

Sermon for May 18, 2025 – The Fifth Sunday of Easter

Acts 8:26-40 EHV

Theme: **Seize the day and witness Jesus!**

- 1) God sends us the opportunity.
- 2) God gives us His Word.
- 3) God grants us joy.

<sup>26</sup>Now an angel of the Lord said to Philip, “Get up and go south to the road that goes down from Jerusalem to Gaza.” (This is an isolated area.) <sup>27</sup>So he got up and went. And there was a man, an Ethiopian eunuch, a court official of Candace, Queen of the Ethiopians, who was in charge of all her treasury. He had come to Jerusalem to worship. <sup>28</sup>He was on his way home, sitting in his chariot and reading the prophet Isaiah.

<sup>29</sup>The Spirit told Philip, “Go over there and stay close to that chariot.” <sup>30</sup>Philip ran up to it and heard him reading Isaiah the prophet.

Philip asked, “Do you understand what you are reading?”

<sup>31</sup>The man replied, “How can I unless someone explains it to me?” And he invited Philip to come up and sit with him.

<sup>32</sup>Now the passage of Scripture the eunuch was reading was this:

He was led like a sheep to the slaughter,  
and as a lamb before its shearer is silent,  
so he does not open his mouth.

<sup>33</sup>In his humiliation justice was denied him.

Who will talk about his generation?

For his life is taken from the earth.

<sup>34</sup>The eunuch said to Philip, “I ask you, who is the prophet talking about—himself or someone else?” <sup>35</sup>Then Philip began to speak. Starting with that very passage of Scripture, he told him the good news about Jesus. <sup>36</sup>As they were traveling along the road, they came to some water, and the eunuch said, “Look, here is water. What is there to prevent me from being baptized?”

<sup>38</sup>He ordered the chariot to stop. Then both Philip and the eunuch went down into the water, and Philip baptized him. <sup>39</sup>When they stepped up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord carried Philip away. The eunuch did not see him anymore, but went on his way rejoicing.

<sup>40</sup>Philip, however, found himself at Azotus. And as he went from place to place, he preached the gospel in all the towns until he came to Caesarea.

Have you ever had an unexpected wait? Perhaps your flight was delayed, or a quick trip to Service Ontario turned into a day-long ordeal. You had hoped to accomplish your tasks quickly and get on with your plans, but God had other plans.

We can easily get annoyed during such circumstances, thinking: “This delay is such a waste of time. Why do I have to wait?” But God doesn’t want you to get upset. Instead, He wants you to consider that He may have given you an opportunity to glorify Him. Look at all the people with you in the waiting room and consider how many of them are in danger of hell because they don’t know Jesus, and you have the message that will save them.

Yes, God makes it our privilege, duty, and joy to tell the people He places in our lives about His Son. Let us learn from Philip's example to **seize the day and witness Jesus!** For God himself, 1) sends us the opportunity, 2) gives us His Word, and 3) grants us joy as we tell others about Jesus.

Part One: God sends us the opportunity.

Philip was an evangelist called by the Church of Jerusalem to assist the Apostles.<sup>i</sup> Shortly before our sermon text took place, he was engaged in spreading the Gospel in Samaria with great success.<sup>ii</sup>

One day... *an angel of the Lord said to Philip, "Get up and go south to the road that goes down from Jerusalem to Gaza." (This is an isolated area.)* I can imagine Philip wondering: "Why would God send me on such an isolated road?" It seems like such a waste of time. But instead of grumbling, Philip trusted that God had a reason for his strange command and believed that whatever the Lord had planned for him would be for his good.

<sup>27</sup>*So he got up and went.*

Let's pause for a moment to consider how God often introduces unexpected detours into our lives, such as delayed flights or unexpected illnesses that leave us waiting at a doctor's office. Our initial reaction to such situations is often one of frustration and anger, asking, "Why me? Why now? Why this?"

Oh, how easy it is to complain when things don't go as planned, and it saddens our Saviour. Why? Because it reveals a lack of faith on our part. "Haven't you learned yet to trust me?" I imagine Jesus thinking, "Have I ever misled you? Go and you will understand!" May the LORD forgive us for grumbling when He changes our plans, and give us the strength to trust Him.

As Philip travelled the isolated road to Gaza, he saw *an Ethiopian eunuch, a court official of Candace, Queen of the Ethiopians, who was in charge of all her treasury. He had come to Jerusalem to worship.* <sup>28</sup>*He was on his way home, sitting in his chariot and reading the prophet Isaiah.*

For Philip to meet such an important official on that isolated road to Gaza would be like us seeing a foreign head in Poltimore, Quebec: you just wouldn't expect it!

So, why was this foreign official travelling such an isolated road? Perhaps he chose it on purpose, seeking solitude to read the scroll of Isaiah undistracted by his surroundings. More importantly, the LORD of history led the eunuch to that road to set up an opportunity for Philip to reveal Jesus to him through God's Word.<sup>iii</sup>

<sup>29</sup>*The Spirit told Philip, "Go over there and stay close to that chariot."* <sup>30</sup>*Philip ran up to it and heard him reading Isaiah the prophet.*

Notice Philip didn't hesitate to witness to the Ethiopian, even though he was a foreigner. He saw the eunuch for what he truly was: a precious soul for whom Jesus died and rose again.

Notice also that Philip's hard travel down that isolated road was only for one soul. God doesn't just care for the mass of humanity; He cares for each of us individually. He knows each person in the world better than they know themselves. Because He suffered and died for every person on this earth, He tells us that there is great rejoicing in heaven over each individual sinner who repents.<sup>iv</sup>

Therefore, when it comes to our evangelism efforts, God doesn't just want us to think about how many people we can reach all at once. No, He wants us to care for each individual soul He places in our lives, regardless of how different they are from us, and go out of our way to witness Jesus with them when the opportunity arises.

How many friends and family members do you have who don't know Jesus? God not only sends us to strangers but also to our close acquaintances who don't yet know him. Every day, the Lord puts an opportunity in front of us to witness Him, but do we take it? May the LORD forgive us for all the times we haven't! In the peace of His forgiveness, let us rely on God's Spirit to help us seize every day to witness Jesus with the people He places in our lives.

## Part Two: God gives us His Word

God not only presented Philip with the opportunity to share the message of His Son, but He also provided His Word for Philip to use. As Philip ran to the chariot, he heard the eunuch reading a prophecy from Isaiah about how God would reconcile the world to Himself.

Most of us here recognize that the eunuch was reading about Jesus' humble willingness to suffer and die for the sins of the world. We know this because we know Jesus. The Ethiopian, on the other hand, had not heard of Jesus, which is the whole reason why God sent Philip to meet him.

Notice that Philip didn't rush in and start preaching. Instead, he listened to the Ethiopian to understand what troubled him. This allowed Philip to address the eunuch's genuine concerns and help him see Jesus more clearly.

Then, starting with the very passage the eunuch read, Philip used God's Word to tell him about Jesus. Philip knew that only the Bible could help the Ethiopian know the truth about Jesus. Why? Because the Holy Spirit only promises to speak to us through His Word, awakening us to the truth so that we may repent and believe in Jesus for salvation.

There are two important lessons I want you to learn from how Philip interacted with the Ethiopian.

First, listen to people before you speak. Why? Because only by listening can you understand what truly concerns a person and tailor God's Word to address their spiritual needs.

Second, use God's Word. Why? Because none of our ideas, opinions, or rhetoric can convert a person from unbelief to faith. Only the Holy Spirit can do that through the proclamation of His Word. That's why God doesn't instruct Christians to convert people. Instead, He calls us to

faithfully share His Word with those He puts in our lives—speaking the truth in love so that those who hear us may hear Jesus, repent, and be saved.

To faithfully share God’s Word, we must know it ourselves. Sadly, we often don’t study God’s Gospel as we should. How many times have we failed to share Jesus with people because we felt unsure of what to say, choosing not to speak at all? May the Lord forgive us for this!

In the peace of His forgiveness, let’s not only seek opportunities to share the soul-saving Gospel of Jesus with those God places in our lives, but also recommit to studying His Gospel for ourselves.

Yes, study the Word at home and in Bible class, continually meditating on it wherever you go! Then you will be prepared to witness. On top of this, consider downloading a Bible app on your phone or carrying a pocket Bible. Then, when unexpected waits occur, you can feed your knowledge and faith in Christ by reading the Bible instead of doom-scrolling through social media.

Who knows: people around you may notice what you are doing and ask you about what you’re reading. It has happened to me. And as you get into a conversation, they might tell you about things that are bothering them, and you have God’s Word right with you to guide them to Jesus for grace, mercy, and hope.

Yes, what a blessing it is to have God’s Word so accessible, searchable, and readable as it is today! May the peace of God’s forgiving love for us in Christ move us to rejoice in this gift and use it to joyfully share His saving truth with those God puts in our lives.

### Part Three: God grants us joy.

The account of Philip and the Ethiopian has a very happy ending. We read:

*<sup>36</sup>As they were traveling along the road, they came to some water, and the eunuch said, “Look, here is water. What is there to prevent me from being baptized?”*

*<sup>38</sup>He ordered the chariot to stop. Then both Philip and the eunuch went down into the water, and Philip baptized him. <sup>39</sup>When they stepped up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord carried Philip away. The eunuch did not see him anymore, but went on his way rejoicing.*

Philip must have told that eunuch a lot about Jesus, so much so that he even knew what baptism was and wanted to become a child of God!

On that day, Jesus brought immense joy to both Philip and the Ethiopian official. The eunuch rejoiced that God adopted him in Christ to be His son. Philip rejoiced to see God saving another soul through the proclamation of God’s Gospel. Even heaven rejoiced, as Jesus had said, *“I tell you, there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repents.”*<sup>v</sup>

Experiencing the Holy Spirit work faith in a person’s heart through our witness of His Gospel is truly wonderful. I can’t describe the happiness I feel after sharing the news of Jesus with people on airplanes, trains, or in waiting rooms. Many of those to whom I witnessed I never met again.

Why? Because the Lord has other plans for me, just as He had for Philip, who God whisked away from the Ethiopian.

Nevertheless, just as Philip continued to share Jesus with others joyfully, so do we, trusting in God's promise: *My word that goes out from my mouth: It will not return to me empty, but will accomplish what I desire and achieve the purpose for which I sent it.*<sup>vi</sup>

It must have seemed strange to Philip when the angel said, "Go down that desert road to Gaza." However, God revealed the importance of His command in due time. A day that initially seemed like a waste of time turned out to be time well spent.

Dear Christian, the next time an unexpected event arises in your life, don't get angry or bored. Instead, take a moment to look around. The Lord may have a great assignment for you. Seize the day and witness Jesus. God has provided you with the opportunity to witness him. He has given you His Word and grants you joy in sharing His saving love with others. Amen.

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<sup>i</sup> Cf. Acts 6:5

<sup>ii</sup> Cf. Acts 4:5ff

<sup>iii</sup> Cf. Acts 17:26

<sup>iv</sup> Cf. Luke 15:7

<sup>v</sup> Luke 15:10 EHV

<sup>vi</sup> Isaiah 55:11 EHV