Acts 8:26-40

Illustration: Irony – I hated reading. I was never a good reader. I almost aced the Math part of the GRE and I did just average on the Verbal. While at DTS I worked at a Christian non-profit and one of my major jobs was editing… i.e. reading. Now, my I teach ESL kids to read and I have to read all of the time for my Ph.D. How ironic, huh? Have you had a taste of irony in your own life?

- God places someone that would not have expected, in a place that no one would have expected, to evangelize to someone that no one would have expected in order to advance His plan for His Church.
- Today we are going to see that God's church doesn't grow because we have great programs, great techniques, or great preaching. *God's church grows because He grows it.*

26 Now an angel of the Lord said to Philip, "Go south to the road—the desert road—that goes down from Jerusalem to Gaza." 27 So he started out, and on his way he met an Ethiopian eunuch, an important official in charge of all the treasury of Candace, queen of the Ethiopians. This man had gone to Jerusalem to worship, 28 and on his way home was sitting in his chariot reading the book of Isaiah the prophet. 29 The Spirit told Philip, "Go to that chariot and stay near it."

- Notice that nothing is typical here: Philip is told to leave his flourishing ministry in Samaria to go to the desert. Preach to the cacti? Eunuch goes to Jerusalem to worship, and he probably didn't get far since he couldn't enter the temple (Deut 23:1). He's sitting in the middle of the desert when Philip is sent to go to stand next to his chariot and stay there.
- Ethiopian – meaning from the south. Probably either a full-fledged proselyte or a Gentile God-fearer, but God had probably been preparing his heart through the Scriptures.
- Reading Isaiah. How did he get a copy of this? How random?

- ***What do you think was going through Philip's head?***

30 Then Philip ran up to the chariot and heard the man reading Isaiah the prophet. "Do you understand what you are reading?" Philip asked. 31 "How can I," he said, "unless someone explains it to me?" So he invited Philip to come up and sit with him.

32 The eunuch was reading this passage of Scripture: "He was led like a sheep to the slaughter, and as a lamb before the shearer is silent, so he did not open his mouth. 33 In his humiliation he was deprived of justice. Who can speak of his descendants? For his life was taken from the earth."

34 The eunuch asked Philip, "Tell me, please, who is the prophet talking about, himself or someone else?" 35 Then Philip began with that very passage of Scripture and told him the good news about Jesus.

- Imagine the scene, this man was probably surrounded by aids, he's from a black race, and he's a dignitary. This wasn't exactly normal for Philip. This was a bold move.
- Read Isaiah 53.
- ***Why do you think the Ethiopian Eunuch was reading this chapter? What is so significant?***

[36]As they traveled along the road, they came to some water and the eunuch said, "Look, here is water. Why shouldn't I be baptized?" [38]And he gave orders to stop the chariot. Then both Philip and the eunuch went down into the water and Philip baptized him. [39]When they came up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord suddenly took Philip away, and the eunuch did not see him again, but went on his way rejoicing. [40]Philip, however, appeared at Azotus and traveled about, preaching the gospel in all the towns until he reached Caesarea.

- From a Jewish perspective, the Ethiopian would have been ineligible for baptism (incorporation into the community) for several reasons. He was black, a foreigner, and likely castrated.
- Philip is then wisked off to resume his preaching.
- ***How does Luke illustrate the significance of the Holy Spirit in evangelism?*** (beginning to end)

Why does Luke record this message?

- 1:8 - The eunuch was geographically and ethnically further distanced from Jerusalem than anyone else up to this point.
- Possible "Fulfillment" of Psalm 68:31 and Zephaniah 3:10, passages that predict the ingathering of people from Ethiopia.
- He wants his original readers to believe that by His Spirit, God Himself brings distant people into his community. (sent Philip, prepared the eunuch, gave Philip the words, and sent him away)

How does the church grow? (1) The Lord expands His church (2) by using us to bring in others who are ethnically and geographically distant. Believe it!