

The Parish of Wellow

Philip the Evangelist - Acts 8:4-8 & 26-40 Passage, Sermon Notes and Questions

Please feel free to take these sermon notes home with you and you may wish to find some time during the next few weeks to consider the questions below.

1. Sermon Passage - Acts 8:4-8 & 26-40

4 Those who had been scattered preached the word wherever they went. 5 Philip went down to a city in Samaria and proclaimed the Christ there. 6 When the crowds heard Philip and saw the miraculous signs he did, they all paid close attention to what he said. 7 With shrieks, evil spirits came out of many, and many paralytics and cripples were healed. 8 So there was great joy in that city.

26 Now an angel of the Lord said to Philip, "Go south to the road-- the desert road-- that goes down from Jerusalem to Gaza. 27 So he started out, and on his way he met an Ethiopian eunuch, an important official in charge of all the treasury of Candace, queen of the Ethiopians. This man had gone to Jerusalem to worship, 28 and on his way home was sitting in his chariot reading the book of Isaiah the prophet. 29 The Spirit told Philip, "Go to that chariot and stay near it." 30 Then Philip ran up to the chariot and heard the man reading Isaiah the prophet. "Do you understand what you are reading?" Philip asked. 31 "How can I," he said, "unless someone explains it to me?" So he invited Philip to come up and sit with him. 32 The eunuch was reading this passage of Scripture: "He was led like a sheep to the slaughter, and as a lamb before the shearer is silent, so he did not open his mouth. 33 In his humiliation he was deprived of justice. Who can speak of his descendants? For his life was taken from the earth." 34 The eunuch asked Philip, "Tell me, please, who is the prophet talking about, himself or someone else?" 35 Then Philip began with that very passage of Scripture and told him the good news about Jesus. 36 As they traveled along the road, they came to some water and the eunuch said, "Look, here is water. Why shouldn't I be baptized?" 37 38 And he gave orders to stop the chariot. Then both Philip and the eunuch went down into the water and Philip baptized him. 39 When they came up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord suddenly took Philip away, and the eunuch did not see him again, but went on his way rejoicing. 40 Philip, however, appeared at Azotus and traveled about, preaching the gospel in all the towns until he reached Caesarea.

2. Sermon Notes

2.1 Jesus' last words to his followers were: 'Go therefore and make disciples of all nations' (Matthew 28:19).

- He instructs them to be Evangelists.
- Initially they seem reluctant to spread the message beyond Jerusalem.
- Only after intense persecution do they begin to spread the gospel to Judea and Samaria
- It is during this period of the early church that we catch up with Philip
- Philip was a deacon - responsible for food distribution.
- Philip too is forced to leave Jerusalem and he like his colleagues spreads the gospel wherever he goes.
- Unlike his colleagues Philip does not limit his audience to other Jews.
- He goes instead, with great success directly to Samaria, and shares the gospel with the traditional enemies of the Jews, the Samaritans.

2.2 As followers of Jesus we too have the same instruction to spread the gospel.

- But how exactly do we go about doing that?
- How do we tell our friends and neighbours here in Wellow or our colleagues at work or members of our family about the gospel?
- In his meeting with the Ethiopian Eunuch, Philip demonstrates four steps that we need to take before we open our mouths:
 - i. We need to have a close relationship with Jesus ourselves.
 - ii. We need to be ready and watching for those opportunities that God will send our way.
 - iii. We need to build relationships with the people God directs us to.
 - iv. We should open our mouths and share the gospel.

2.3 We need to have a close relationship with Jesus ourselves: 'an angel of the Lord came to Philip and said "Go south to the road—the desert road—that goes down from Jerusalem to Gaza. So he started out. . ."' (Acts 8:26)

- Before going anywhere or sharing anything we see that Philip has a close relationship God himself.
- As a result of this close relationship Philip trusts and obeys God.
- Do we know where God wants us to be and what he wants us to do?
- If we want to be used by God we have to be listening and in close relationship to hear God say, "This is the path

for you, now go and walk in it.”

- The closer we are connected to God, the easier it is to hear His voice.

2.4 We need to be ready and watching for those opportunities that God will send our way: “So he started out, and on his way he met.” (Acts 8:27)

- It was while Philip was on his way that he met an Ethiopian eunuch, a very important and influential official.
- It’s all too easy to say, “One day when I get things under control...then I will share the gospel with other people.”
- If we live according to the “one day philosophy,” that day will never come.
- We need to begin the journey today. Begin the adventure of travelling down the path God has set for each one of us but keep our eyes, ears, heart, and mind wide open for the experiences, encounters, and relationships God may have for us as we travel the road of life.

2.5 We need to build relationships with the people God directs us to: ““Philip, go to that chariot and stand near it.” (Acts 8:29)

- In order to build relationships with those God directs us to, we have to be willing to draw near to them.
- Too often we and the Church have removed ourselves from getting too close to the world in which we live for fear that the world might influence us.
- Unfortunately, the flip side is true as well. We, the Church, are no longer influencing the world.
- Before we can share the gospel we need to connect with people, we must begin where they are with their questions and their needs.
- People who are sceptics or are investigating the claims of Christ will watch us like a hawk. It only takes a second for them to separate those of us who are just going through the motions from those who genuinely care about them.
- When we genuinely care about people we will find ourselves praying for them. We will begin to engage people on their terms, on their turf, in their comfort zone.
- Then we will have earned the right to begin to talk about spiritual matters. In verse 31, Philip asked, “Do you understand what it is you’re reading?” The eunuch replied, “No, how could I unless someone would explain it to me?” So, he invited Philip to come up and sit with him in his chariot to teach him.
- When people ask us questions, it then gives us the right to share the Good News.

2.6 We should open our mouths and share the gospel: “Then Philip began with that very passage of scripture and told him the good news about Jesus” (Acts 8:35)

- Philip no doubt shared with the Ethiopian Eunuch that Jesus fulfilled the very prophesy he was reading in Isaiah.
- That it was Jesus who was led like a lamb to the slaughter, that it was Jesus who paid the price for your sin and my sin and his sin.
- But it was the work of the Holy Spirit that would have convicted the Ethiopian Eunuch that he needed to respond to what Jesus had done for him. And that is what he does by asking Philip to baptise him.
- What a fabulous outcome this was and rumour has it that this Ethiopian Eunuch may well have been responsible for starting the Christian Church that still to this day exists in Ethiopia.
- All this came about because Philip had a strong relationship with God, he was always on the lookout for opportunities to share his faith, he was prepared to spend time by coming into relationship with those God directed him to and finally he was able to share in a coherent manner the good news of the gospel.
- Philip is an example to us all of how to be a model evangelist.

3. Questions to consider back at home

3.1 Who is responsible for sharing the good news? Is it the responsibility of those in authority like deacons in the early church or ministers today? What would Philip’s answer be? What would Jesus’ answer be? What is your view?

3.2 What do we learn about evangelism from Philip?

3.3 A friend of yours from another church asks you to join her one Saturday in some ‘Street Evangelism’ which she explains involves stopping shoppers and sharing the good news of the gospel with them. What would Philip’s view be of this type of evangelism? What would Jesus’ view be? What is your view? What would you say to your friend?

If you would like to discuss these questions further please feel free to call me on 01761 432293

Matthew Street 31st July 2005