

Sunday, May 2, 2021 – Fifth Sunday of Easter

Acts 8:26-40 - Philip teaches and baptizes an Ethiopian

²⁶An angel of the Lord said to Philip, “Get up and go toward the south to the road that goes down from Jerusalem to Gaza.” (This is a wilderness road.) ²⁷So he got up and went.

In John 12: 20 ff. Philip, the disciple with the Greek name, is the one whom some Greeks who had come to Jerusalem for the Passover approached with the request, “Sir, we wish to see Jesus.”

Now there was an Ethiopian eunuch, a court official of the Candace, queen of the Ethiopians, in charge of her entire treasury. He had come to Jerusalem to worship ²⁸and was returning home; seated in his chariot, he was reading the prophet Isaiah.

Many Bible scholars believe that the Ethiopian, being a eunuch, may not have been able to worship in the Temple once he got to Jerusalem.

He was reading the prophet Isaiah – Whom do you know who might have recently experienced a disappointment or a setback and/or who is searching who might be particularly receptive?

²⁹Then the Spirit said to Philip, “Go over to this chariot and join it.” ³⁰So Philip ran up to it and heard him reading the prophet Isaiah. He asked, “Do you understand what you are reading?” ³¹He replied, “How can I, unless someone guides me?” And he invited Philip to get in and sit beside him. ³²Now the passage of the scripture that he was reading was this:

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

³³In his humiliation justice was denied him. Who can describe his generation? For his life is taken away from the earth.” (*Isaiah 53: 7-8*)

³⁴The eunuch asked Philip, “About whom, may I ask you, does the prophet say this, about himself or about someone else?”

Do you know the Bible and Jesus well enough so that when God gives you an opportunity to share Christ with someone, you are able to do it?

³⁵Then Philip began to speak, and starting with this scripture, he proclaimed to him the good news about Jesus. ³⁶As they were going along the road, they came to some water; and the eunuch said, “Look, here is water! What is to prevent me from being baptized?” ³⁸He commanded the chariot to stop, and both of them, Philip and the eunuch, went down into the water, and Philip baptized him.

Psalms 22:25-31 - All the ends of the earth shall remember and turn to the LORD

Of the seven last words of Jesus, three of them are addressed to God the Father – “Father, forgive them” – “Why have you forsaken me?” – and “Into your hands I commend my spirit”

Of the three addressed to God the Father, the latter two are quotations from the Psalms – Psalm 22: 1 – My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?

Psalm 31: 5 – Into your hand I commit my spirit

Psalm 22 contains many words of lament, which reflect the experiences of Jesus on the cross – Verse 6 – I am scorned by others and despised by the people

Verse 7 – All who see me mock at me; they shake their heads

Verse 8 – “Commit your cause to the Lord; let him deliver and rescue the one in whom he delights!”

Verse 14 – I am poured out like water, and all my bones are out of joint

Verse 15 – My mouth is dried up like a potsherd

Verse 18 – They divide my clothes among themselves, and for my clothing they cast lots

But Psalm 22 ends with strong words of faith and assurance

²⁷All the ends of the earth shall remember and turn to the LORD;
all the families of nations shall bow before God.

²⁹Indeed, all who sleep in the earth shall bow down in worship;
all who go down to the dust, though they be dead, shall kneel before the LORD.

³⁰Their descendants shall serve the LORD, whom they shall proclaim to generations to come.

³¹They shall proclaim God’s deliverance to a people yet unborn, saying to them, “The LORD has acted!”

1 John 4:7-21 – God is love

⁷Beloved, let us love one another, because love is from God.

⁸Whoever does not love does not know God, for God is love.

⁹God sent his only Son into the world so that we might live through him. – *Cf. John 3: 16*

¹⁰In this is love, not that we loved God but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the atoning sacrifice for our sins.

¹¹Beloved, since God loved us so much, we also ought to love one another.

¹²No one has ever seen God; if we love one another, God lives in us, and his love is perfected in us.

¹⁵God abides in those who confess that Jesus is the Son of God, and they abide in God.

¹⁶God is love, and those who abide in love abide in God, and God abides in them.

¹⁹We love because he first loved us.

²⁰Those who say, “I love God,” and hate their brothers or sisters, are liars; for those who do not love a brother or sister whom they have seen, cannot love God whom they have not seen.

Gospel: John 15:1-8 - Jesus is the Vine

¹“I am the true vine, and my Father is the vine grower. ⁵I am the vine, you are the branches.

Did Jesus and His disciples pass through a vineyard on their way from the Last Supper to Gethsemane?

²He removes every branch in me that bears no fruit. Every branch that bears fruit he prunes to make it bear more fruit.

Some translations have “lifts up” instead of “removes.”

Are you producing no fruit, fruit, more fruit (verse 2), or much fruit (verse 5)?

How has God pruned you? How does God need to prune you?

⁴Abide in me as I abide in you. Just as the branch cannot bear fruit by itself unless it abides in the vine, neither can you unless you abide in me.

⁵Those who abide in me and I in them bear much fruit, because apart from me you can do nothing.