**John 15: 1-8 & Acts 8: 26-40 280424**

**“Look, here is water! What is to prevent me from being baptised?”**

**A gospel for all people.** Page 123 of the NT section.

Spread of the gospel throughout the world.

Acts 8 takes us away from the geo-centric spread of the gospel we find in most of Acts.

**Philip**

Called as one of the deacons - someone who would wait at tables (Acts 6)

God has different plans.

Stephen becomes the first Christian Martyr.

Philip is probably the first prophet of the post Pentecost Church.

Earlier in Acts 8 Philip has gone out and starting spreading the gospel beyond Jerusalem.

With signs, healings and miracles.

Our passage picks up the story as Philip is commanded by an Angel of the Lord to go towards the south, to the road connecting Jerusalem and Gaza.

Philip is to go and have a divine encounter - Luke highlights this by his several mentions of the Holy Spirit and also the Angel of the Lord.

Philips is divinely sent to a certain road, at a certain point for what reason?

That soon becomes clear when the dust cloud on the horizon turns out to be a chariot.

**Exclusion**

Here we meet an Ethiopian Eunuch from the court.

Wealthy, well read, faithful but…

Perhaps he has experienced rejection, been made to feel an outsider.

Being a eunuch (Deut 23:1)? Different skin colour?

Reading the project Isaiah - speaks of the inclusion of Ethiopian

But also speaks in Isaiah 56 of how those who are Eunuchs will also be gathered to God, and find their home in God.

The Eunuch is reading this passage from the Greek translation of Isaiah 53.

“In his humiliation justice was denied him”

Was that the eunuch experience in Jerusalem, at the hands of those he thought would welcome him in worship?

Where do we feel excluded? Ignored? Full of doubt?

Where have we been the victims of others prejudices and fears?

Where have we felt alone, despairing, hopeless.

God is not far off from us but comes to meet us in those places.

**God rescues us in Jesus Christ**

God comes to meet us - the prodigal son with the father running to his son.

God comes not to meet us a faceless entity, but in Jesus Christ.

By Christ’s death and resurrection the shame, pain, fear, despair and hopeless we experience has been taken by God.

Not that we do not experience those things even now, but so that God can call us out from those places.

God can draw us into the hope, joy and love of God that comes in and through Jesus Christ.

Perhaps, like Philip, we are called to speak the truth of God’s life, hope and love to someone?

We need prophets. Calling us out and beyond. Calling us to where the Spirit is leading us.

Perhaps we will be like the Ethiopian?

We don’t know what happens to him, but we do know that Christianity spread quickly and strongly through north Africa.

We know that Ethiopia was one of the earliest Christian Kingdoms in the world.

Perhaps we are called to be like the Ethiopian Eunuch and share the good news of how God has lifted us from despair to hope, from death to life.

**Baptism**

The eunuch says “Look, here is water! What is to prevent me from being baptised?”

The answer is nothing.

Nothing can prevent us from coming to God in Christ Jesus.

No prejudice or fear.

No shame or humiliation.

No despair.

Nothing can prevent each of us and each person from discovering our home in God.

Throughout Acts, baptism is the ultimate sign and seal of our inclusion in the good news of Jesus Christ.

Perhaps we see that most clearly in this encounter.

Philip and the Ethiopian eunuch remind us that there is nothing that can prevent us from making our home in God.

That because of the death and resurrection of Christ prejudice, fear and shame can be forgiven.

We are all called home to God. And maybe we are called to be a Philip, calling others home to God, calling this community home.