

Telling The Good News About Jesus

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Date: 26 December 2022

Preacher: Rev James Maciver

[0 : 00] 40. We're singing verses 1 to 9. At all times I will bless the Lord. I'll praise him with my voice.

Because I glory in the Lord, let troubled souls rejoice. Together let us praise the Lord, exalt his name with me. I sought the Lord, his answer came, from fears he set me free.

They look to him and shine with joy, they are not put to shame. This suffering man cried to the Lord, from him deliverance came. The angel of the Lord surrounds and guards continually all those who fear and honor him.

He sets his people free. Come, taste and see, the Lord is good, who trusts in him is blessed. O fear the Lord, you saints, with need you will not be oppressed.

Psalms 34, these verses will stand to sing. At all times I will praise and bless the Lord. At all times I will bless the Lord.

[1 : 08] I'll praise him with my voice. Because I glory in the Lord.

Let troubled souls rejoice. Together let us praise the Lord.

Lord, exalt his name with me. I sought the Lord, his answer came.

From fear she set me free. The Lord, his name is blessed. They look to him and shine with joy.

They are not put to shame. The suffering man cried to the Lord.

[2 : 29] From whom the deliverance came. The angel of the Lord surrounds and guards continually.

He sets his people free. All those who fear and honor him. He sets his people free.

He's a land of ego. He wants to hang. The Lord roles are blessed. From her heart, he desires, will not obst gaz. The Lord resistant habrades, will not spoec. rays must of 87s face with yesterday, O fear the Lord violad in his flesh.

and heaven is blessed. O dear the Lord, you sins with me, you will not be oppressed.

Once again, let's join together in prayer. Let's call upon the Lord in prayer. Our gracious and ever-blessed God, help us to draw near to you, believing that you are, that you are the one who rewards those who diligently seek you.

[4 : 13] We thank you, O Lord, for this renewed opportunity, for every time we come, we pray that you would fill us with a sense of privilege, that you would enable us, Lord, to see how unworthy we are, that we should come into your presence, that we should have admission into your holy presence.

And as we also seek, Lord, that you would impress our unworthiness upon us, help us also to realize your worthiness to be praised. And give us once again, Lord, tonight to see the ground upon which we approach you in the person and in the work of our Lord Jesus Christ.

We give thanks, O Lord, that all the blessings we receive come to us through him. Because they come to us through him, we give thanks that they are secure for us, that they are guaranteed forevermore to be blessings that will be enjoyed by your people.

And we thank you that as you join us to him, as we come in faith, as we come giving ourselves trustingly to him, we thank you, Lord, for the way in which you have promised us that all the good things that he has procured for his people are made over to us.

We give thanks even in providence that all things work together for good to those who love the Lord, to those who are called according to your purpose. We bless you for the spiritual gifts, especially, that accrue to us and are dispensed to us even on a daily basis.

[5 : 45] We give thanks for those, O Lord, that you have given to your people that are given once and for all. The gift of forgiveness of sin, of justification of the righteousness that comes to us, the righteousness of Christ that is imputed to us and received by faith alone.

And we bless you, Lord, once that this has been accomplished and applied to us. It is something that remains in place and will be so forevermore. We thank you for the gift and the privilege and the benefit of your sanctifying work through your Spirit, the grace of adoption by which we are received into the number of God's children.

We thank you, Lord, for all the practical gifts and all the things that follow on from those great spiritual realities. We thank you for your fatherly care, for the way that you look after your people so well, even in times of your providence being mysterious to them.

Lord, we thank you that in your wisdom you are directing all things towards that glorious end for them that will bring them into your everlasting kingdom, that will make them princes in your presence, that will truly give them to reflect forever and be always in the image of Christ, glorifying the Lord God.

Lord, bless us, Lord, we pray as we gather here in your presence once again under your word. Bless your word to us and help us to be thankful for it. Lord, you have called us by your word already to praise you.

[7 : 28] You have given us in your word so much that we can use in your praise. You have given us matters to sing. You have given us prayers that are recorded for us, the prayers of your people in different circumstances, not only in the book of Psalms, but in other places throughout your word.

We find those who addressed you having their prayers recorded for our benefit. We pray, Lord, that you would help us to follow their example, to enter into that engagement with you that they engaged in, and to experience the benefits that they experienced, not only during their time of prayer, but also in response to it as you answered their cry and brought to them the blessings that you had for them.

And we thank you that we have in our congregational life so much that we give thanks for as we come towards the end of this current year. We give thanks, Lord, for all that you have been to us, for everything that we have known of your goodness stretching out before us.

We think of the words of the psalmist who also could refer to your goodness, and an exclamation say, how great is your goodness to those who fear you, laid up for those who fear you, going ahead of those who fear you.

And we give thanks, Lord, for the prospect of more of your goodness being experienced by us, and the ways in which your goodness is extended to us. Lord, we pray your blessing upon our gathering this evening.

[9 : 05] Grace us, we pray, with your presence. Help us to know that you are here for our good, that you are here because you take delight in meeting with your people, that your favor is upon them, that you are committed to their welfare, to their advancement in righteousness and in eternal life.

And we thank you, O Lord, that as we come to you in the name of Christ, all of these great blessings are assured in him for all the promises of God are yea and amen in him.

And we thank you tonight, Lord, that we come on the basis of all that he is, all that he has done, all that he will yet do. We pray, Lord, your blessing for all our families tonight as we think of them.

Wherever they are in the world, we commit them to you. We ask, Lord, that you would bless them in all the different family circles that we represent here, and all those who belong to us and are near and dear to us.

We think of them, Lord, at this time, as we look towards the end of this year and the beginning of a new one, we pray that you would fill our lives with hope, with the hope of the gospel, with the hope that you bring to your own saved people.

[10 : 20] And we ask, Lord, that as we pray for them, we ask that you would do for them more than we can ask or think, for this is how you term yourself in the Scriptures as our God, the God who is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we are able to ask or think.

Oh, God, we thank you that there is no limit to your ability and that you are the God who has surprised your people so often and even at times when they were despondent and beginning to doubt and to fail, you entered into their circumstances and you brought them such an experience as lifted them up and revived and quickened their souls.

We pray in our day, Lord, too, that you would do this for us. We confess, O Lord, that at times we feel despondent, that we find as we look out over the world and as we see the state of the world, as we find so much rebellion against you, as we find so many alternatives to trusting in you, and even as we look in in ourselves, O Lord, and find that there is so much there in our own hearts and minds that we would rather it were not there at all, doubts and fears and failings.

Lord, we pray that in your mercy that you would lift us up, that you would enable us even tonight for these few moments to have a heavenly experience through your blessing of what it is to come to know you, to follow you, to be blessed by you.

Lord, remember, we pray all those tonight who do not have the capacity to be here, we think especially of those who are ill, those who belong to us as a congregation, in hospital or in care homes or elsewhere.

[12 : 03] Remember them, Lord, at this time, we pray. Graciously bless those who are bereaved, those who sorrow over the loss of loved ones, and reflect in times gone by of loved ones who are with them and are now no more here, whether it be in recent bereavement or even back in time.

Grant, Lord, your comfort and your direction for them. Remember again our children, our young people, our young adults, those who are here, O Lord, and are going through school at this time and facing challenges in school as regarding their belief in the Bible, their belief in Christ as the Savior.

Sanctify your word to them, we pray. Sanctify their young lives. Give them to be rooted and grounded in you as their Savior. Hear the prayers of those who pray for them in their own families and in their relatives.

Grant the teaching that they receive at home or in church will continue to be blessed by them. Bless our leaders, we pray, at this time in the congregation, those who give so willingly of their time to teach our young children to enable them also to engage in different activities.

Lord, we commit them to you and ask that you would continue to bless these activities and these groups and gatherings from time to time. Lord, we pray that there may be a lasting fruit of harvest of righteousness in these young lives.

[13 : 30] We know they face so many challenges, Lord, in these days. We know that the world out there holds out so much sinful attraction for them and that seeks to draw them away from the things of Christ.

We pray that you would sanctify them, that you would protect them and shield them by your own power and that you would prove to be for them, Lord, a God who is so worthy of our trust and we pray that you would give them in their young days to trust in you.

We ask that you bless now as we gather together all other gatherings of your people in this town and throughout our nation. Bless us, we pray, throughout our own presbytery and our own denomination.

Remember us, Lord, we pray as a church. We give thanks for all the upholding and the strengthening and the encouragements that you have given us over these past years when we have faced this COVID pandemic and had so many challenges, Lord, in your providence.

We give thanks for your guidance of us, for the wisdom that you imparted, for the way in which you upheld us and strengthened us and enabled us, Lord, to be encouraged by knowing of others who had turned to the gospel and turned to yourself and gave evidence that they had come to trust in the living God.

[14 : 48] Oh, remember us, Lord, we pray in these days to come and grant that you would remove this virus, this pandemic so that we may see your own intervention, that we may find, Lord, that we are released from the restrictions we presently are observing and especially we pray this, Lord, for our church gatherings that we give thanks for being able to gather in this way and for the technology that enables others to join us, Lord, online.

We do pray that we may in days to come be pleased to be able to have the final restrictions removed so that we may sing with gusto once again so that we may come to observe and partake of the Lord's Supper.

And in all of these things, Lord, hear us as we cry out to you for we acknowledge that you alone are God, that you preside over all the events of life and that it is your prerogative to bring or to remove whatever you have seen fit to impose in your own providence and government at this time.

And so remember, again, our leaders in the nation as we continue to pray for them, we do pray again that you would bless them by giving them to acknowledge you, to be turned into your ways and to show forth in their lives evidence that they indeed are turned into wisdom and in the ways of your peace.

Receive us now, we pray and hear our prayer and forgive our sin for Jesus' sake. Amen. We're going to read from God's Word now in the book of Acts.

[16 : 23] The book of Acts in chapter 8, we're reading from verse 26 and we'll read to the end of the chapters. That's the book of Acts chapter 8 and at verse 26.

Now an angel of the Lord said to Philip, Rise and go towards the south, to the road that goes down from Jerusalem to Gaza.

This is a desert place and he arose 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.

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

So Philip ran to meet him and heard him reading Isaiah the prophet and asked, Do you understand what you are reading? And he said, How can I unless someone guides me?

[17 : 33] And he 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 dumb, 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. 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 beginning with the scripture he told them 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? They 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.

But Philip found himself at Azotus and as he passed through he preached the gospel to all the towns until he came to Caesarea. Once again we pray that God will bless to us this reading of his word to his own praise.

[18 : 56] Let's again sing his praise this time in Psalm 36. Again it's in Psalm 36 at verse 5. That's on page 44. Verses 5 to 10.

Your steadfast love is great, O Lord. It reaches heaven high. Your faithfulness is wonderful extending to the sky. Your righteousness is very great like mountains high and steep.

Your justice is like ocean depths both man and beast you keep. How precious is your steadfast love what confidence it brings both high and low find shelter in the shadow of your wings.

They feast within your house and drink from streams of your delight for with you is the source of life in your light we see light. To those who know you as their God your steadfast love impart maintain your righteousness to those of pure and upright heart.

these verses 5 to 10. Your steadfast love is great, O Lord. Your steadfast love is great, O Lord.

[20 : 12] It reaches heaven high. Your faithfulness is wonderful extending to the sky.

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the feast the feast within your house and drink from streams of your delight or with you is the source of life of life in your light we see light in your light we see light to those who know you you do not serve your steadfast love in heart you stand fast love and heart maintain your righteousness to those of good and a bright heart of good and a bright heart if you turn with me please now to the passage we read in Acts chapter 8 and we can consider this together this evening from verse 26 through to the end of the chapter chapter 8 of the book of Acts let me just read verse 35 which we are going to take as the focal point of our study this evening then Philip opened his mouth and beginning with the scripture he told him the good news about Jesus he told him the good news the gospel about Jesus very interesting the way that the book of Acts brings together in these chapters an account of the conversion of three specific people three specific individuals and these three representatives these three individuals are representatives of the way in which humanity was divided into three great groupings all the way from the Old Testament onwards from the time when the from the time of the sons of Noah onwards you remember the sons of Noah Ham and Shem and Japheth and how you find described in Genesis chapter 10 what's usually referred to as the table of the nations you find there a description of their descendants those that were descended from these three sons of Noah Ham and Shem and Japheth and as you find here a description of the Ethiopian eunuch followed by the conversion of Saul of Tarsus who became Paul the apostle and then in chapter 10 the conversion of Cornelius a centurion so you find these three groupings of humanity represented in these three individuals you recall after chapter 10 of Genesis in chapter 11 you have the story the account of the Tower of Babel the Tower of Babel is the way in which it describes the way in which fallen humanity trying to look after itself themselves without God came to have a plan that he tried to put into action and began to put into action which was to build a great tower right up to the heavens and to preserve for themselves a name to keep themselves without any reference to God and God looked down and came down as you know and interrupted their plans and humanity came to be scattered from there over the face of the earth and he confounded their languages he actually brought about the difference of languages

[25 : 44] by which you find from then onwards in different parts of the world that his language developed so people could not understand one another unless they learned each other's languages of course in the New Testament that process is reversed in Christ because you find in the second chapter of the book of Acts that wonderful account of all of these people that come from different parts of the world to actually stand there in the presence of God and the day of Pentecost and the spirit of the Lord came and you remember the wonderful description there of people hearing the apostles in their own language as if they were indeed at home and then you find here these three representatives as you find them there described the descendants of Ham and Shem and Japheth the Ethiopian eunuch representing Africa where Ham, the descendants of Ham, settled and then you find Shem who is of the Jewish

Jewish descent from Shem covenant people, the people that became Israel and then you find Japheth who is you might say the other parts of Europe especially in contrast with those two others well in this very context in these chapters in Acts you find these three groupings are actually brought together as it were in these three individuals that represent them and what you find in that is this wonderful emphasis that's elsewhere of course in the New Testament especially that divided humanity is reunited in Christ's people because Christ's people draw people from all these parts of the world into the one family of God when we come to have our trust in Christ and come to be Christ's people when we are adopted into the family of God we join people from all the different parts especially from these three sections of humanity that are brought together so that the division is no longer there they are spiritually one in Christ Jesus and that itself is a great emphasis that you can follow out in the teaching of the New Testament in some of the epistles especially so here is what you find in these chapters but we are focusing in on the Ethiopian eunuch this descendant of Ham as he is described for us in these passages now first of all I want to just deal with the situation the situation that led to the meeting between this eunuch he is not named and this man Philip who is an evangelist and he went about here preaching the gospel circumstances the situation that led to them coming together and meeting together to the Ethiopian's advantage the second thing we can see in the passage is the explanation which led to the Ethiopian's conversion the way that Philip explained to him the meaning of this scripture that he was reading in Isaiah 53 and then beginning at that scripture he told them the good news about Jesus so the two things briefly tonight we are looking at the situation which brought them together and the explanation that brought conversion to the Ethiopian here is the situation first of all as you find it described in the chapter here and throughout the book of Acts it is an interesting study in itself to actually follow out the way that the book of Acts sets out

God's plan as something that has always been set whether it is for individuals or for nations or for different groups of people but you will find that God's plan as it is set and brings people together and means people also sometimes parting from each other whatever the plan is whether it is for individuals for families for nations for empires God has already planned God has purposed that the purpose of God is there and everything that happens falls within that purpose of God and that is a very important thing for us to remember that everything comes about by the will of God by the purpose of God that has set things in place from all eternity that does not mean we do not have to exercise our own minds that we do not have liberty to actually consider consider the gospel call and respond to the call of Jesus in the gospel it is not a predetermined state where you do not find people being able to exercise their own minds the gospel addresses our minds addresses our thought processes and addresses our hearts addresses our conscience that is by the way that is by the way but he is bringing together this man who is seeking the meaning of this scripture and also this Philip this evangelist who is specifically set by God set apart to be a gospel preacher to be one who explains the gospel and the meaning of Christ especially remember in the shorter catechism as you learnt most of you will have learnt the shorter catechism at some point and question 11 what are God's works of providence

God's works of providence are his most holy wise and powerful preserving and governing all his creatures and all their actions and although there is a liberty and contingency within God's plan nevertheless God's plan is God's plan God's providence is his most holy wise and powerful preserving and governing all his creatures and all their actions and there is many a day you are thankful for that as a Christian that is not left you are not left to your own devices that you are not left to make up your own plan as to what your life is that you are not left to look out in the world and think well who is actually in control of this world who is in charge of these proceedings this God is and that is all the way through the book of Acts as it is in scripture as well of course in Jerusalem at this time this man was returning from Jerusalem we were told that he was an important official in the court of Kandasi who was queen of the Ethiopians he was in charge in fact of her treasury he had come up to Jerusalem to worship and he was returning to Ethiopia to his own place he was returning to his own country sitting in a chariot it wouldn't have been a grand stately chariot but nevertheless he was being he was being driven along in a chariot and that was him making his way from Jerusalem back home and Jerusalem at the time of course was in a state of high excitement he had been to Jerusalem he had obviously heard of things he had perhaps witnessed things in Jerusalem as well during these very heady days leading up to the crucifixion the trial the crucifixion of Christ the death of Christ the resurrection of Christ following three days afterwards an intense time in Jerusalem an intense time for the people just to consider what was going on what was the reason for all of these things and people of course like the apostles preaching the gospel and themselves struggling to understand until the spirit came at Pentecost what all of these things meant at least meant in detail so remarkable events of Jesus' death and his resurrection and all these things surrounding that would have been very much in the mind of this man and I think he would probably have been very much influenced by the things that he saw and heard in Jerusalem at that time and was on his way home but reading the scroll of Isaiah he was reading this book that we know as the book of Isaiah and as he was reading he was making his way home he had obviously been in some way or other struck by this passage and as he was looking at this passage he was wondering what does this passage mean?

Who is this prophet Isaiah speaking about? What does it mean that he's saying he has believed our report? What does it mean that here's someone who was bruised for our iniquities?

[34 : 19] Who was put to death for our sins? Who is he speaking of? He was wrestling with this passage in his mind as he made his way back home he was searching for the meaning of this passage of Isaiah there's the Ethiopian that's his set of circumstances that's how things have worked for him and into the picture comes Philip this man who's been set apart by God now previously you read about him we didn't read from the beginning of the chapter but you go back to verse 4 you can see those who were scattered abroad that was in the persecution that broke out there scattered throughout Judea and Samaria except the apostles Saul of course at that time Saul who became Paul the apostle was still ravaging the church as you see there so the scattering took place and Philip went down to the city of Samaria and proclaimed to them the Christ and the crowds with one accord paid attention to what was being said by Philip when they heard him and saw the signs that he did many unclean spirits came out of many who were possessed crying with a loud voice and many who were paralyzed or lame were healed so there was much joy in that city there you see Philip already working as an evangelist as someone who's preaching the gospel explaining the gospel and it's that Philip that now comes in verse 26 to be instructed by God through an angel to go up from where he is to go towards the south to the road that goes down from Jerusalem to Gaza he's now given specific instructions and what do you next read?

you read that he arose and went and he ran down that road down that road and he was actually responding to the instruction of God and as the instruction went ahead to tell him to go over and join this chariot in verse 30 Philip ran to him and then he heard him he would have been speaking out loud reading the scroll of Isaiah reading this passage he heard him as he was reading this out loud but you see the emphasis there and just don't just pass over it too quickly you see it saying the spirit said go over and join this chariot so Philip ran to him yes I'm sure there was an amount of catching up to do but Philip ran to him he didn't take his time he didn't walk he didn't amble over he didn't say I'll just take it easy and I'll catch up with him sometime he ran to him and that itself is making a point for us I think tonight that for all of us is very important especially for all of us who seek to make Jesus known to explain the meaning of the gospel to people around us or even in our own families because here is this man Peter he is running for this work this is an important work this is so important that he runs to the accomplishment of it as we come to the end of this very challenging year as it's in sight and as we hope for much more liberty to be engaged in the gospel for God in this year to come as we pray for and as we hope and as we trust will be the case let's make it a year of running let's make it a year of being eager to actually bring the gospel to that world out there let's make it a year of running with a message such as Philip has here the message of the gospel the message of the gospel because that world in its epidemic in this pandemic and its post pandemic state as at all times is going to be very needy of that message not only very needy but perhaps actually more ready than it's been before because people undoubtedly will have been and are asking questions maybe not to the extent that you'd like maybe not to the extent that those in high government are asking these serious questions but people undoubtedly are asking the question well where is there a meaning to this pandemic what is there to this pandemic more than just an actual physical phenomenon what is there more to it than an illness what is there to it more than just something that's come upon us as out of nowhere and people are asking certain questions to do with spiritual matters is there any connection with God is God speaking to us through this is this something that I can use in order to try and find out more about God is this something that will help me towards closing in with God all of these and other questions are being asked and as they're being asked so you and I as those who know the gospel are being tasked by the same providence that brought these two people together as it will bring us together

God willing over the next few months over the next year so God is tasking us as he tasked Philip go near to that person go near to these people tell them why Jesus is important to you tell them what the gospel is about tell them that there is an answer to our human dilemma and our human problem and our human failures and our human weakness and tell them that the answer is not in our own human strength in human ingenuity in technology in any of these things important or they may be the answer is in Jesus the answer is in Christ and that's the providence that led to them meeting and we need to catch up as this man Philip did to catch up with this chariot we need to catch up with those who are lost because they are perishing they don't know much of the gospel many of them and most of them that do know something of the gospel have chosen just to ignore it chosen that it is not for them and we can't just leave things as if to say well that is their choice let's just move on that is not what God has placed in our hearts he has placed in our hearts he has placed in our hearts the burden of making Jesus known the burden of explaining as this Philip did to this eunuch telling the good news about Jesus amongst all the bad news amongst everything that fills people's hearts with sadness with sorrow with pain with anxiety with issues of health whether mental or physical all of the things that cause distress distress to people

God has an answer to that it may not take everything away from the lives that people experience and have but it will certainly bring solid basis and meaning and above all righteousness into their lives remember providence in this year in my life and in your life is going to bring people together in different circumstances ask in those circumstances of yourself what is this for me in terms of making Jesus known how do I use this to the gospel's advantage if God has brought about this providence that's brought me to meet with such and such a person there must be something in here that has to do with Jesus and making Jesus known and telling the good news about Jesus about Jesus and is that not why we're here this evening because God in his providence has made a way for you to come to be under the gospel tonight and God in his providence has brought a way for me to stand in this pulpit and declare to you the good news about Jesus there's the same thing that happened here in the book of Acts between this Ethiopian and Philip as providence brought them together as the circumstances the situation brought them together these two men out of all that was happening in the world but you can see every single thing that happened in the lead up to this was for this specific purpose that Philip would actually tell this man the good news about Jesus all the things that had gone before and all the things that came after all fitted towards this specific moment this important moment this crucial moment of Philip telling this man the good news about Jesus so that's the situation that led to their meeting

God in charge God arranging it and these two people who had never met each other before and here they are in a critical meeting a crucial moment for both of them especially for the Ethiopian but for Philip too because he is serving the Lord and as he is brought by God to meet with this man so they come to meet in this extraordinary meeting which has always been planned by God and which is going to lead to this Ethiopian conversion and not only that but who knows because you read afterwards he went away to his own land he went on his way rejoicing who knows what the outcome of this was in Ethiopia in the place in Ethiopia wherever he belonged to who knows how many people came to have the good news about Jesus spoken to them from this Ethiopian who had come himself to have it spoken to him in this extraordinary meeting between himself and Philip well it's extraordinary in many ways in many other ways it's just ordinary it's just the events of another day in Philip's life and so it will be

[44 : 14] God willing for you and for me as each day passes and gives way to another day there's another time in God's providence when something comes our way and something to do with Jesus is brought before us to disseminate to speak out others about in the circumstances of God's wise providence but secondly let's look at the explanation which led to his conversion because as Philip responded and ran to this chariot he heard this man reading Isaiah the prophet and he asked the passage he was reading was chapter 53 as we know it in the prophecy of Isaiah and well isn't that a remarkable providence itself because here is Philip a man used by God to teach people about Jesus to present the good news and here is someone who has already given him an opening because he's reading in the Old Testament probably the passage that's most clearly to do and most detailed with regard to the death and the circumstances of the death of Christ no preacher could ask for a better or more advantageous situation than that it's as if you had all come tonight and were just crowding around this pulpit saying tell me the meaning of this passage please explain to me this passage well I hope you've come of course seeking to have scripture explained to you and seeking that the Lord will actually direct your heart to the to the knowledge of Christ through this very scripture through this very scripture itself as he led this Ethiopian through Philip to come to understand it but what an amazing and wonderful opportunity for Philip here's just a text as it were dropped into his lap as he heard this man reading the prophecy of Isaiah who could ask for more what greater advantage could he have than that a preacher of the gospel a man seeking the meaning of scripture and reading this passage that's all to do with a prophecy of the coming Messiah and the sufferings and the death of Jesus and so

Philip proceeds to guide him to Jesus and there are three brief points I want to mention in Philip's guiding of this man to Jesus because they're important too in regard to the opportunities we have ourselves to come to know Jesus for ourselves or else to try and guide by God's help others to Jesus as well the first thing you notice is that Philip began by addressing his understanding Philip ran to him and heard him reading and he said do you understand what you are reading how you see the first point that Philip wanted to make the thing that he wanted this Ethiopian's mind to focus upon was his understanding of the passage do you understand he was hearing him reading it do you understand what you are reading what an important emphasis what a key point that is because it's crucial that we understand the scriptures I don't mean by that that you understand everything that's in the Bible completely and totally but understand it in the sense in which Philip meant it understand it for your saving benefit understand it savingly understand it so that it brings to you the knowledge of Christ and brings you into that living union with Christ that's the question that God is addressing to you through the gospel tonight and he's addressing me as well just because

I happen to preach the gospel doesn't mean that I don't need this passage or this question addressed to myself let's just all think of ourselves in the place of this eunuch and God addressing us through the speaker of the gospel and God saying to us do you understand what you are reading have you found Christ in the gospel you understand it in terms of its outward meaning you understand the account it gives of various events you understand that these actually took place as the gospel record actually brings before you but then the understanding that Philip is talking of is an understanding of your mind an understanding of your will an understanding of your heart do you understand what you are reading is your heart in it is Jesus real to you in it you could put it that way is Jesus real to you is God real to you in your reading of scripture in your reading of this book this word that God has so freely given to you what an important question that is because there are many people maybe some even here tonight who are very familiar with the Bible many familiar with the terms of the gospel with the teaching of the gospel but still don't know Christ personally still aren't united to Christ savingly still haven't put their trust in him still haven't received him as he is offered in the gospel still haven't willingly surrendered their heart to him to be ruled by him if that is you tonight then here is God asking you do you understand what you are reading and here is God saying to you listen to what this passage is saying about this man and about how this Philip

Philip dealt with him and how he brought him to the understanding that he needed to have and it is crucial we understand these things if you cast your mind back to the other book that Luke wrote he wrote the book of Acts and he also wrote the gospel of Luke as we know it you remember in the last chapter of Luke's gospel Luke 24 at verse 27 that Jesus drew near to these two disciples disciples who were about seven miles from Jerusalem walking to the village called Emmaus and verse 28 they drew near to the village to which they were going Jesus acted as if he were going further but they urged him strongly saying stay with us for it is towards evening and the day is now far spent so he went in to stay with them while he was at the table with them he took bread and blessed it and broke them and their eyes were opened and they recognized him and he said did not our hearts burn within us while he talked to us on the road and opened to us the scriptures

Jesus had opened to opened the scriptures to them because he had spoken to them on the way as he had drawn them into the conversation as to what had happened in Jerusalem in these days something like we've said in our introduction to our study this evening well he's they said this is what happened some of those who went to the tomb they found it just as the women had said but they didn't see and then he began to speak to them of the scriptures and the prophets beginning with Moses and all the prophets he interpreted to them in all the scriptures the things concerning himself what a commentary what a sermon the son of God himself the savior explaining to these men leading these men through the scriptures beginning with Moses and then through the prophets he interpreted to them in all the scriptures the things concerning himself he opened their mind he set before them the truth of the things that they had just said they had heard and were witnesses of but now he's opening their minds to understand the scriptures do you understand said Philip the things that you're reading and have we prayed today before we came to church we prayed to God to give us an understanding to give us more than a mental understanding to give us that spiritual recognition and understanding of Jesus himself to find him in the scriptures that's the first point he began with the understanding and then he moved on to respond to the interest that this man had because the man said verse 31 how can I understand unless someone guides me and he invited Philip to come up and sit with him and we're told the passage that he was reading in Isaiah and then verse 34 the eunuch said to Philip about whom I ask you does the prophet say this about himself or about someone else he began with focusing on the understanding and then as this man responded and as he said something more about his search for the truth and the meaning of this passage

[53 : 30] Philip responded with the truth about Jesus he explained to him he told him in the scripture the good news about Jesus well of course that's what we want to see isn't it in this coming year we want to see people taking up an interest in Jesus this is not conversion for this man he's not yet changed but he has that interest and Philip responds to that question to that interest to that desire of this man and this is what he then does he explains to him he tells him the good news about Jesus and obviously that was blessed to the man now you notice what he's saying beginning with this scripture that's what the key really was as far as Philip was concerned God had actually placed this in his lap and he took the scripture and he worked out from there to explain the things of Christ to present the good news of Christ and that's such an important point that world out there is filled with bad news that world out there is filled with bad thoughts about this gospel about this Jesus about your worship about the church of God about the emphases that you find in the Bible that contradicts and is very antagonistic to the ways of the world especially in those in those ways of the world that are in direct contrast to the ways of God and that's what Philip did he began with the scripture and that's where we begin you don't begin with any kind of philosophy you don't begin with something that you think yourself is maybe adequate for the moment he began with this scripture you always come to work from scripture into your situation not from the situation into the scriptures he began with the scripture and of course it means a certain knowledge of scripture is necessary but that's what he did he began with this scripture and it really reminds us doesn't it that here is in Isaiah 53 a scripture about Jesus it doesn't matter where you begin in the Bible but somewhere or other there's a road that leads to Jesus

Jesus is really the centerpiece Jesus is really the very center of God's truth he is the way the truth and the life and even if you begin with a historical passage in the Old Testament there may be no specific reference to Jesus in the passage but somewhere as you study it and as you relate it to other passages God will actually lead you to Jesus he'll lead you to the Savior himself because that's what it's all about that's what the gospel is about that's where the gospel is in Christ himself so he began with that scripture and he told him the good news about Jesus the other point to make there before we finish is this the gospel is a positive emphasis it is the good news about Jesus you might say there's some bad news in the Bible as well of course there is it's bad news in the way that it tells me

I'm a lost sinner it's bad news to be able to reckon with the fact that I'm not able to save myself by my own efforts that my own righteousness that my own as Paul found out for himself my own attempts at pleasing God will never go anywhere near far enough I don't need any way to have that because Christ has already done that so you see the bad news that tells you you can call it bad news it's in a sense it's all good news because it's telling us truth but what feels like bad news and appears to be bad news in emphasizing our sinfulness and our need is something that you bring under the light of the good news because however you feel about yourself and it's not all about feelings anyway I'm sure but whatever conclusions we come to about ourselves the good news always has something that actually counteracts that and the gospel is good news friends as we reach towards the end of this year and anticipate

God willing a year to come with more gospel freedoms as we said we pray for remember that presenting the gospel is about good news it's bringing to people positive good news the good news is Jesus the good news is Christ the good news is God's salvation in him that's why this man why Philip guided this man to Jesus why it's Jesus that he brought out of this passage make sure that you don't present the gospel as bad news or if there is elements to it that people might think of as bad news don't leave them there emphasize the positive good news that the gospel is that Christ is good news you see it concludes now and we're concluding a sermon with us as he guided him to Christ then we read that when they came up from Philip having baptized him in the water the Lord carried the spirit of the Lord carried Philip away and the eunuch saw him no more and he went on his way rejoicing perhaps that word and might have been better translated but or for he went on his way rejoicing it's actually the word for literally in the scripture the spirit of the Lord carried Philip away and the eunuch saw him no more but the eunuch saw him no more went on his way rejoicing you see what it's saying is this here is a man who came to Philip or Philip came to him this interaction happened between them he had all these questions for Philip

Philip brought him and guided him to Christ and having done that that was it Philip was taken away the man had no further need of Philip at that time at least you see what it's saying he went on his way rejoicing Philip was gone in a sense the man couldn't care less he had somebody else in the carriage with him now somebody else was beside him or even in him in his chariot and that was Jesus and as Philip went his way as Philip was taken away by the Lord so this man continued in his way rejoicing can you imagine it here's a man Philip who told him all of these good things who explained the gospel to him so well who brought him and guided him to Jesus and although Philip is now gone this man is rejoicing he's rejoicing because he's found Christ or Christ has come to fill his life and so we're back to the question that we began with do you understand the things that you're reading is Jesus real for you tonight in the gospel let's pray almighty God we thank you for the gospel we thank you that it is so positively good news for us

[61 : 14] Lord of God we give thanks that into the darkness of our sinfulness the darkness of this world you brought the good news of Christ you sent your son as the good news in his own person and we thank you that this gospel contains that good news in its proclamation that he came to give us life that we might have it more abundantly bless your word to us once again we pray receive our worship and cleanse us from all our sin for his name's sake amen well let's conclude we're singing tonight in conclusion in psalm 51 psalm 51 in the Scottish Psalter verses 11 to 15 verse 11 to 15 of psalm 51 cast me not from thy sight nor take thy holy spread peace which is and

Then will I teach thy wisdom to those that transgress or cheat, And those that send her shall then be turned head unto thee.

O God of my salvation, Lord, live from blood guilt in it.

Set free, then shall my tongue cover sing of thy righteousness.

Thy closeness, O Lord, by thee, let them be opened.

[64 : 31] Then shall thy praises by my heart have brought people shared.

Now may the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God the Father, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you now and evermore. Amen.