

Sunday 29th April 2018 Philip and the Eunuch - 3 Questions!
Acts 8:26-40 1 John 4:7-21 John 15:1-8

Who were Philip and the Eunuch? What do we know about them?

Philip: Greek speaking Jewish Christian chosen by the 12 to tend to the needs of others (6:1-6)
Remember? 7 men chosen who were full of Holy Spirit and wise to because the widows were being overlooked
In tune with the Spirit
vs 26 The Spirit prompted Philip to head south on the road from Jerusalem to Gaza
vs 29 The Spirit told Philip to Go over to the chariot and join it

For us to be in tune with the Holy Spirit we need to abide in God as in the Gospel reading
Philip encouraged and affirmed the Ethiopian in his faith

Ethiopian Eunuch:

Ethiopian -

Court official - of the Candace, queen of the Ethiopians in charge of her entire treasury
So a man of influence within the power structures of the government
Wealthy enough to be riding in a chariot
Devout - reading aloud from the prophet of Isaiah Try reading aloud sometimes!!
Humble enough to know that he could not understand what he read on his own
His religion is not made clear but...
He had made pilgrimage to Jerusalem so could be Jewish or Gentile turned Jew
Ethiopian does not mean he was not Jewish God's chosen people of Israel were a mixed race
God of Israel had been taught in Ethiopia since Solomon & the Queen of Sheba
In Old Testament Ethiopia is known as Cush and mentioned in Ps 68 and Jeremiah

Eunuch -

castrated male servant - castrated so 'safe' to work with royal women, to serve among the royal household
stereotypically seen as sexually immoral

Insider : Outsider

So this man of great influence in his home environment, in charge of the treasury of the queen, was excluded within the faith that he was seeking to embrace
In the scriptures, in Deuteronomy and Leviticus he would have been seen as scarred and defective and therefore excluded from worshipping with others

Deut 23:1 says that no-one who has been sexually mutilated "shall be admitted to the assembly of the Lord"

But the prophet Isaiah teaches a lot about freedom from marginalisation and he announces that God will recover the remnant, those on the edges, a release from the older books of Deut & Levitical laws

Isaiah 56:4-5, just a couple of chapters after the passage that the Eunuch was reading, actually gives an amazing promise specifically to Eunuchs

For thus says the Lord:

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

So it is no wonder that the Eunuch may have been baffled and wanted some clarity on what he is reading

So in the course of their conversation Eunuch asked 3 questions... I think I have a few more! :-)

1. “How can I understand, unless someone guides me?”

Philip asks the eunuch if he understands what he is reading and he humbly replies

‘How can I unless someone guides me?’ !

As a eunuch he was not allowed into the temple (Deut 23:1)

If a Gentile then only allowed in outer courts so maybe he had not received as much teaching as others and he wants to know more

Needs a Philip to explain / open things up to him, someone to bring the ink to life because he needs to know the God of the Scripture as well as the words of scripture

Think of words that you may have read on someones application form for something. Until you meet the actual person they are just words

2 people could write the same words and yet be quite different in reality

The Eunuch needed a Philip to bring the words to life, to understand them, to be a guide to him

Who do we have to guide us and help us understand the words of Scripture more?

Who do we help to understand more?

We all need to have people that help and guide us

And we need to be helping and guiding others...

Both with the help of the Holy Spirit

2. “About whom, may I ask you, does the prophet say this, about himself or someone else?”

The words the eunuch was reading included

Like a sheep he was led to the slaughter... in his humiliation justice was denied him... vs 32 & 33

He asks if Isaiah is talking about himself or somebody else?

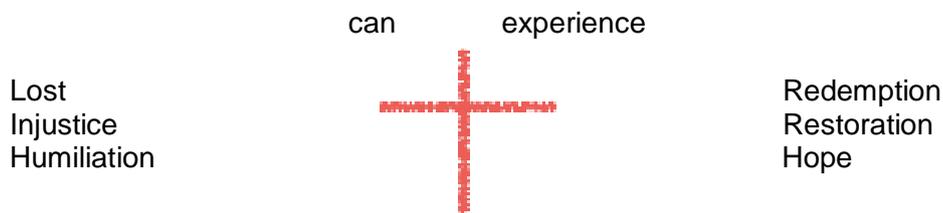
As a eunuch he would have experienced humiliation and been denied justice so these words must have resonated with him deeply

What were they saying to him? Did the writer of these words truly understand how he felt?

Isaiah, the eunuch AND JESUS knew and understood these words

Philip explains, starting with the words of scripture that he was reading and then went on to the good news of Jesus

The good news that



The good news of the Jesus is available for EVERYONE

God loved us, each and everyone of us, that he sent his Son as the atoning sacrifice for our sins
Philip was testifying to what he knew to be true... that the Father had sent his Son as the Saviour
of THE WORLD

The message of Jesus, of the cross, of Easter is that EVERYONE, however lost or marginalised
or unworthy they feel is loved by God and through the cross, can be redeemed and restored and
find a new hope and joy

3. "What is to prevent me from being baptised?"

What was he hoping for when he asked this question?

What was stopping him being baptised?

Was he the wrong nationality? Ethiopian so cut of from the land of Israel

Wrong sexuality? His body violated the purity code

Wrong job? Member of the cabinet for queen of Ethiopia

Humanly speaking these may all have been seemed a barrier to baptism

Maybe he had never heard the whole story that Philip explained to him and the message of Jesus
to believe and be baptised

But after his talk with Philip he was prompted by the Spirit and there was nothing to stop him

Vs "37" (Missing verse) Belief was crucial

Philip said " If you believe with all your heart, you may.

The eunuch answered, "I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God"

So they went down to the water and Philip baptised him

And the Eunuch went on his way rejoicing

Philip got snatched away by the Spirit of the Lord and found himself in Azotus - for another day!!

What walls or barriers do we... have we... put in the way of people believing in the loving and
saving good news of Jesus ??

We need to keep abiding in The Vine so that we are at one with God and in tune with His Spirit and
we need to ask for wisdom as we help and guide one another

And we need to be very careful that we don't put barriers in the way of others coming to faith

My question to all of us is, if you have not been baptised what is stopping you?

And if you were baptised as an infant and have never made a declaration of those promises for yourself, either through confirmation - a re-affirmation of your baptism promises, what is stopping you?

Do come and talk to me

Summary

So... 3 questions the eunuch asked of Philip and we can ask today too

How can I understand unless someone guides me?

How is guiding you and how are you being asked to guide?

About whom, may I ask you, does the prophet say this, himself or someone else?

Are you feeling excluded, marginalised? The message of love and salvation is for you too

What is to prevent me from being baptised?

Nothing if you believe in Jesus as Lord and Saviour

Come and talk to me :-)