28 April – 4 May 2024 Journeying alongside others

# **Acts 8: 26-40**

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

34The eunuch asked Philip, “About whom, may I ask you, does the prophet say this, about himself or about someone else?” 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 Philipbaptized him. 39When they came up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord snatched Philip away; the eunuch saw him no more, and went on his way rejoicing. 40But Philip found himself at Azotus, and as he was passing through the region, he proclaimed the good news to all the towns until he came to Caesarea.



Bible notes

Philip is one of seven ‘Hellenists’, Greek-speaking Jewish Christians (appointed ‘to wait on tables’) generously serving God’s community (6:1-6). When the Jerusalem church was persecuted, they were among those ‘scattered’ throughout Judea and Samaria’ (8:1-3). Travelling north to Samaria, Philip proclaimed the good news and baptized (8:4-13). Now God’s messenger tells him to return south, through the wilderness towards Gaza on the coast. There are parallels between Philip’s journey and the risen Jesus’ walk to Emmaus, reminding us that Philip travels with his Lord. As Jesus opens the conversation with a question, ‘What are you discussing?’ (Luke 24:17), so does Philip, ‘Do you understand?’ Both explain the Scriptures, Jesus talking about himself (24:27), and Philip about Jesus. Jesus disappeared as his companions recognised him and they returned to Jerusalem (24:31-33). Philip is spirited away northwards, leaving the African courtier who ‘went on his way rejoicing’. Philip travels with his Lord as he journeys with this Ethiopian treasurer from a country with a Jewish tradition, later claimed to date from the time of the Queen of Sheba’s visit to Solomon. Philip runs beside the chariot, but this high official, wealthy enough to possess a scroll of Scripture, invites Philip to sit beside him. Philip first waits to be asked a question about the passage from Isaiah 53:7-8 before relating it to Jesus. And it is the Ethiopian who asks for baptism and commands his chariot to stop. Their journey together ends as both of them enter and emerge from the waters of death and resurrection.

Reflection

Spend a few moments thinking about what stands out for you from the Bible reading. This idea may help.

Philip, the apostle, and the Ethiopian treasurer briefly journey together, and this is of great significance for them both. Both were on their own travels, but after meeting both changed direction. In Philip’s case this was literally a reversal from going south to going north, as the word of God reaches out ‘to the ends of the earth’. The Ethiopian came to Jerusalem to worship, and he travels on his way home ‘rejoicing’. He has been baptized in the name of the self-giving God who, as Peter will express it, ‘shows no partiality’, just as we are ‘not to make a distinction between them and us’.

 **Questions for reflection**

*You may wish to use these questions and the picture to help you think about or discuss issues arising from this week’s Bible passage.*

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| People on a bus |  |

* What topics work well when speaking to strangers?
* Why is it significant that Philip journeyed alongside the Ethiopian eunuch?
* What does this tell us about how we might relate our faith to others?

## Prayer

*Adapt to your local context.*

We travel the journey of life but do not go alone,
**for the Lord is with us.**
We travel the journey of life with thankful hearts,
**and the Lord is with us.**
We travel the journey of life with each other,
**and the Lord is with us,**
now and always with us.
**Amen.**

**A prayer to end the Bible study**

Lord, be with us on our journeys with others and open our eyes to you. Amen.

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