



Grace Lutheran Church  
Valentine, NE

## MAIL MINISTRY

The 4<sup>th</sup> Sunday in Trinity  
July 9, 2017

Pre-Service Meditation: Psalm 27

Hymns: WS 745; TLH 356:1-3, 6; WS 771

Scripture Readings: Genesis 18:20-33  
Matthew 5:7-12

**Sermon Topic:** Evangelism; Christian Life

**In Nomine Jesu!**

**Sermon Text:** Acts 8:26-39

***Now an angel of the Lord spoke to Philip, saying, "Arise and go toward the south along the road which goes down from Jerusalem to Gaza." This is desert. So he arose and went. And behold, a man of Ethiopia, a eunuch of great authority under Candace the queen of the Ethiopians, who had charge of all her treasury, and had come to Jerusalem to worship, was returning. And sitting in his chariot, he was reading Isaiah the prophet. Then the Spirit said to Philip, "Go near and overtake this chariot." So Philip ran to him, and heard him reading the prophet Isaiah, and said, "Do you understand what you are reading?" And he said, "How can I, unless someone guides me?" And he asked Philip to come up and sit with him. The place in the Scripture which he read was this: "He was led as a sheep to the slaughter; and as a lamb before its shearer is silent, so He opened not His mouth. In His humiliation His justice was taken away, and who will declare His generation? For His life is taken from the earth." So the eunuch answered Philip and said, "I ask you, of whom does the prophet say this, of himself or of some other man?" Then Philip opened his mouth, and beginning at this Scripture, preached Jesus to him. Now as they went down the road, they came to some water. And the eunuch said, "See, here is water. What hinders me from being baptized?" Then Philip said, "If you believe with all your heart, you may." And he answered and said, "I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God." So he commanded the chariot to stand still. And both Philip and the eunuch went down into the water, and he baptized him. Now when they came up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord caught Philip away, so that the eunuch saw him no more; and he went on his way rejoicing.***

In Christ Jesus, who has called us to be His ambassadors, dear fellow redeemed:

Last Sunday in connection with our 1<sup>st</sup> Scripture Reading, I mentioned that it would be quite easy for believers of today to think and then to say, "It is nice to know about the history of Abraham, but in the end what does that have to do with me?" My answer was that just as God made promises to Abraham and kept them, so He makes promises to you and me, and we can be sure that He will keep them.

In the same way as you listened to our sermon text for this morning, it would be quite easy to think and to say once again, "What does this account about Philip really have to do with me? An *"angel of the Lord"* has never spoken to me and probably never will. I am just not like Philip at all. Maybe the pastor is like him, but not me!"

My dear friends, nothing could be farther from the truth! Let us examine Philip's situation and this incident. We will find that we are all very much like Philip and should expect to experience situations similar to that of Philip meeting the eunuch from Ethiopia, for you see **WE TOO ARE CALLED!** We are all believers in Christ called to share the gospel message with others, for as our Word of Truth this morning suggests, *"We are [called to be] ambassadors for Christ!"* (2 Cor. 5:20) This is true for each of us whether we are young or old, male or female, in school or out of school,

working or retired. As long as we walk on this earth, our primary calling—and let no one doubt that this is our primary calling—is to be witnesses for Jesus as we go about fulfilling all of the other callings God has extended to us. Yes, **WE TOO ARE CALLED!** As we shall see from our text, in order to be successful in our calling as ambassadors of Christ we need above all to listen—to **listen and act, to listen and preach**, and finally **to listen and rejoice!** May the LORD bless our study!

## I.

Our text begins: *“Now an angel of the Lord spoke to Philip, saying, ‘Arise and go toward the south along the road which goes down from Jerusalem to Gaza.’”* It then goes on to explain: *“This (area Jerusalem and Gaza) is desert,”* and it concludes: *“So he (Philip) arose and went.”* To better appreciate this situation, we need to know a bit more about Philip. Philip was a member of the early church in Jerusalem. He was well-regarded by his fellow Christians and chosen to be one of seven men to serve as deacons in that early church. These seven men were charged with taking care of the benevolence program of the congregation, supervising the daily distribution of food and other essentials to those in need, especially the widows. Later we learn that Philip became known as well for his evangelism (cf. Acts 21:8), but at this time he was preoccupied with taking care of the practical needs of his fellow believers.

It must have seemed strange then for an angel to tell Philip to leave Jerusalem and head south towards Gaza. Almost no one lived in that area, because it was a desert region. The congregation in Jerusalem had received no requests for aid from fellow Christians there. In fact, if Philip had sat down and thought about this prompting of the Lord’s angel, he may well have decided not to go. It really did not make any sense to go and, besides, it would without doubt interrupt the important work he was already doing on behalf of the church right there in Jerusalem. But Philip **listened and acted!**

My dear friends, if we are to fulfill our callings, and **WE TOO ARE CALLED**, then we too must **listen and act!** How do we listen? As already mentioned, I would hazard to guess that none of us here today have had a direct revelation from an angel of the Lord. We, first and foremost, are to listen to our God as He speaks to us through His Word. God’s Word calls upon us to *“walk by faith, not by sight”* (2 Cor. 5:7). Sometimes that may not always seem to be the safe or sensible thing to do. Jesus calls upon us to *“confess Me before men,”* while promising then that He will *“confess (us) before My Father who is in heaven”* (cf. Mt. 10:32), but it is not always safe humanly-speaking to do that. It does not always seem to make sense, yet Jesus urges us to recognize that *“he who does not take his cross and follow after Me is not worthy of Me,”* and He points out that *“He who finds his life will lose it, and he who loses his life for My sake will find it”* (Mt. 10:38-39). But what does all that have to do with our text? We are to listen to God’s charge to be His ambassadors, and when He opens a door to share the gospel—even though it may not seem to make much sense—let us obey and boldly go where God would lead us to go and say what God would have us say. **WE TOO ARE CALLED!** Therefore, let us **listen and act!**

## II.

Let us also **listen and preach!** Our text goes on to relate the seemingly chance meeting between Philip and the eunuch of Ethiopia. First, we want to recognize that this was no chance meeting. There is no such thing as chance, for everything in Philip’s life, as in our own, was guided by our God in His providential care. Notice, however, some of the details. Philip saw the eunuch’s chariot, ran to meet it, and overheard him reading from the book of Isaiah. He then asked the eunuch whether or not he understood what he was reading. He joined the eunuch in his chariot, but rather than beginning to talk right away, he allowed the eunuch to ask questions, giving Philip time to understand where the eunuch was in his thinking. In that way Philip was ready to speak words, which would prove most helpful. When Philip understood just what the eunuch needed to hear, we are told that he *“opened his mouth, and beginning at this Scripture, preached Jesus to him.”*

At this point, we must be careful once again, for it would be easy at this point for many of you to think, “Well, I’m no preacher. That was all right for Philip and, no doubt, for the pastor, but I can’t do that!” My dear friends, that is not true! We are all called upon by our Savior God to evangelize the people around us—to preach to them the good news of God’s love for their souls in Christ. But to do that successfully, do not allow yourself to focus on yourself and your seeming inabilities. Rather, listen first to God’s Word, which proclaims your personal redemption and the redemption of every human soul, and then listen to the person God brings into your life—at times, it may seem, by chance. Remember, there are no chance meetings. God loves every person in this world, sent Jesus to be the Savior of every person in the world, and God brings individuals into our lives, so that we can share with them the message they most need to hear...a message of deliverance and salvation. To know, however, where to begin and what to say, you and I must first listen. We need to know where people are spiritually. Are they still lost in sin? Are they sorrowing over sin? Are they afraid of the future, or mourning the past? Do they have questions about certain Biblical teachings? Do they need erroneous thoughts corrected? It is only when we know where people are, that we can lead them to Jesus and the truths He has given us to aid and comfort in life.

My dear friends, **WE TOO ARE CALLED**—called by God to **listen and to preach** a message that is vital for everyone to hear and believe. That message spells the difference between life and death, heaven and hell!

### III.

Yes, **WE TOO ARE CALLED**—called, finally to **listen and rejoice!** The end of our text really focuses on the reaction of the eunuch to the message Philip proclaimed. As they approached a body of water, he asked whether or not he might be baptized. He confessed his faith, that “*Jesus Christ is the Son of God.*” The eunuch commanded the chariot to stop. He and Philip descended into the water. Philip baptized the man, and then we are told: “*The Spirit of the Lord caught Philip away, so that the eunuch saw him no more.*” With Philip gone, we are left with the eunuch. We are told: “*He went on his way rejoicing.*”

The eunuch had listened to Philip explain the Scriptures with rapt attention. He learned of God’s love and His determination to rescue mankind from sin. He learned about Jesus and how He had fulfilled the Old Testament prophecies the eunuch had been studying. He knew he was right with God because of what Jesus had done and the gifts of forgiveness, life, and salvation that he had been given. He could not but rejoice! True, the man who had brought him the gospel was gone. The One who is the essence of the gospel—Jesus Christ—would always be with him! How could the eunuch not but rejoice!

By way of historical note—Ethiopia developed one of the earliest and largest Christian societies in the ancient world. It is rightfully concluded by most historians that this eunuch himself returned home and preached Jesus to his queen and his fellow courtiers. It is a matter of historical record that many must have believed.

My dear friends, we are, first and foremost, to listen to the proclamation of the gospel, so that our souls might be saved and then continually refreshed by messages of God’s love, forgiveness, and consummate care through His divine providence. How can we not then also rejoice, as did the eunuch? How can we not then share the message with others, as the Lord gives us opportunities? Remember—we are Christ’s ambassadors urging our fellow human beings to recognize that “*God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself*” (cf. 2 Cor. 5:19), and that consequently we have been given the gift of eternal life for Jesus’ sake.

May we prove to be effective ambassadors, who **listen and act**, who **listen and preach**, and who **listen and rejoice!** Amen.

--Pastor Paul D. Nolting  
To God alone be glory!