

Easter 5            4/29/18  
Acts 8:26-40    B  
Confirmation Sunday

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.

After all was said and done – you know, the Bible study, the public questioning of Philip, the baptism in the water, and Philip being carried away – when it was all said and done, the Ethiopian Eunuch went on his way. Now, I'm doing to guess that that when you hear that, you think something like this: that "he went on his way" means that he got back into his chariot, said, "Giddy up" to his horse and he went on his way through Gaza back home to Ethiopia. And, when he got home, he resumed his duties as a court official to Candace, the queen of the Ethiopians. Really, when all is said and done, that's what we conclude when he hear that he "went on his way".

But here's the thing – not all is said and not all is done. What really is the way of the Ethiopian Eunuch? Think about this guy: he's coming back, because he had gone up to Jerusalem to worship. Now, you go up to Jerusalem when you are a Jew and you go up for the principle feasts – you go up for Passover; you go up for Pentecost; you go up for the Feast of the Tabernacles. Luke tells us simply, "He had come to Jerusalem to worship," which means he had gone up to Jerusalem most likely for one of those feasts. Furthermore, Luke is telling us that he is a covert to Judaism.

But the chances are that when he got to Jerusalem to worship, he was a bit disappointed. He was disappointed because he was not a Jew, he was an Ethiopian and a Eunuch. According to Jewish Law, in the book of Leviticus, people who were not Jewish and people who were eunuchs

were not permitted to enter into the full assembly of God's people in the temple. They were barred from certain parts of worship at the temple.

So, the way of this Ethiopian is one who goes up for worship but feels he is never a part of what's going on. In that sense, the way of the Ethiopian is your way as well.

What I mean is this: You come here to God's house this morning. You come to worship – you sing the songs, you pray the prayers, you hear the Word, but there is something inside of you that makes you feel like that Ethiopian Eunuch must have felt, that you really don't fit in all the way; that you are not really a part of what's going on here.

The Ethiopian Eunuch felt that way because of his birth; because of his body. You feel that way because your sin is ever before you. Your conscience tells you that because of what you've done with your body, because of what you've done in your body, the thoughts that have come out of your brain, the words that have come out of your mouth, what your heart has clung to; the greed and coveting that have come out of your eyes, you feel that you are not worthy to come into the presence of the holy God. And maybe if you do, He is going to punish you. Your sin is holding you back. So, not all is said and not all is done.

When Philip encounters this Ethiopian Eunuch, what's he doing? He's studying Scripture; reading the Word of God, like you do in your devotions, Bible class, as you are doing here this morning as you hear God's Word and the sermon. The Ethiopian is reading the words of Isaiah the Prophet,

“Like a sheep he was led to the slaughter and like a lamb before its shearer it 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 Philip opened his mouth and tells the Ethiopian the good news about Jesus.

The Good News about Jesus is this: He is the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. In other words, He is the Lamb of God who takes away everybody's sin. His love knows no barrier, no bounds; His love embraces everyone. He takes away your sins – the sins your conscience condemns you for, the sin you were born into, the sins you have done in the body, and the sins you have done with your body. Like a sheep, He was led to the slaughter of the cross carrying all those sins. For those sins, Jesus died. On that cross, He presented Himself as the atoning sacrifice for the sins of the entire world – yours, the Ethiopian Eunuch, mine, everyone included. And, His resurrection the 3<sup>rd</sup> day proves that the Father accepted Christ's sacrifice for the reconciliation of the world. Each of our confirmands wears a RED carnation over their heart today, as a reminder that our heart is always to be filled with faith in that Lamb Jesus.

He is risen and lives to bring you fully and completely into the assembly of God's people, so that you receive everything that's going on here this morning. This He does in and through the waters of Holy Baptism. As the Ethiopian said, "Here is water. What prevents me from being baptized?" Nothing, and nothing prevented you from being baptized, so in and through the waters of Holy Baptism, He give to you all the forgiveness, life, and salvation that He won for you by His death and resurrection and He made you God's own child.

It's just like Isaiah said,

Let not the foreigner who has joined himself to the LORD say, "The LORD will surely separate me from his people"; and let not the eunuch say, "Behold, I am a dry tree." For thus says the LORD: "To the

eunuchs who keep my Sabbaths, 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 (56:3-5).

The name that He gives is "Christian," one belonging to Christ.

That's the name He gave the Ethiopian Eunuch when he was baptized and that is the name give you, Dear Child, in the new birth of your baptism.

That name "Christian" means that you are fully one of God's own children, receiving all the gifts and blessings that God has for His people in Christ Jesus. That is why today our confirmands, as you did in your confirmation vows, acknowledge the gifts God gave them in their baptism.

The Ethiopian Eunuch went on his way, as a Christian, one of God's own people. That means that when he got back to Ethiopia, he went around telling people the good news about Jesus; telling them the love of God knows no barriers, no bounds, no nationalities, that that love sent Jesus to suffer and die for them, that they are included in the people of God, and they receive all of the blessings and gifts of God in Christ Jesus.

That's what it means that the Ethiopian Eunuch went on his way. And that's how you go on your way, for indeed, that is the way of the Christian.