

'On his way, rejoicing.'

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[0 : 00] Well, we're going to turn to our Bibles and to the passage that we'll be looking at shortly. You'll find it in the book of Acts, which I think if you have one of our church visitors' Bibles, is page 917, Acts chapter 8.

And we're going to read the story of Philip and the Ethiopian eunuch, beginning at verse 26 of Acts chapter 8.

Now an angel of the Lord said to Philip, Rise and go toward the south, to the road that goes down from Jerusalem to Gaza. This is a desert place.

And he rose and went. And there was an Ethiopian, a eunuch, a court official of Candace, queen of the Ethiopians, who was in charge of all her treasure.

He had come to Jerusalem to worship and was returning, seated in his chariot. And he was reading the prophet Isaiah. And the spirit said to Philip, Go over and join this chariot.

[1 : 09] So Philip ran to him and heard him reading Isaiah the prophet and asked, Do you understand what you're reading? And he said, How can I, unless someone guides me?

And he invited Philip to come up and sit with him. Now the passage of Scripture he was reading was this, Like a sheep he was led to the slaughter, and like a lamb before its shearer is silent, so he opens not his mouth.

In his humiliation justice was denied him. Who can describe his generation? For his life is taken away from the earth. And the eunuch said to Philip, About whom, I ask you, does the prophet say this?

About himself or about someone else? Then Philip opened his mouth, And beginning with this Scripture, He told him the good news about Jesus.

And as they were going along the road, They came to some water, And the eunuch said, See, here's water. What prevents me from being baptized? And he commanded the chariot to stop, And they both went down to the water, Philip and the eunuch, And he baptized him.

[2 : 20] When they came up out of the water, The Spirit of the Lord carried Philip away, And the eunuch saw him no more, And went on his way rejoicing. But Philip found himself at Azotus.

As he passed through, He preached the gospel to all the towns, Until he came to Caesarea. Amen. May God blester us. This is word.

Good. Well, as I said, It's lovely to be here. Woody, thank you very much for your invitation. And for reading tonight's passage, Let's turn back then in our Bibles To Acts chapter 8, The page number 917.

And this extraordinary story of Philip And the Ethiopian. Can I say, first of all, It is a great passage to have on Pentecost Sunday.

Pentecost, of course, The festival taken over by the early church From their Jewish forebears, Falling some seven weeks, For 50 days, Pente, 50 days, After the Passover, That occasion when the Lord Jesus was crucified, A little over a week, After his ascension to the right hand of God.

[3 : 55] And so here, this Sunday, And every year, We remember the fulfillment of that great promise Of the risen Lord Jesus, To send his Holy Spirit, The third person of the Trinity, Father, Son, and Spirit, To send his Holy Spirit, To teach and equip those disciples To be apostles, Leading them into all truth, Reminding them of all that Jesus taught.

And it's a result of his ministry That we have our New Testament, Is it not? And also, of course, To empower all believers, Men and women, Old and young, Slave and free, From every people and language, To be his witnesses, Not only in Jerusalem, Where the great events of Pentecost took place, But in the surrounding area, Judea and Samaria, Yes, And even to the ends of the earth.

And from there, We tonight meet, Do we not? On one of those distant islands, As Isaiah puts it, Who then had not heard his name, Or known his glory.

It's a great day then, For a topic of mission. And here in Luke's second book, We know it as the book of Acts, Don't we?

The author narrates, The proclamation of the gospel, As it spreads outward, From Jerusalem. And he presents it, Not only as the Acts of the apostles, As it's often called, I think if you look back in your Bible, You'll see it says, The Acts of the apostles, Back at the beginning of the book, Actually, That of the apostles bit, Wasn't there when Luke wrote it, That's been put in, Later, By a church tradition.

[6 : 05] Luke presents it, Not just as the Acts of the apostles, Not only as the Acts of the Holy Spirit, But if you've got that page open, This is chapter one, Keep your finger in chapter eight, Look at chapter one, And the opening verse, Of the book of Acts.

You'll see there, That Luke writes, In the first book, O Theophilus, You and I know that, As the gospel of Luke, In the first book, O Theophilus, I have dealt with, All that Jesus, Began, To do, And to teach, Until the day, When he was taken up, After he'd given command, To the Holy Spirit, To the apostles, Whom he had chosen.

Now, I don't know, If you've ever reflected, On that little work, Began. It's rather interesting, Isn't it? I mean, If Luke's gospel, Is all that Jesus, Began to do, And to teach, The implication is, That the, Second volume, The volume, That we have in front of us tonight, Is all that Jesus, Continued to do, And to teach, Is it not?

This then, Is not simply, The acts of the apostles, It is the acts, It is the ongoing work, Of the risen, And ascended, Lord Jesus.

His saving work, Finished, Wonderfully on the cross, Yes. But the job description, That Isaiah tells us, The Lord God has given the servant, Is, Is, To take, To take, Salvation, To the ends, Of the earth, And Luke knows, His bible, And when Luke writes down, In verse, Eight of chapter one, Speaking of the coming, Of the spirit, You will receive power, When the holy spirit, Comes upon you, And you will be my witnesses, In Jerusalem, And in all Judea, And Samaria, And to the ends, Of the earth, He is quoting the Lord Jesus, Quoting Isaiah, This is the job description, Of the servant, God says, Of his servant, It is too small a thing, For you to restore, The tribes of Jacob, I will make you a light, To the Gentiles, To bring my salvation,

[8 : 30] To the ends, Of the earth, What is the risen, And ascended Jesus doing? He is pursuing, His mission, And his mission, Is nothing less, Than salvation, To the ends, Of the earth, My friend, This book, Is the book, Of the acts, Of the risen Jesus, Through the apostles, Empowered, By the spirit, And that work, That mission work, Of the Lord Jesus, He will continue, Until that glorious day, When he returns, In his kingdom, And so here we are tonight, And we are meeting then, On one of the days, When the Lord Jesus, Is still pursuing, His mission, We'll come back with me, To Acts chapter 8, It's a remarkable story, It may be familiar, To some of us here, It may be new, To others,

It is a story, That marks a significant, Step, In the fulfillment, Of that mission agenda, Do you remember, Jerusalem, Judea, And Samaria, The ends of the earth, This is a very, Significant step, As we will notice, As we go through it, Now there are two main, Characters, In this story, The first, Is a man called, Philip, If we had been, Reading through Acts, Then we would have, Encountered him, Previously, Philip, Philip was one of those, Who were, Highly regarded, As, Full of wisdom, And of the spirit, In chapter 6, And who were the first, Deacons, Appointed to serve, The church, And to release, The apostles, For word ministry, Now this man, Philip, Receives a message, From God, Brought by an angel, That is a messenger,

From the Lord, And the message, Is pretty simple, You can see it there, In verse 26, Philip, Rise, Get off your, Nice new chair, That you've bought, Wonderfully, For the congregation, To sit on, Rise, And go, And go, I don't, Willie paid me a fee, To say that, I'm, I'm, I'm on a commission, You understand, Rise, And go south, Go and join that main road south, From Jerusalem, Toward, Gaza, Alright, So there's Philip, That's the first character, The second character, We meet, In verse 27, Now this second man, Is an Ethiopian, That is a, Person from, Ethiopia, Now he is, Quite an interesting, Character, He's not named, But we're told, That he was a senior, Civil servant, He was the, Finance minister, Of, Candace, The queen, Of the Ethiopians, He was in charge, Of all of her, Treasure, And this, Ethiopian, Had traveled, To Jerusalem, And Luke tells us, He traveled there, To worship, The God, Of, The Jews, Well he's now, Returning, Home, We're also told, And it's there, In verse 27, That he was, A eunuch, That is, A man, Who had been, Physically, And,

Genitally, Mutilated, A man, Who according, To the old testament, Law, Would not be, Allowed, Within the precincts, Of the temple, Interestingly, So he is, In his chariot, He's returning, The chariot,

He's sort of, Riding down, This main road, South, But, While in Jerusalem, He visited, A bookshop, And there he, Bought, A kindle, And has downloaded, The prophet Isaiah, Well, It would have been, Very nice for him, Had he been able, To do that, In fact, What he has done, And we're not told how, Is he has acquired, Something very valuable, Which is, And you can imagine, The scroll, It would be written on, A handwritten copy, Of, A portion, Of the old testament, Scriptures, Here then, Is a man, Of considerable wealth, As well, Of influence, And as he rides, In his chariot, He is reading, He is reading, From this, Scrawl, Well, What happens next, Is fascinating,

[13 : 35] The Holy Spirit, Verse 29, Says to Philip, Philip, You see that chariot, Go and join it, Now chariot's moving along, So presumably, Philip starts, Sort of running, And he runs alongside, The chariot, And as he's running along, He can hear the guy, Reading out loud, For the practice was, To read out loud, Not the sort of, Silent reading, That we are used to doing, And lo and behold, What Philip hears, Is a portion, Of Isaiah chapter 53, Now, Philip knew his bible, Well enough, To recognize, Where it was from, Good job, Wasn't it?

Well, Luke spells it out here, Like a sheep, He was led to the slaughter, And like a lamb, Before its shearers, Is silent, So he opens not his mouth, In his humiliation, Justice was denied him, Who can describe his generation, For his life, Is taken away, From the earth, And the Ethiopian, Is fascinated to know, Who this passage, Is about, He's just read, These words, This is what comes, Immediately before it, In Isaiah 53, Surely he has borne our griefs, And carried our sorrows, Yet we esteemed him stricken, Smitten by God, And afflicted, But he was pierced, For our transgressions, He was crushed, For our iniquities, Upon him, Was the chastisement, That brought us peace, And with his wounds, We are healed,

All we like sheep, Have gone astray, We have turned everyone, To his own way, And the Lord, Has laid on him, The iniquity of us all, Now if you're familiar, With that passage, You know that it is, The most wonderful, And extraordinarily detailed, Prediction, Of the saving work, Of Christ, On the cross, And so the Ethiopian, Wants to know, Who is this passage about, Look at verse 34, He says to Philip, And you've got the picture, In your mind's eye, The chariot, Philip running along, Actually let me just check, That you have got this right, In your mind's eye, I wonder what it is, You're imagining, Are you, For example, Imagining, Clearly, An Ethiopian, In a chariot, That is, A dark skinned, Man, A black African, Is that what's in your mind's eye,

And have you got clear, In your mind, That there's Philip, Who's, A, A, A, A middle eastern man, Yes, So in your mind's eye, There should be no sort of, A, White westerners here, You got the picture, Is that in your mind's eye, Okay, So, Philip's still running along, Chariot is going along, Man reading scroll, You've got it in your mind's eye, Okay, So man turns to Philip, Running alongside, And says, Presumably out of the window, The chariot, Who is this about, This prophet, Who is he talking about, About whom does the prophet say this, Is it about himself, Or is it about, Someone else, Now that's the key question, Isn't it, It's actually a question, Still asked in theological colleges, Edward, Lobb and I, Had the privilege of attending, The same theological college, I can still remember, The question being asked there,

But can you remember that, You can't remember that, Well Edward probably, Didn't turn up to that lecture, I can remember it, And I can still remember, The lecturer being very mystified, And not really knowing, Who it was about, Which was very sad really, But anyway, Philip fortunately does know, And what happens is, That Philip, Is invited, Into the, Chariot, Isn't that great, Come on, Come and join me, Says the Ethiopian, And as Philip, Is in the chariot, Sort of puffing, And panting, Having done his running, He sort of slowly calms down, And the pulse rate, Decreases, And, Well what happens is, That Philip, Begins with this scripture, And tells him the good news, About, Jesus, Jesus, Philip, Philip, Is invited to be this man's guide, To be his teacher, To be the one, Who explains the scripture,

[18 : 19] To him, And fortunately, Philip, Is able, To do it, He tells him the good news, About Jesus, He explains, About, God, And about sin, About the death of Jesus, For our forgiveness, He explains, About the need, To be cleansed, Of sin, Spiritually, And that, Baptism in water, Is an outward picture, Of that inner cleansing, That Christ, Alone, Can give, And as he explains, The gospel, And they go down the road, They come across, A patch of water, A little oasis, In the desert, And the Ethiopian, Says, To Philip, Look, Here is water, Why, Why don't we stop, What is to

prevent me, Being baptized, Right now, Well, Well,

It's an interesting exercise, Isn't it, Just to work out, Had you been Philip, What would you have had to have said, In order to elicit that response, Would your standard gospel presentation, Have led the Ethiopian to say, Here is water, What's to prevent me, Being baptized, Interesting question, That isn't it, I think most versions, Of the ABC, Of two ways to live, Of Christianity explored, Unless I missed it, Hardly mention baptism, Isn't that interesting, It's interesting, That should be, The Ethiopian's response, Here's water, What's to prevent me, Being baptized, And of course, There could have been, A number of things, That would have prevented, Being baptized, It could have been,

His physical mutilation, Could have been, His ethnicity, Could have been, That he was, An Ethiopian, And not a Jew, But Philip can't think, Of any good reason, At all, Philip agrees, The Ethiopian commands, The chariot to stop, The brakes are put on, The horse sort of, Stretches to a halt, Cloud of dust, They get out of the chariot, And Philip, And this Ethiopian man, Go down into the water, And he is baptized, And coming out, Dripping wet, He gets back, Into his chariot, And Philip is carried off, By the spirit, And we're told, That the eunuch, Saw him no more, But he went, On his way, Rejoicing, Well it's a great story, Isn't it?

A great story, And it is a significant step, Because, Do you notice, What this means? This, This is the bringing, Of the gospel, To Africa, My friends, The gospel doesn't come, To Europe, Until chapter 13, Of the book of Acts, The gospel goes to Africa, Before it gets to Europe, Is that not interesting?

Are you interested? Is that not very, Very interesting? You see, Because of, The impact, Of western, Missionary endeavor, Particularly in the, Nineteenth century, Many, Parts of Africa, Are under the impression, That the Christian faith, Is an, English, Religion, That the Bible, Is an English book, Because it's come to them, In English, Even, That God, Is an, Englishman, Now I realize, That nobody here, Would be tempted, To believe that, But this passage, Reminds us, That the gospel, Went to Africa, Before it came to Europe, And the great, Event, Of Pentecost, Reminds us, That the gospel, Is infinitely, Translatable,

[22 : 50] Translatable, It crosses, Into different, Languages, And cultures, That you don't, Have to learn, Hebrew, And Aramaic, And Greek, In order to hear, The voice of God, Because where the Bible, Is translated, Into your own language, Like English, For example, Or like, Farsi, Or like, Any of the great, Languages of the world, Then, Those who speak, That language, Hear the voice of God, In their own language, That was the great, Miracle of Pentecost, Wasn't it?

That without learning, The languages, Of all those visitors, To Jerusalem, The disciples were, Miraculously, Enabled, To speak the gospel, To tell, The mighty acts of God, In the languages, Of all those visitors, To Jerusalem, And it is a very important, Step then, That happens here, That is full of, Significance, So we must be, Very careful, That we don't, Imagine, That we have some, Proprietary, Rights, Over the scriptures, Or the gospel, No, It is God's gospel, It is Christ's mission, And the Bible, Is an ancient, Middle Eastern text, In Hebrew, Aramaic, And Greek, And you and I, Are citizens, Of a distant island, Who, Had not heard his, Fame, Or known his glory, But who have the privilege,

Of a Bible, Translated, Into our own language, Now, It's a remarkable story, It's full of drama, And interest, And, And yet, Within it, I want to suggest, That there are three, Huge lessons, To do with, Authentic gospel, Ministry, And so as we, Sit here now tonight, Around this passage, I want us just to, Step back, And just to reflect, On what happened here, And let me, Explore these three, With you, First of all, Do you notice that, The gospel, Is rooted, In scripture, Have a look at verse, 35, Let me go from 34, The eunuch said to Philip, About whom I asked, Does the prophet say this, About himself, Or someone else,

Then Philip, Opened his mouth, And beginning, Beginning with this scripture, He told him the good news, About Jesus, May I suggest, That it would be a very interesting exercise, To take home tonight, To see if you can do that, Start with those verses, From Isaiah 53, And see if you can do, What Philip did, Can you take, Isaiah 53, And from that, Tell the good news, About Jesus, That's what Philip did, Because, The gospel of the Lord Jesus, Is rooted, In the Old Testament scriptures, It is the fulfillment, Of the plan and purpose, Of God, From the time of man's rebellion, God, Has been engaged in mission, And his mission is, To bring salvation, To the ends of the earth, And Isaiah sets out,

The whole agenda, For God's mission, So when, Jesus begins, His public ministry, John the Baptist, Announces, That this is the fulfillment, Of Isaiah chapter 40, If you remember, The voice, Crying in the wilderness, Prepare the way, Of the Lord, When Jesus goes, To his death, On the cross, He does so, As the lamb of God, Who takes away, The sin of the world, He was pierced, For our transgressions, All we like sheep, Have gone astray, Each to his own way, But the Lord God, On the cross, Lays on Jesus, The sin of us all, That is the gospel, Isn't it?

[27 : 14] And the gospel, Is rooted, In the scriptures, You see, It's not enough, Simply to give people, A bible, When they leave school, Or they get confirmed, Or they graduate, It's a good thing to do, It's not enough, Simply to put a bible, In a hotel bedroom, Although, Thank God, For the Gideons, And that whole movement, That do it, Actually, What you need, Is the bible, Plus, Somebody to explain it, The bible teacher, Is needed, That's why, It's so brilliant, Isn't it?

To have something like, A corn hill training course, I hope that you're regular, In praying for its work, It is so important, Isn't it? To have men, And women, Who are able to do, What Philip, Did. Gospel ministry, You see, Is, Proclamation ministry, It is to do with, Explaining the meaning, Of, The central, Message of the bible, That is what, Gospel ministry is, It is proclamation, Not performance, Proclaiming, Not performing, Philip, Isn't performing here, Is he?

Oh, He makes an effort, He obeys, He obeys, The messenger, He runs along the chariot, He's done his homework, But, What helps the Ethiopian, Is that beginning, With this scripture, He tells him, The good news, So, First big lesson, Authentic gospel ministry, Is rooted, In the scriptures, Second, It's focused, On, Jesus, Jesus, The new testament, Is very clear, That the gospel, Is about, Christ, And him, Crucified, The gospel, Is not just Christ, It is not just, Who Jesus was, It is who Jesus was, And why Jesus came, The apostle Paul, The apostle Paul, Sums it up, In those four simple words, Christ, And him, Crucified, At the very heart, Is what Isaiah 53, Predicts, That one will come, Who is the perfect servant, And he will suffer, On the cross, For the forgiveness, Of sins, The one who came, Not to be served, But to serve, To give his life, A ransom, For many, You see the gospel, Is not about me, And my experience, Philip doesn't give, His testimony, To the Ethiopian, Enoch, It's not about, Church and community, Philip doesn't extol, The benefit, Of the Jerusalem church, And encourage the Ethiopian, To turn back, And become a member, It's not even about, The world, And its needs, Needy as the world is, The gospel, The gospel, The gospel, The gospel, The gospel, Nothing to do, With what, I have to do, The gospel, Is all about, What Jesus, Has done, The message, Rooted in the scriptures, Is focused, On Jesus,

[30 : 37] Christ, And him, Crucified, And that means, That wherever you find yourself, Tomorrow, You're able, To speak, The message, Of salvation, Because it's not, That complicated, Is it?

It's about, Jesus, And, His death, For our, Forgiveness, Friends, We don't want to, Over complicate it, Do we? Is that not what, It's about?

Rooted in the scriptures, Focused on Jesus, Okay, Third big lesson, Before we finish, Notice that it has to be believed, By each individual, Great emphasis here, Isn't there?

On, The way Philip engages, With this Ethiopian, Have a look at verse, 30, Philip says to this man, Do you understand, What you are reading?

Well, That's a good question, Isn't it? Do you understand it? Does it make sense to you? Can you get your head around it? Do you understand, What you're reading? Now, Of course the man says, Well, No, I don't think I do actually, How can I?

[31 : 50] Unless somebody guides me, So he invites, Philip into the chariot, To do so, Or again, Verse 35, We read that, Philip opened his mouth, And beginning with the scripture, He, Philip, Told him, The Ethiopian, The good news, About Jesus, For it wasn't preaching to everybody in general, But to this one person, Who had come within his orbit, And sphere of influence, And so it was, That the Ethiopian understood, And understanding he believed, And believing, He repented of his sins, And put his trust in Christ, And was baptized, And was baptized, As a picture, Of that wonderful miracle, Of the cleansing of sin, That the Holy Spirit alone, Can achieve, And accomplish, It has to be believed,

By each individual, The fact, That this man, Was an Ethiopian, Was no barrier, To his believing, The fact that he had been, Physically mutilated, Was no barrier, To his being accepted, By God, The fact of his personal wealth, Was no, Barrier, To his coming, Into Christ's, Kingdom, He believes, Now we don't know each other, I don't know who I'm speaking to here, Tonight, But if you have ever been tempted, To think, That the Christian gospel, That the salvation of Jesus, Is not for you,

Because, I don't know, Because of your background, Because of your, Family circumstances,
 Because of your, Ethnicity, Because of your, Personal history,
 Because of your, Entanglement with sin, Because of, I don't know, A hundred reasons, Will you
 please notice, That this passage, Stands, Clear, Because the gospel, Is for, Whoever, Will believe,
 And that is the promise, Of the gospel, But we must each, Respond, Ourselves, Nobody else can
 do it for you, Your friend, Your husband, Your wife, Your parents, Your child, You have to do it, You
 have to, Do business with God, And this Ethiopian, Did business with God, On that day, As the
 scripture came alive, As he understood, What Jesus had done for him, As he understood, His need
 of cleansing, And so, The chariot, Was brought to a screeching halt, And this man, Confessed
 Christ, And was,
 Baptized, Well, Luke tells us, That he went on his way, Rejoicing, And, You can imagine, Philip
 heading off, Philip goes to preach elsewhere, The chariot gains speed, The Ethiopian sitting in the
 back, Philip's no longer with him, He reaches down, And picks up his scroll, And I want you to, Just
 come back with me, To Isaiah, And with this, We're going to finish, Now he'd been reading, Chapter
 53, And that's what Philip, Had explained to him, Just a little further on, Just a few, Couple of
 columns, On the scroll, In our Bibles, Chapter 56, I want you to, I want you to hear, What the
 Ethiopian, Would have come across, And as we read it, I want you to ask yourself, Had you been
 him, What impact, Would these words, Have made on you, And if you have ever felt yourself, To be
 an outcast, Think,
 What these words mean, For you, And when you pray for, Mission around the world, Notice, What it
 is that God says, Here, I'm going to read, Isaiah 56, And I'm going to read, From verse, Three, Let,
 Not, The foreigner, Who has joined himself, To the Lord, Say, The Lord will surely, Separate me,
 From his people, And let not, The eunuch, Say, Behold, I, Am a dry tree, For thus says the Lord, To
 the eunuchs, Who keep my Sabbaths, Who choose the things, That please me, And hold fast to 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,
 [36 : 58] An everlasting name, That shall not, Be, Cut off, Amen, Amen, You're allowed to say,
 Amen back, Amen, Let's pray, Our Lord God, We thank you so much, That on that day, This
 Ethiopian, Turned, To Christ, And we thank you, That your word declares, That the foreigner, Who
 turns to Christ, Will not be cut off, Or rejected, Or sent away, That even this eunuch, Is welcome,
 And given a name, Better than a son, Or a daughter, And we thank you, Because we know, That we
 fall into that category, Ourselves, We thank you,
 For the privilege, Of being, Given that name, The name of, A child of God, That will last forever,
 Make us mindful, Of that privilege, And grant that we may be those, Individually, And as a church,
 That are forever, Ready to open, Our arms, In welcome, And that are ever ready, Like Philip, To
 speak a message, Rooted in the scriptures, Focused on Jesus, And to commend that message, To
 men and women, Old and young, From every people, And language, And culture, And so we ask
 tonight, That you would send us, On our way rejoicing, In the name,
 Of the risen, And ascended Lord Jesus, Amen.