

# Acts 8:26-40

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[ 0 : 0 0 ] This morning, if you're looking in a pew Bible, it's page 917, Acts chapter 8, we'll begin at verse 26.

Now 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. 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. 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 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? And he invited Philip to come up and sit with him. Now the message of the passage of the scripture that he was reading was this.

[ 1 : 0 9 ] Like a sheep, he was led to the slaughter. And 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. 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 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. But Philip found himself at Azotus.

[ 2 : 1 1 ] And as he passed through, he preached the gospel to all the towns until he came to Caesarea. Is Christianity a white man's religion? Many people assume that it is.

Some people have rejected it for that very reason. Now, a hundred years ago, about two-thirds of all the Christians in the world lived in Europe. Most of the rest lived here in North America.

But over the last century, Christianity has declined in Europe. And it has grown explosively in several other places. In particular, the Christian church has grown in sub-Saharan Africa.

From 9% of the population in 1910 to 63% of the population in 2010. And during the same period, the population of Christians in Asia more than doubled.

So that today, Christians are spread throughout the whole world. Now, it wasn't primarily a result of European colonial influence.

- [ 3 : 13 ] Because the Christian church grew relatively slowly during the colonial period in Africa. But it grew far more quickly after 1965 when most African countries had achieved independence.
- Similarly, in China. At the time of the communist revolution in 1949, there were estimated 800,000 Protestant Christians in China. At that time, the communist government expelled and forced all the Western missionaries to leave.
- And they severely repressed Christian believers, hoping to stamp out Christianity altogether. But despite persecution and without Western leadership, the Chinese church grew by leaps and bounds.
- And the estimate by 2010, there were 75 times as many Protestant Christians in China as there were 160 years ago. Perhaps 60 million.
- Now, what we see here in the book of Acts is that this massive movement that has happened over the past century of the Christian message spreading throughout the world and Christian churches growing in all kinds of places is not a new thing.
- [ 4 : 22 ] It's not just a 20th century, 21st century phenomenon. It was part of God's purpose from the beginning of the Christian movement. In the book of Acts, we see the gospel of Jesus Christ crossing ethnic and cultural and national and social barriers.
- And we see the church becoming a truly international and multi-ethnic community. And the invitation is for us to join in, to participate in spreading this glorious message of Jesus Christ to the ends of the earth.
- This morning, we've just read the account of one of the first black Christians. He may not have been the first black Christian. The gospels tell us that Simon from Cyrene, a city in North Africa, carried Jesus' cross.
- And Acts 2 tells us that some people from Egypt and Libya were present in Jerusalem on the day of Pentecost and heard Peter preaching. But this man was from further south. He was from Ethiopia.
- Now, that word Ethiopia didn't simply refer to the modern country of Ethiopia. It referred generally to all of Africa south of Egypt, what was seen then as the ends of the earth.
- [ 5 : 35 ] In particular, it referred to the powerful ancient kingdom of Nubia based in modern-day Sudan. And interestingly, a few times in the Old Testament, the prophets looked forward to a day when people from far and wide, from all nations, including specifically Africans, would come and worship the God of Israel.
- Zephaniah 3.10 says, So God has always had a plan for people from all cultures and from all over the world to worship him.
- Now, what we'll see in this passage is how the gospel of Jesus spreads across these cultural, national, and social boundaries. If you are a believer in Jesus, I hope that you'll see how God can use you and us as a church to extend the gospel of Jesus Christ to others across all kinds of boundaries.
- If you're not a believer in Jesus, I hope that you'll see that this gospel of Jesus Christ is good news for you, particularly in your cultural background, whatever your background or your identity.
- Now, what we see in this passage is that the gospel of Jesus spreads in three ways. By the power of the Spirit, by the explanation of the Scriptures, and by the message about the servant.
- [ 7 : 08 ] The Spirit, the Scriptures, and the servant. So first, by the power of the Spirit. Some people have said the book of Acts shouldn't be called the Acts of the Apostles.

It should be called the Acts of the Holy Spirit. Because the Holy Spirit is so prominent in this story of the message of Christ spreading. In the beginning of Acts, chapter 1, verse 8, a key verse in the book, Jesus said to his apostles, You will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, in Judea, and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.

And throughout the book of Acts, the Holy Spirit empowers believers to speak and listeners to receive the gospel. Now, in this passage, we see the Holy Spirit working in some somewhat unusual ways.

Verse 26, An angel of the Lord said to Philip, Rise and go south. Or perhaps go at noontime. Same word was sons of the south at noontime.

So go at noontime, go toward the south. To the road that goes down from Jerusalem to Gaza. Now, if you've read chapter 8, or if you were here two weeks ago when we looked at the beginning of chapter 8, this comes as a surprise.

[ 8 : 21 ] Because Philip was preaching in the north of Israel, in Samaria. And large crowds of people came and heard him.

And there were miracles happening. People were coming to faith in Jesus and getting baptized. There was a whole revival going on. And then, Philip gets this message.

Go south to the road that goes down from Jerusalem to Gaza. Now, the end of the verse explains this is a desert place. In other words, go to the middle of nowhere.

At least 50 miles away from where you are right now. It would not have been part of Philip's strategic plan. Philip was obedient. He rose and went. Then again, in verse 29.

Some more unusual directions. The Spirit said to Philip, go over and join that chariot. Now, imagine if you were Philip. Sitting down by the side of the road in the middle of nowhere.

[ 9 : 20 ] And the Holy Spirit says, see that chariot coming down the road. See that taxi coming down the road. It's not going to stop for you. You run after it. Verse 30 says, Philip ran to him.

Imagine running alongside a moving taxi and carrying on a conversation through an open window with someone that you don't know personally. Now, I, okay, it was, if it was the middle of nowhere, perhaps there weren't any other chariots on the road.

And the chariot was probably only going five miles an hour. And he, Philip was a good enough runner that he could keep up with it. But still, the guy in this chariot was a high status court official.

The chief treasurer of a powerful foreign nation. Philip was a Greek speaking Jew. Doesn't seem to have had any political status in particular. Who had been a traveling preacher among the Samaritans.

Who were seen as the lowest of the low. That's where he had just been. And then at the end, verse 39. The spirit of the Lord carried Philip away.

[ 10 : 27 ] Now, that's an interesting phrase. You might wonder, does that mean he was teleported? Well, possibly, not necessarily. But the same language is used of the prophet Elijah in the Old Testament.

1 Kings 18.12, if you want the reference. Who once was empowered by God to run so fast. That he outran the king's chariot back then. Well, however exactly he got there.

Philip found himself at Azotus. 20 miles north of where he was approximately. And he kept preaching from town to town. Until he settled down in Caesarea. Where he eventually raised a family.

And we meet him later in the book of Acts. In chapter 21. So, what are we to make? Of this Holy Spirit involvement in Philip's life. And in this encounter.

Well, let me say two things. First, the Holy Spirit gives us freedom and boldness to initiate relationships. And to share the good news of Jesus with people that normally we would be intimidated by.

[ 11 : 28 ] Or shy away from. God gave Philip freedom and boldness to speak about Jesus. To initiate a conversation with a high official in a foreign government.

When Philip didn't even have a chariot of his own to ride in. It was like talking to someone who owns a Lexus. When you usually take the bus. Because you don't have a car. Right? Normally, you'd either feel intimidated or envious.

Think about who you are intimidated by. Maybe your professor. Remember. Remember, as an undergraduate, I was intimidated by all my professors. I didn't necessarily appear that way.

But on the inside, I felt that they were something different than human. What exactly, I don't quite know. Right?

But I was intimidated by them. Maybe it's your boss. Maybe it's people who go to Yale. If you don't go to Yale. Maybe people from a different race.

[ 12 : 27 ] Or a different country. Especially if there's some bad history in the past. But you know, God is not intimidated by that person. That you are intimidated by.

And when you are filled with the Spirit of God. Instead of avoiding people out of fear. The Holy Spirit enables us to reach out. And initiate relationships with them.

With sincere love. To be freed from fear. In order to love. Let me give one example of this. Francis Collins.

Is a Christian. And the director of the National Institutes of Health. But when he was a medical resident. He was an atheist. And he said, when I was a resident. I sat at the bedside of people who were facing certain death.

And I realized that my medical skills. And the whole realm of medicine. Was not going to save them. And I listened to them. Talk about their personal faith. And how that gave them a sense of peace.

[ 13 : 26 ] I was puzzled. One afternoon. An elderly woman with terrible heart disease. And we'd run out of options to offer her. Told me about her faith. And then she turned and looked me square in the eye.

And said, doctor. You haven't said anything. What do you believe? Nobody ever asked me that question. He said, I stammered.

I struggled. I said something like, oh, I'm not really quite sure. And all of a sudden I realized. That my atheism was very thin. It didn't have much foundation.

I had never really looked at the evidence. For and against the existence of God. And I was supposed to be a scientist. Who makes conclusions based on evidence. That was a problem. A pointed question.

By an elderly hospital patient. Changed the course of a doctor's life. And set him on a journey. That eventually led him. To put his faith in Jesus. So the Holy Spirit gives us freedom and boldness.

[ 14 : 28 ] To speak to. To initiate relationships. And share the good news of Jesus. With people that otherwise. We'd be intimidated by. Second. The Holy Spirit guides us.

Through careful thinking and planning. As well as through. Spontaneous opportunities. And unusual directions. Now I think there's an important balance here.

That we need to maintain. Philip. And Paul. And Peter. And the other people in Acts. Didn't wait to receive special directions. From an angel. Before going out to proclaim the gospel.

Or before making strategic decisions. Earlier in this chapter. It says people who were scattered from Jerusalem. By persecution. Simply started preaching the word. And Philip went to a city in Samaria.

And started preaching the word. Even here. The spirit told him. Go up to the chariot. But the spirit. It doesn't seem like. The Holy Spirit was whispering in his ear. And dictating.

[ 15 : 25 ] What words he should say. In his conversation. Most of the time. Philip was simply obeying Jesus command. To go into all the world. And proclaim the gospel.

Jesus already gave us that command. And he promised. That he would be with us always. And so we should do the same. We don't need to wait. For special supernatural guidance.

From an angel. Or a dream. Or a prophecy. Before we make important decisions. Even decisions like who to marry. Or even whether to pursue. Full-time Christian ministry.

Or certainly to initiate conversations. With people about Jesus. So we don't need to wait. For unusual guidance. Now on the other hand.

I think that there is also. An opposite danger. John Piper has a sermon on this passage. From about 25 years ago. And he says. Some of us. May be more in danger. Of making the other mistake.

[ 16 : 23 ] Namely. Of thinking that we can do. All that God wants to get done. Simply by our own planning. So he says. In the scriptures. And stories like these. God equips us.

Not only for wise. And prayerful planning. On the basis of circumstances. We can see. But also for. Listening responsibly. To the spirit. When he may want to tell us.

To do something. That we might never think of. Doing. Through our own planning. So I think for some of us. The question is. Are we walking in obedience.

To the clear commands. Of scripture. Using the common sense. That God has given us. And trusting that the Holy Spirit. Is at work. In our wise. And prayerful planning. And decision making.

But I think there's also. Another question. Are we open. And responsive. To the unexpected. And unusual. Opportunities. That the Holy Spirit. May send our way.

[ 17 : 19 ] Whether it happens. Through a dream. Or an angel. Or a strong impression. Like. Pick up the phone. And call that person. Or sit down. At that table. In the dining hall. Are we willing.

To be flexible. With our own plans. Even our own ministry. Priorities as a church. If it seems. That somehow. God is providentially. Redirecting us. I think that's part.

Of what Philip's example. Here teaches us. That there's both. A disciplined. Obedience. And. A flexibility. In adapting. To what.

God sends us. You know. Spreading the gospel. Across cultural. And national. And social. And language barriers. Is no easy task. If we take that seriously.

And if we're serious. In taking it on. I think we'll need. All the resources. That the Holy Spirit. Gives us. And these are. Areas that we can grow in. So Christianity. Spreads by the power.

[ 18 : 13 ] Of the spirit. But second. It spreads. Through the explanation. Of the scriptures. Now sometimes. In the church. I grew up in. Which talked a lot. About the Holy Spirit.

People would say. Something like this. Say don't get into. Arguments with people. About religion. And theology. Because you can never. Argue someone. Into believing in Jesus.

The only thing. That no one. Can argue with. Is your personal. Testimony. Your personal. Experience of Jesus. They can never. Deny that. So when you're. Sharing your faith.

Share about how. You have personally. Experienced. Jesus. Above all else. Now. It is true. You cannot. Argue someone. Into the kingdom. Of God.

God. And it's true. That sometimes. Personal testimonies. Can be helpful. But the problem. With that way. Of thinking. That the. Primary thing.

[ 19 : 06 ] You should be doing. Is sharing your personal. Experience of God. Is that it actually. Places the focus. More on you. Than on Jesus. You know. Philip could have shared. All kinds.

Of personal. Spiritual experiences. Probably more than. Most of us have. I mean. He could have run up. To this Ethiopian. Said. Yesterday. An angel. Told me.

To come all the way. Down here. Or. The Holy Spirit. Just told me. To come. And meet you. Or. Let me tell you. About all the miracles. That God did.

Through me. In Samaria. But that would have been. A complete distraction. The eunuch. Was reading. The scriptures. And so. The first thing.

Philip did. Was to engage him. In conversation. About. The scriptures. You see. The scriptures. Are God's. One of God's. Greatest.

[ 19 : 59 ] Blessings. To humanity. In the ancient world. It would have been. Very unusual. For this man. To have his own. Copy of the scriptures. And to be able. To read it. Most people can read.

And books. Were expensive. And fragile. Most likely. He had. Just purchased. A Greek translation. Of the prophet. Isaiah. When he was in Jerusalem. And he was reading it. During his long journey home.

But you know. For the eunuch. Reading the scriptures. All by himself. Only got him so far. Because he couldn't understand. The meaning. Maybe you've had.

A similar experience. Maybe you picked up. A bible. And started reading. Maybe you read. Genesis. Maybe you got all the way. To Exodus. Maybe you made it. Through Exodus. And then you got. To Leviticus. And you started asking.

All kinds of questions. What in the world. Does this mean? Measurements. For the tabernacle. Animal sacrifices. Priestly regulations. What is going on? And how in the world. Does this make any sense?

[ 20 : 59 ] Well that's where you need. Not only the written scriptures. But also. Someone who can guide you. If you've never read the bible. Let me urge you. Like this eunuch. To read the scriptures.

If you don't have a bible. Of your own. That you can read. Take the one. From the pew. In front of you. It's our gift to you. Take it home. We'll replace it. Don't worry.

Start by reading. One of the New Testament gospels. Matthew. Mark. Luke. Or John. But let me also urge you. Read the scriptures. With someone else. With someone.

Who can perhaps. Answer some questions. And help you see the big picture. So you don't get. Confused. Or discouraged. If you are a Christian. Let me urge you.

To read the scriptures. So that you can guide others. Philip knew what the eunuch was reading. And he was able to begin with that very passage. In Isaiah.

[ 21 : 55 ] And tell him the good news about Jesus. You know why Philip could do that? It's not just because he was. Sensitive to the spontaneous leading of the Holy Spirit.

It was because he had spent his time in the scriptures. He had spent time reading. And hearing. And studying. And interpreting. And discussing. And memorizing. The word of God.

You see Philip was prepared. For this very spontaneous. And spirit led moment. Because he had been disciplined. In his study of the scriptures. And the more that we study the scriptures.

And fill our mind and heart with them. The more we'll be prepared. For the spontaneous opportunities. That God may send us. If perhaps you know someone.

Like the eunuch. Who is seeking the truth. Let me encourage you. Read the scriptures with them. And ask them. Don't just start preaching at them.

[ 22 : 51 ] Ask them a question. Like Philip did. Do you understand what you're reading? What do you think this means? Does it make sense? And then you can begin a conversation.

You see the gospel spreads. Not just through public preaching. Of the scriptures. To large crowds of people. As Philip did in Samaria. But also through individual. One-on-one conversations.

By ordinary Christian believers. You know Philip wasn't. One of the apostles. There is an apostle named Philip. But it seems that this was a different Philip.

I always thought it was the same Philip. Until Nick's sermon two weeks ago. And he convinced me that it wasn't. And I looked at it. And I'm like. Yeah that's right. Because it says he was one of the seven. Not one of the twelve. One of the seven deacons.

Right. Philip wasn't what we would think of as a pastor. He was a Christian who was full of the spirit and wisdom. Who was appointed to take care of the needs. Of some widows.

[ 23 : 49 ] Who needed. Food. On a regular basis. He was appointed to oversee. An administrative program of the church. To help people. But he was also.

A man of the word. And he. Was a. Spirit filled believer. And even though he wasn't a pastor. He was used powerfully by God.

So be encouraged by Philip's example. The gospel spreads by the power of the spirit. The gospel spreads by the explanation of the scriptures. And finally it spreads through the message.

About. The servant. The servant. Verse 35. Philip opened his. Then Philip opened his mouth. And beginning with this scripture. He told him. The good news.

About. Jesus. You see the spirit. Leads us. To the scriptures. And the scriptures. Lead us. To the servant. To Jesus Christ.

[ 24 : 45 ] Himself. Ethiopian eunuch. Was reading. From Isaiah 53. Which Stephen read for us earlier in the service. A large section of.

And the particular verses. Quoted. In verse. In verse 32 and 33. Of Acts. Spoke of a person. Who is like a silent lamb.

Led to the slaughter. Someone who is unjustly treated. Cut off in the prime of life. Having no physical descendants. Descendants. And the whole chapter.

From which these words were taken. Describes. A suffering servant. Who didn't merely die. A tragic death. But through his death. Made sacrificial atonement.

For others. The verse. Just before. What the eunuch quoted. Says all week. Says this. All we like sheep.

[ 25 : 40 ] Have gone astray. We have turned everyone. To his own way. And the Lord has laid on him. The iniquity of. Us all. The eunuch read these verses.

And he asked a very perceptive question. He said tell me please. Who is the prophet speaking about. Himself or someone else. Who is this. Mysterious. Servant.

The prophet Isaiah had described. This suffering servant. In four haunting poems. Sometimes he seemed to be describing. The people of Israel. Sometimes he seemed to be describing.

A prophet who would. Like himself. Sent to restore. The people of Israel. And to be a light to the. To the nations. And for hundreds of years. Jewish scholars puzzled.

Over the identity. Of this mysterious figure. Many people continue. To puzzle. Over it. Had he come in the past. Would he come in the future. Was he simply representing.

[ 26 : 38 ] The nation as a whole. But the earliest Christians. Including Philip. Had a unanimous answer. To the question. Who is this servant. They said finally.

There is one. Who completely fits. This job description. It's none other than. Jesus the Messiah. Himself. Did the suffering servant.

Refer to Israel as a nation. Yes. In one sense. Yes. But Israel as a nation. Had never lived up to. Its calling before God. To be a light to the world.

To be a royal priesthood. They were constantly failing. Becoming just as corrupt. As everyone else. Only Jesus. Faithfully embodied.

All that Israel was called. To be and to do. Did the suffering servant. Refer to a prophet. Like Isaiah. Sent to restore. The people of Israel. And to bring God's salvation.

[ 27 : 33 ] To the nations. Yes. But no prophet. Before Jesus. Had yet accomplished that. No prophet.

Had led to that. Promised restoration. That would result in people. From all the nations of the world. From the ends of the earth. Acknowledging the one true God. And becoming part of his covenant people. Only Jesus did that.

And this is the good news. That Philip. Proclaimed to this man. Who had traveled from far and wide. From what would have been seen. As the ends of the earth. All the way to Jerusalem. To worship the one true God.

He had taken a long journey. To the only place in the world. That bore witness to pure monotheism. The belief in one true and living God. Creator.

Lord. And judge of all. Every other nation. Was still stumbling in the darkness. Of pagan polytheism. This man had gone all the way to Jerusalem.

[ 28 : 30 ] But now he was going back home. And though he had a copy of the scriptures. He still didn't understand. And though he'd gone all the way to Jerusalem. He was still on the outside.

In many respects. This man was a privileged insider. He was well educated. He was well traveled. He was well paid. But in one respect. He would always be an excluded outsider.

Because he was a eunuch. In verse 27. He's introduced using four phrases. An Ethiopian. A eunuch. A court official. In charge of all the queen's treasure.

But in the rest of the passage. He's described simply as. The eunuch. More than his ethnic background. More than his career position. More than his high educational level.

His status as a eunuch. Defined him. In the ancient world. High officials. Who had regular contact. With women in the palace. Would routinely be.

[ 29 : 27 ] Made eunuchs. And that means he had been castrated. Or at the very least. He was incapable. Of having sex. And producing children. He could never marry.

No woman would ever want to marry him. And in a culture. Where the ability to produce children. Was the ultimate sign. Of blessing and accomplishment. Eunuchs were despised. Lost. And everybody made jokes about them.

The eunuch knew. That he would never have a family of his own. He would never be remembered. Or taken care of by his kids. And though he admired. The Jewish monotheistic faith.

He could never become. A full member of the Jewish community. Because in order to join. The Jewish community. He would have to be circumcised. But as a eunuch.

He couldn't be. He had to remain. Forever on the outside. Looking in. But the striking thing. Is that the biblical passage.

[ 30 : 25 ] That he was reading. Described a man. Like him. A man who had no children. A man who was despised. And rejected.

And humiliated. And finally killed. As many eunuchs were. It described a man. Who had experienced. All the pain. And all the shame. And all the rejection. That he had experienced.

As a eunuch. This man. Had been wronged. But he didn't pay back. Evil for evil. This man died. But his death. Wasn't just. Solitary.

And tragic. It was sacrificial. And atoning. He paid a price. So that others might live. Later on. In that same chapter.

Of Isaiah. Isaiah 53. Verse 10. It said. When his soul. When the servants. When the servant. When his soul. Makes an offering for guilt.

[ 31 : 18 ] Through his death. It says. He shall see. His offspring. He shall prolong. His days. He shall make many. To be accounted righteous.

And he shall bear. Their iniquities. This servant. Who died. As a sacrifice. For sins. Would be raised. Victorious. From the dead. And this one.

Who had died. Unmarried. And childless. Would have a multitude. Of spiritual children. From all the nations. Of the world. That no one could count. And just three chapters later. In the same book of Isaiah.

There is a wonderful promise. That because of the work. Of this servant. That even foreigners. And eunuchs. Would one day be accepted. As full members.

Of the family of God. If you look at Isaiah chapter 56. Verses three to five. It says this. Isaiah said. Let not the foreigner. Who has joined himself.

[ 32 : 13 ] To the Lord say. The Lord will surely separate me. From his people. And let not the eunuchs say. Behold. I am a dry tree. For thus says the Lord. To the eunuchs.

Who choose the things. That please me. And hold fast 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. You see. Because Jesus the servant. Was cut off. From the land of the living.

You and I. Can be. Grafted in. To the fruitful vine. Of his people. Because Jesus was rejected. You and I can be welcomed.

Into the family of God. Because Jesus poured out his life unto death. You and I can receive a crown. Of eternal life. This is the good news about Jesus. The suffering servant.

[ 33 : 10 ] Who bore our sin. And our shame on the cross. And triumphed over death. And his resurrection. And this good news about Jesus. Spoke powerfully to this eunuch. He knew that he would forever be on the outside.

Of the temple in Jerusalem. And he knew that all the temple regulations. Were simply a reminder. Of the reality. That all we like sheep have gone astray.

And each of us has turned to his own way. And we're stained. With sin. And guilt. And we can't cleanse ourselves. But he saw that through Jesus.

A new and living way had been opened. To enter into the presence of God. To become part of the family of God. To be made clean and whole. Once and forever. And so when he saw some water.

He said see. Here's water. What prevents me. From being baptized. He was prevented.

[ 34 : 07 ] From being circumcised. And joining in. To the Jewish community. But through Jesus. There was nothing that prevented him.

From being baptized. You see baptism represents. Fully identifying with the death. And resurrection of Jesus. Being fully welcomed. Into the family of God.

Through him. Friend. What prevents you. From being baptized. What prevents you. From fully committing your life. To Jesus. From fully experiencing.

His transforming grace. From fully taking your place. In the family of God. Not as an outsider. Looking in. But as a child of God. Welcomed home. Have you felt that Christianity.

Is a foreign religion. Has somebody taught you. That accepting Jesus. Would mean completely abandoning. Your culture. Or your ethnicity. It is not true.

[ 35 : 03 ] Jesus is Lord. Of all nations. Of all ethnic groups. And he has come. Not to destroy. Our different cultures. But to purify. Each one of them. And to reconcile them together.

In his glorious kingdom. Or perhaps like the eunuch. Have you internalized. The feeling. That your body. Is somehow damaged goods. Unworthy.

Of being offered. To God. Perhaps there's something. That you've done to yourself. Or something that. Someone else has done to you. Or even some condition.

You were born with. That makes you feel like. A perpetual outsider. In the church. Maybe it's sexual attraction. Towards people. Of the same sex. That you're scared. To tell anyone else about.

Maybe it's uncertainty. About your gender identity. Feeling that you don't belong. In your own body. And feeling that you will never. Truly belong. In a church that affirms.

[ 35 : 58 ] What Genesis 1 says. That God made us. Male and female. And the gender distinctions. Are part of God's good design. Let me say to you.

Just as the gospel. Of Jesus Christ. Christ. Was good news for the eunuch. The gospel of Jesus Christ. Is good news for you. And for your body.

The gospel says. That Jesus Christ. Willingly offered. His sinless body. To be disfigured. And broken. On the cross. So that our bodies.

Which groan. Under the weight. Of a fallen world. As well as. Our personal. Rebellion against God. So that our bodies. Might be reclaimed. By God.

To be his very own. And one day. Completely healed. And restored. And when you offer. Your body and soul. To Jesus. He will welcome you. Into his family. He will give you.

[ 36 : 53 ] A new identity. Your truest. And most. Lasting identity. As a beloved. Child. Of God. He will give you. A new family. Of people to walk.

Alongside you. Of broken. People. Who experience. Who extend. Healing. To others. Wounded. Healers. Who extend.

God's grace. You know. This is what baptism. Viscerally affirms. That you've died. And risen with Jesus. That his story. Has now become. Your story. And that he has begun.

The process of transforming. You into his image. He'll show you. How his power. And wisdom. Can be displayed. Even in your greatest weakness. And vulnerability. And he promises.

Never to leave you. Nor forsake you. The good news about Jesus. Is better than anything. This world has to offer. It's better than sons. And daughters. It's better than being.

[ 37 : 49 ] A high government official. It's better than traveling. The world. As the angel said. When Jesus was born. This is good news. Of great joy. For all people.

And the eunuch got it. He went on his way. Rejoicing. May we receive. And rejoice. In this good news of Jesus.

And go on our way. Rejoicing in the power. Of the Holy Spirit. Let's pray. Let's pray. Lord God.

Our Father. We thank you. For your providence. We thank you. For how you. Led Philip.

To meet this man. In the middle of the desert. In the middle of nowhere. Lord. That you knew exactly. The timing. Of how that would happen. And you arranged for it.

[ 38 : 50 ] And we thank you. For your scripture. We thank you. That the promises. Of the gospel. Not only speak to us. Generally. As a human race. But even. Individually.

As the apostle Paul said. Christ loved me. And gave himself. For me. Lord. We thank you. For how. Your promises. Spoke to this eunuch.

In his own. Particular. Situation. Someone from. A different. Ethnic group. Than most. Of the Jews.

Or even the Christians. At that time. As someone. Who had. Lived. With shame. And. Knowing.

He was an outsider. Knowing. He was. Like all of us. A sinner. Lord. We thank you. For how your gospel. Speaks to all of those. Barriers. That separate us from you.

[ 39 : 46 ] We thank you. That you've broken. Every barrier down. That we can. Come into your presence. And we can marvel. At your grace. And we can know.

Your promises. To us. Which are represented. In the. In the act of baptism. But which are given to us. By faith. Lord.

That you have claimed us. As your own. That we are part of your family. That we are in this together. That you will never leave us. Nor forsake us. And that one day.

We will be completely redeemed. In your kingdom. Lord. Give us that joy. And help us to be. Messengers of that joy. As this.

Eunuch. Became. We pray in Jesus name. Amen. Well the music team. Is going to come up. Our final. Hymn. Reflects the joy.

[ 40 : 45 ] Of knowing. The gospel. And knowing. That Jesus Christ. Has come for us. So let us stand. As we sing. And can it be. That I should gain. Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen.