.

I think about my own life. Like there are people that we've been able to reach through faith family the gospel may have not gotten to in that way without going through what you go through. God scatters us and it seems like there's no purpose.

[ 18 : 41 ] But when we live on mission we know that God is sovereign over our suffering. Amen? Number two. Number two. This is important as well. Is that winning sometimes feels like losing.

Winning sometimes feels like losing. Here's what I want to say and I want to say it strong and loudly. Never judge the success of the mission by external circumstances or by what you see. Jesus taught us in the parable of the wheat and the weeds Matthew chapter 13 that the kingdom is going to grow as well as the weeds or evil things are going to grow as well.

In other words sometimes you're going to look at the field and you're like I don't see any harvest at all. In fact I see more weed than I see wheat. Like why don't we just go and rip it up?

And Jesus is like no. God is sovereign over the field. There will be times it looks like you're losing but trust me you're winning if you're on the side of the mission of God.

Let me remind you quickly. Do you think Joseph felt like he was winning when he was in prison? Do you think Naomi felt like she was winning when she came back with no husband or sons? Do you think Isaiah felt like he was winning when the people he was called to preach to wouldn't listen?

[ 19 : 59 ] Do you think Christianity looked like it was winning one Friday afternoon on Calvary? No. But we learn this. You never judge the success of God's mission by the physical circumstances.

It feels like you're losing we're getting scattered and Stephen died and Saul's after us. I know. It's exactly how I planned it.

Because now more people are going to hear the gospel and this thing's going to grow like wildfire. You wouldn't have planned it this way because you don't know as much as I know God says.

So I know you're hurting that you got scattered but remember you're on mission and this is being led by the divine providence of God.

Third and final implication of the first point of which I have ten. Kidding. Third implication is this. God uses ordinary people to advance the mission. God uses ordinary people to advance the mission.

[ 21 : 03 ] This won't be on the screen but if you have your Bibles notice specifically in where is this their verse chapter 8 verse 1 says Saul approved his execution.

There arose on that day a great persecution against the church in Jerusalem. They're all scattered throughout the regions of Judea Samaria except the apostles. So guess who wasn't a part of this expanding the mission in other places?

The professionals. apostles. The apostles stay in Jerusalem and those that get scattered are the and I don't really believe in these categories but for the sake of understanding the everyday Christian.

Right? And so in other words what Luke wants you to see is that the early church grew through everyday Christians taking the message of Jesus with them every day. That really should encourage you.

Like you should really put this on a coffee cup and drink out of that cup every morning so that you're reminded that who God used in the early church wasn't always the apostles it was everyday people like Stephen and as we'll see in a moment Philip.

[ 22 : 14 ] People that got scattered and took the message of Jesus with them. Some of you say well pastor I'm not significant let me ask you some questions. I've asked these questions to you before.

Who led Billy Graham to Christ? Who is the preacher? Preaching when Charles Spurgeon was saved. Who financed the mission of William Carey? I guarantee you no one in this place knows the answer to them.

Your pastor included. But guess what? Someone did. You don't know their names but their ministry was absolutely important to the mission of Christ. Listen I believe this with all that I am that when we get to heaven the heroes of the faith are going to be truck drivers, janitors, teachers, and hotel maids who went every day with Jesus every day.

That's how the mission through the divine providence of God expands. Notice one of these everyday Christians here that Luke introduces us to a man by the name of Philip.

And Philip here is used for the mission because he has a stuttering problem. He has a spiritual stuttering problem. Look at verse 5. Acts 8 verse 5. Philip went and I want you to read the yellow part.

[ 23 : 24 ] Philip went down to the city of Samaria and proclaimed to them Christ. Look at verse 12. Look at verse 12. But when they believed, Philip, as he preached the good news about the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women.

Look at verse 35. Then Philip opened his mouth and beginning with the scripture, told him the good news about Jesus. Now verse 40. But Philip found himself in Azotas and he passed through and he preached the gospel to all the towns until he came to Caesarea.

It reminds me of an old hymn. Any of y'all love old hymns? Like I loved the old hymns growing up and there was an old hymn we used to sing all the time called I Love to Tell the Story.

Here's the lyrics. I love to tell the story, 'tis pleasant to repeat, what seems each time I tell it more wonderfully sweet. I love to tell the story for some have never heard the message of salvation from God's own holy word.

I love to tell the story to will be my theme in glory, to tell the old, old story of Jesus and his love. Philip had a stuttering problem.

[ 24 : 47 ] He couldn't shut up about Jesus. Can you? Can I?

Do we have a spiritual stuttering problem? We can't, not that we're arrogant jerks for Jesus, but wherever we go, we can't stop talking about Jesus.

That's how the mission spreads. God is expanding the kingdom through people just like us who went about every day with Jesus every day.

Next, we see here that as the mission expands, two things happen. That is, false belief gets exposed and true belief is produced, which by the way was similar back in Acts 5 when the church was growing with Ananias and Sapphira.

Let's pick it up, Acts 8 and verse 9. A man by the name of Simon. But there was a man named Simon who'd previously practiced magic in the city and amazed the people of Samaria saying that he himself was somebody great.

[ 26 : 04 ] And they all paid attention to him from the least to the greatest saying, this man is the power of God that is called great. And they paid attention to him because for a long time he'd amazed them with his magic.

But when they believed Philip as he preached the good news about the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women. Even Simon himself believed, and after being baptized he continued with Philip and seeing signs and great miracles performed, he was amazed.

Now, on the surface this would seem pretty amazing, right? I mean, you read this and you think if there's a guy as influential as Simon, this must be a win for Christianity.

I mean, this is someone that has been converted from the occult. When you read that word magic, don't think David Copperfield or Harry Potter or something like that.

This was a dealer in the occult that has just been, so it appears, rescued by the faith. On the surface, it seems like an amazing conversion, religion, but this is what you have to do.

[ 27 : 12 ] Are you listening? Give it time. Give it time. Because authentic faith will always prove itself. Because look at what happens in verse 18 as it relates to Simon.

Now when Simon saw the Spirit was given through the laying on of the apostles' hands, he offered them money, saying, hey, give me this power also so that anyone on whom I lay my hands may receive the Holy Spirit.

But Peter said to him, may your silver perish with you because you thought that you could obtain the gift of God with money. You have neither part nor lot in this matter for your heart is not right before God.

Repent therefore of this wickedness of yours and pray that the Lord, if possible, the intent of your heart may be forgiven you. In other words, what happens with just a little bit of time?

It's revealed that Simon didn't want Jesus, he wanted more power. When he saw the power of God on the person like Philip, he's like, I want some of that too.

[ 28 : 16 ] I want that in my arsenal as well. And so Jesus is the ticket for me to have a more powerful life, a more successful life. It is very important for us to realize this as the mission advances.

Notice it on the screen. Initial faith doesn't always mean authentic faith. Can I say that again? Initial Faith does not mean it is authentic faith.

This is a clear teaching in Scripture. You remember Jesus and the parable of the soils or the seed, how the seed falls on different soils, and there is one that does shoot up, does appear for a little while, but it doesn't last.

It isn't persevering and authentic faith. The Apostle John speaks of this in 1 John. They went out of us proving that they were never of us.

You have to give faith time because real faith perseveres. A faith that doesn't last is not authentic genuine faith.

[ 29 : 27 ] Let me ask you this question. It's a very important question. In fact, it's the dividing line between authentic faith and whether or not you're in this for something else. Is Jesus your life or is Jesus the ticket to a better life?

Let me ask it a different way. What is it that gets you excited about Christianity? Do you get excited because of forgiveness of your sins? That is amazing, isn't it? You'd think you'd say yes, but I guess we're full of very righteous people in this place.

What gets you excited? Is it heaven? I can't wait to get to heaven and all the things that will be a part of heaven. Is it that you get some sense of peace of mind? Or is it God himself?

John Piper writes this. I think it's a very helpful quote. He says this, If you could have heaven with no sickness, all the friends you ever had on earth, all the food you ever liked, all the leisure activities you ever enjoyed, all the natural beauties you ever saw, and no human conflict or any natural disasters, could you be satisfied with heaven if Christ were not there?

People, this is going to get real, people who would be happy in heaven if Christ were not there will not be there. The gospel is not a way to get people to heaven, it's a way to get people to God.

[ 30 : 57 ] You're not being reconciled to heaven, you're being reconciled to God himself. If we don't want God above all things, we have not been converted by the gospel.

That's Simon's story here. As the mission goes forward, what gets exposed is there is an initial belief like, I want some of that, and I want peace of mind, and sure, I want some forgiveness of sins, and I'd love to have a little Holy Spirit power so that I can do what you guys can do, and all that reveals is you didn't want Christ, and he is the pearl of great price.

The one so valuable you'd sell everything you have just to buy the field that has that treasure. Christ is what we want more than anything else.

So, we've seen the divine expansion of the mission, we've seen divine exposing in Simon's case of the mission, and now I want to show us as we close the divine encounter of the mission.



Pick it up in verse 26, chapter 8, verse 26. Now, an angel of the Lord said to Philip, rise and go towards the south. That sounds like an amazing command, by the way, especially during wintertime.

[ 32 : 24 ] To the road that goes down from Jerusalem to Gaza, this is a desert place. Now, let me ask you this, okay, we're almost done, give me just a few moments. Has God ever asked you to do anything that just seemed crazy?

I mean, just like, that doesn't make any sense whatsoever at all. There is no rationality behind what God is asking me to do. Well, that's what's happening here, because if you know anything about the landscape of the ancient Near East, you know that there is nothing down this road.

Gaza is barren. It's like the country boonies, okay? There ain't nothing down that road worth seeing at all. It's like, God, you're calling me to leave this amazing ministry.

Look at all the people that are coming to faith here, and you call me to the middle of nowhere. It's like, I've got this booming, exploding business in Minneapolis, and you're asking me to go to, I don't know, Iowa.

No offense to those of you who are from Iowa, right? But, there ain't much there, right? It's like, why would I leave here to go there? Like, it doesn't really seem to make any sense at all.

[ 33 : 33 ] And I guarantee you that there are people in this place that have felt that way before. Like, the road that God took you down was a road that seemed pointless. Why is God taking me down this unemployment road?

Why is God taking me down this singleness road? Why is God taking me to Minnesota? Why is God, I'm on this road, and it doesn't seem to make any sense why I'm on this road?

Please tell me there are some of you that relate to that. This road doesn't make any sense at all, but listen, it's in these moments that we need to keep in mind you're still on mission and God wants to see if you're sensitive to the Spirit's leading when His plans are different than yours.

Remember, I've told you this earlier, notice it on the screen, that what you see as an interruption God plans as a divine appointment. You think there's nothing down this road, just wait and see.

Here's what's down this road, verse 27. And He rose and went, and there was an Ethiopian, a eunuch, a court official of Candace, queen of the Ethiopians, who was in charge of all her treasure, and He had come to Jerusalem to worship.

[ 34 : 51 ] And returning, He was seated in His chariot, reading the prophet Isaiah. And the spirit said to Philip, go over and join the chariot. So Philip ran to him and heard him reading Isaiah the prophet and asked, do you understand what you're reading?

And he said, well, how can I unless someone guides me? And he invited Philip to come up and sit with him. So here's what's down this road. What's down this road is a man, and here's what we know about this man.

First, he's an Ethiopian. Now, when you read that he's an Ethiopian, don't think third world country poor. What you should think instead is outsider.

The reason why I say you should think outsider, not some type of economic status, because his economic status is powerful. This man has a lot of money. He serves the queen.

Like, this guy is not hurting for money or power or prestige. What's shocking about reading this is that this guy is not a Middle Eastern Jew.

[ 35 : 51 ] We are dealing now with an African man. That is significant to the mission of Christ. And praise God for that, because we are starting to see glimpses how this mission is moving to all peoples everywhere.

So first, he's Ethiopian. Second, he's empty. What I mean by the fact that he's empty is he's searching. The text tells us that he's returning from Jerusalem where he went to worship.

And what you need to understand, faith families, that does not just happen. People don't just say, you know, I'm not Jewish and I'm just going to go to Jerusalem and worship. Particularly this man.

And he would have been turned away without any question at all by the Jewish leaders, by the Jews in Jerusalem. And so now he is in a rest area in the middle of nowhere seeking answers.

I do not understand what I'm reading. This man is Ethiopian. This man is empty. He is seeking and searching answers. Third, he is a eunuch. This is the awkward part.

[ 36 : 56 ] Six times Luke emphasizes that he is a eunuch. Thank you, Luke, for emphasizing that six times. That means he's been castrated. Why would someone in this position be castrated?

Because in the ancient Near East, if you work in the royal court, castration was required to ensure that you did not mess with the royal line. What that means is eunuch said goodbye to family in a culture where family is everything.

Are you getting what's going down here? Are you understanding who Philip is meeting on this road? He is a sexually altered African man with power but no peace who has just been rejected by the Jews parked on the side of the road.

Bet Philip didn't see that one coming. On this road to nowhere. And of all things, it just so happens that guess what this man is reading?

He's reading Isaiah. And what specific passage in Isaiah is he reading? Here it is. This foreigner is reading this.

[ 38 : 08 ] Let not the foreigner who has joined himself to the Lord say, the Lord will separate me from his people. This eunuch without family is reading and let not the eunuch say, behold, I am a dry tree.

The one who has been cut off, literally, is reading to the eunuchs who keep my Sabbaths, who choose the things that please me and hold fast to my covenant.

I will give in my house and within my walls a monument and a name better than sons and daughters. I will give them an everlasting name that shall not be cut off.

This one rejected by the religious people is reading, he was oppressed and afflicted yet he opened not his mouth like a lamb that was led to slaughter like sheep before its shear is silent.

He opened not his mouth. You got to be kidding me. That man is reading that text? Do you think that just so happened?

[ 39 : 13 ] I don't. This was a divine appointment of God that a man cut off is reading about a man who would be cut off, who would be separated from God.

A man rejected by religious people is reading about a man who would be rejected by religious people. a man who is empty and searching for answers, reading about a man who would provide those answers through an empty grave.

And Philip just so happens to be walking by and by the end of the conversation, do you know what happens? A mutilated man finds hope and salvation in a mutilated man.

Verse 38, What seemed like an interruption in Philip's life was a divine appointment where he would once again have the opportunity to share the good news of Jesus and the mission would continue to expand at a rest area on a highway in Iowa in the middle of nowhere and God keeps his kingdom growing.

If there's any big takeaway from tonight, although there are many in this passage and I didn't even scratch the surface, there's more here, here's the big takeaway that I would give you as I close and it's this.

[ 41 : 06 ] Notice on the screen. God uses unlikely people like Philip because remember the apostles are still in Jerusalem. So God uses unlikely people like Philip to reach unlikely people like Samaritans and eunuchs.

That's the everyday mission of Jesus Christ and look at me faith family, that is your life every day. The kingdom of God in the grocery store checkout line.

The kingdom of God as you're waiting to get your oil changed. The kingdom of God as you're broke down on the side of the road. The kingdom of God as you're walking the road of singleness.

The mission is continuing to advance by his divine providence through us every day to the most unlikely of people.

And you and I more than anyone else ought to know that that is true because we are just like John on that airplane.

[ 42 : 21 ] We are just like the eunuch on the side of the road on the way to Gaza. Sin has mutilated our lives.

Sin has burned us from our bodies to our soul. You may be prideful, you may be gay, you may be alcoholic, you may be full of greed, you may be opposed to God, you may have been in church all your life playing a religious game, you may be sexually altered, you may be sexually addictive, you may be feeling like you're cut off because you're not good enough, you're not attractive enough, you're not talented enough, but I tell you this, the good news of Jesus Christ is that there is hope for every single one of us.

Every single one of us. Why? Because Jesus was cut off on the cross so that we would not be cut off from God.

And that happened not by accident, but by divine appointment. It was God's plan to crucify his son so that everyone who has been mutilated by sin would find hope and salvation in a mutilated man.

And all God's people said, amen. Let's pray. Lord, thank you for what you've taught us tonight and thank you for the reminder that your kingdom is growing and this mission is advancing even when we can't see it.

[ 43 : 58 ] And all the off-road places that we think surely the kingdom of God is not there, we think it's at big large conferences and concerts and places where there's thousands of people like, oh, that's impressive, that looks like the kingdom.

no, it's a conversation over coffee in the corner of a Starbucks. And that running into someone you never would have dreamed of and yet it happened on that specific day in that random place and in everywhere in between the mission advances and you clearly only by your grace because it's not because we deserve it, you're using us.

People who because of your grace have a stuttering problem, we just can't stop talking about Jesus. And you use that to advance your kingdom.

So help us be on mission as we go from this place realizing that we're not walking into random. we're walking according to providence.

That ought to give us great hope and comfort. In Jesus' name, amen.