

“Doing the Right Thing”

Psalm 23; Acts 8:26-40

July 21, 2024

Introduction

- When I worked in Mount Holly, I knew a woman from my work at the CRO.
- She was a very kind lady, making sure many in her community got food and clothing in times of need through the CRO (Community Relief Organization).
- Then, one day, I saw her walking down Main Street.
 - o Our church sits right outside of Main Street and I saw her as I walked over to my favorite restaurant at the time, “The City Café”.
 - o She was wearing clapboard, like you’d see in old timey advertisements.
 - o Emblazoned on the front of it were the words “Repent and Be baptized”.
 - A Bold if altogether Biblical statement.
 - But here she was, WEARING IT ON HER.
- I really liked that woman so I spent an hour with her, just walking up and down Main Street.
 - o She got lots of looks, good and bad but one person came up to her, was truly touched and took the literature she had.
 - I realized she was sowing seeds.
- Then I asked her, why she was doing this.
 - o Her reply was simple
 - God laid it upon her heart to do this. Made it so that she felt it needed to be done.
- I remember being profoundly moved by the way God was moving in that woman’s life.
 - o She continued to do good works, I lost track of her, sadly in the change of churches. We’ll pray for her this morning though.

Transition to Bible

- I tell you that story because I’m sure that the Holy Spirit is working in millions of lives today in much the same way.
 - o I remember a few years ago meeting a man at a QT who was putting up “Jesus Saves” signs.
 - o His reply was the same – God told him to do it.
- God has been in the business of telling people what to do since the beginning, hasn’t He?
 - o Remember Genesis 12, that’s where he comes to Abram, a wandering Aramean and tells him to hitch it over to Canaan.
- This morning, we get the story of another man, responding to the Holy Spirit’s summons.
 - o Phillip

Phillip

- We know a little bit about Philip by this point in Acts.
 - o He’s first mentioned with Stephen as they are called to be deacons, distributing food to the widows primarily.
- But then he’s called upon to go with a couple of others to Samaria.
 - o After the Jews and Romans start persecuting the Christians in Jerusalem, they hit the road with the Gospel.
 - First on the hit list? Samaria.
- Samaria
 - o But let’s recall the political strife that was operative between the Jews and the Samaritans.
 - They hated each other and within years of Jesus Christ’s birth, massacres on both sides had occurred.
 - These were, for lack of better words, enemies.
 - o Yet with the power of the Holy Spirit, the Gospel was being preached and thousands were being converted.
 - It would’ve been such an exciting time.

- When churches are growing, there's an excitement and energy that is simply unmatched by other joys.
 - It comes from the fact that building churches is what we're all called to do in our own unique ways.
 - That's right, every one of us is uniquely able and equipped to share the Gospel with someone else.
- Phillip would've been energized by what was going on in Samaria.
 - Then comes the call of the Lord.
 - And it might now have been exactly what Phillip was looking for.
 - "Rise and go toward the south^[d] to the road that goes down from Jerusalem to Gaza."
- The Road to Gaza
 - Now imagine that you've been a part of an exciting, growing thing and all of the sudden, God is diverting you to...NOWHERE, essentially. The desert.
 - But Phillip goes.
 - Like Abraham goes, like all true followers of God.
 - HE asks, you go.
 - Again, I'm sure as Phillip walked out away from civilization into the desert, he would've had lots of questions for God.

The Ethiopian Eunuch

- But there, on that path, what should Philip discover but a caravan.
- This wouldn't have been a lone man on a carriage.
 - No, as we know, this man was the Treasurer for a great Nation of Ethiopia.
 - Now, we might think of that as being a relatively poor and desolate place but we'd be quite wrong.
 - Ethiopia at the time would've been extremely wealthy at the time.
- This man would've been attended by scores of other people, it would've been a large group.
- But there he was.
- Eunuchs
 - We're told this about him and it would make historical sense.
 - In ancient times, high level servants of the royals would've been castrated to prevent any hit of scandal.
 - But, sadly, Judaism at the time had a prohibition against eunuchs.
 - They couldn't even go into the inner Temple.
- So here was a man desperate to understand salvation.
 - We know he's reading Isaiah 53.
 - Isaiah 53-55, often referred to as the "Suffering Servant" passages, are among the most profound and poignant in the Old Testament. Isaiah 53 vividly describes a figure who bears the sins and suffering of others, often interpreted by Christians as a prophetic depiction of Jesus Christ's sacrificial death. The servant is portrayed as despised and rejected, a man of sorrows acquainted with grief, who is wounded for our transgressions and bruised for our iniquities. Despite his suffering, the servant remains silent and does not retaliate, embodying humility and submission to God's will.
- As was the case in the ancient world, the man would've been reading aloud.
- This meant that he was likely a Jewish proselyte.
 - This was someone who wanted to be Jewish and was learning its ways but here he was flummoxed.
 - What does this passage mean?
- Now look, if you're going to be given an Old Testament passage to preach Christ from, there probably aren't any better.

- This particular section is ripe for understanding exactly what Jesus Christ underwent for us and for our salvation.
 - *“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.”*
- Then, the eunuch wants to know – ““About whom, I ask you, does the prophet say this, about himself or about someone else?”
- The Eunuch wants information.
 - Here he is thirsting to know God deeply and, at first, he thinks that because of his condition, he can’t ever be fully accepted. And yet, he can through Jesus Christ.
 - Later in these suffering servant passages, even the eunuch is accounted for as they are embraced into the new covenant.
- Philip sits down with him and explains the good news about Jesus Christ to him.
 - Recap the good news.
 - We are sinners, doomed to extinction.
 - But God loves us and so, in the fullness of time, He sent Jesus Christ.
 - Through the power of the Holy Spirit, we believe in Him and are thus saved from eternal death and delivered into an abundant life here and now.
 - That’s not only good news, that’s great news.
- Peter essentially evangelizes this Eunuch.
 - But notice how that contrasts often with what we think of evangelism is.
 - Oftentimes we think we’ve got to take people hostile to God and somehow convert them. We think this is evangelization.
 - It is but it’s just one form of it.
 - Much more common is what’s happened here with Phillip and the Eunuch.
 - Here, a person who is spiritually thirsting, is provided more direction and insight by someone further down the road, so to speak.
 - Someone is in spiritual need and someone with a gift of the Holy Spirit is brought forward to strengthen the other.
- Evangelism
 - Evangelism isn’t always about breaking people’s resistance down, much more often it’s just supplying them with the right information.
 - How do you get the right information?
 - You worship.
 - You study.
 - You serve.
 - It’s that simple.
 - Do these things and you will find yourself fully equipped to find and help people with their faith.

Examples

- I see examples of this all the time with people in churches.
- I see people who, even though that it’s them in the hospital, see the hospital as a mission field and begin sharing the good news in whatever ways possible at the time.
 - I’ve been touched to see congregants in bed having meaningful conversations with nurses and techs about God Almighty.
 - Here are people in the worst situations life can throw at you finding the wherewithal in energy to share good news with people attending to them.

Bill Johnson

- I want to tell you about the man who evangelized me.
- I wasn’t raised Christian.
- Met Bob in AA.
- Then ran into him heading into Sharon Presbyterian Church one day...