

SERMON DISCUSSION GUIDE FOR ALL SAINTS SMALL GROUPS

"A Church for Others" | Rev. Jordan Griesbeck | July 11, 2021

Acts 8:26-40

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. **27** And he rose and went. And there was an Ethiopian, a eunuch, a court official of Candace, queen of the Ethiopians, who was in charge of all her treasure. He had come to Jerusalem to worship **28** and was returning, seated in his chariot, and he was reading the prophet Isaiah. **29** And the Spirit said to Philip, "Go over and join this chariot." **30** So Philip ran to him and heard him reading Isaiah the prophet and asked, "Do you understand what you are reading?" **31** And he said, "How can I, unless someone guides me?" And he invited Philip to come up and sit with him. **32** 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 silent,
so he opens not his mouth.

33 In his humiliation justice was denied him.

Who can describe his generation?
For his life is taken away from the earth.

34 And the eunuch said to Philip, "About whom, I ask you, does the prophet say this, about himself or about someone else?" **35** Then Philip opened his mouth, and beginning with this Scripture he told him the good news about Jesus. **36** 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?" **38** And he commanded the chariot to stop, and they both went down into the water, Philip and the eunuch, and he baptized him. **39** 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. **40** But Philip found himself at Azotus, and as he passed through he preached the gospel to all the towns until he came to Caesarea.

Key Points and Discussion Questions from Jordan's Sermon:

Read the Scripture Passages at left.

Introductory Discussion

Jordan references the racial tension in the world and suggests the world is wrestling mightily with the question of inclusion.

What are the world's solutions to the need for inclusivity right now? How are these solutions working?

The Central Sermon Question:

In what three ways does Jordan initially suggest that the Church is uniquely equipped to bring forth true unity among disparate factions?

1. The Church has The Scriptures!

Jordan suggests that it's not only the Scriptures themselves that are powerful; but, also it's the way we are called to read them that is powerful.

- What did he mean by that?
- In what ways beyond mere nationality were Philip and the Ethiopian Eunuch "other" to each other?
- True/False: God's word cannot have its full impact in my life unless I read it with others. Discuss.

Jordan suggests that it is important to read the Word of God Christo-centrally.

- What does this mean?
- Consider what you know of the life of this eunuch alongside the passage he was reading.
 - How might he have been inclined to read this passage in a self-centered way?
 - How does Philip's interpretation help him?
- What can we observe in this passage about the tension between the Scriptures being *about Jesus yet for us*?

2. The Church has The Sacraments: Baptism and The Lord's Supper.

Jordan reminds us that Baptism represents a tangible introduction to join the family of God.

Imagination Exercise: Read verse 36 again and place yourself in the chariot across from the Eunuch. Imagine his skin, his accent, his clothing and adornments. Now imagine he asks you the question: "See here: what prevents me from *joining your family* right now?" Discuss.

From Luke 24

That very day two of them were going to a village named Emmaus... **15** While they were talking and discussing together, Jesus himself drew near and went with them. **16** But their eyes were kept from recognizing him... **27** And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he interpreted to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning himself. **28** So they drew near to the village to which they were going. He acted as if he were going farther, **29** but they urged him strongly, saying, "Stay with us, for it is toward evening and the day is now far spent." So he went in to stay with them. **30** When he was at table with them, he took the bread and blessed and broke it and gave it to them. **31** And their eyes were opened, and they recognized him. And he vanished from their sight. **32** They said to each other, "Did not our hearts burn within us while he talked to us on the road, while he opened to us the Scriptures?"

Isaiah 56:3-5

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."

4 For thus says the LORD:

"To the eunuchs who keep my Sabbaths,
who choose the things that please me
and hold fast my covenant,

5 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.

Jordan similarly reminds us vividly that in communion we are spiritually touching lips with people from cultures all over the world.

Place yourself back in the chariot. You are eating your lunch when the Eunuch holds out his hand and asks for a bite of your sandwich and a big swig of your Topo Chico. Discuss.

How do you feel about "strange people" joining our family here at All Saints? What are some tangible steps you can take to be a part of the process of strange people joining our Body?

3. We become a church for others through our suffering!

Jordan suggests that the only way we will ever truly move towards others is if we suffer. What did he mean by this? Do you agree? Disagree?

Consider the life of this eunuch again.

- What do we know of his particular plight? His unique suffering?
- In what ways did suffering, both his and Jesus', allow him to enter the Kingdom of God?

Some types of suffering are private and more easily hidden while others (like the eunuch's) are public and impossible to deny.

Discuss:

- True/False. Making my suffering more known to others is a part of knowing Jesus' love.
- True/False. It is the privilege of every believer to share his/her suffering with others.
- How would you characterize the struggles/ suffering you are experiencing in your life right now? Which kind is it? How so? What are your next steps for inviting others into your struggle? Or sharing it with others? What is standing in your way?

4. We will become a church for others through the Spirit!

Reread the first verse of the passage in Acts.

- Who drives the action in this story?
- Why does that matter?
- Debate: Is Philip an active or passive part of this story?
- Do Philip's responses to the Spirit strike you as swift or hesitant? How does that make you feel?
- What reasons might Philip have to doubt that he was hearing the Spirit's voice?
- What reasons might Philip have to act swiftly on the Spirit's guidance? (Hint: Reread the Old Testament passage in Isaiah. Read also Acts 8:27)
- How important is Philip's familiarity with Scripture in this story?

Closing Discussion/Prayer

Pray for one another, paying close attention to the struggles you shared with each other during this discussion.