



St. Michael's Church
CHARLESTON, SC

SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 10, 2017

ACTS 8:26-39
JOHN 12:20-26

PREACHER: THE REV. AL ZADIG, JR.

HELP US LORD TO BE SO CONNECTED TO YOU THAT WE MIGHT BECOME THE SERVANTS OF OTHERS.

TAKE OUR LIPS AND SPEAK THROUGH THEM,
OUR MINDS AND THINK THROUGH THEM,
AND TAKE OUR HEARTS, AND SET THEM ON FIRE.

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Have you ever been in a situation where when:

- What your spouse says
- Strikes such truth
- It stops you in your tracks?

Case in point..My wife and I were talking about hurricanes Harvey and Irma and she said why couldn't the military just drop some kind of explosive in the middle of a hurricane; to calm it down?

And my mind immediately goes to hurricane airplanes dropping the equivalent of

gigantic pink Pepto Bismo tablets...with a whole bunch of atmospheric Roloids thrown in-

Calming the swirling chaos!

What a great idea!

Atmospheric Roloids!

Why can't that be done?

After all,

- We put a man on the moon...

Wouldn't it be great if we had the cure for such storms!

Seriously...

- 25 deaths recorded so far at the hand of Hurricane Irma
- 70 deaths at the hand of Hurricane Harvey

Imagine a world without storms..

And while we're on the subject, what if we held the cure for cancer..

38.5% of us will be diagnosed at some point with cancer during our lifetime.

Imagine a world without cancer;

- Imagine how your life, the life of others would be different...?

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I have such **such** good news for us...

In John 11, Mary and Martha are dealing with the death of their brother Lazarus, Jesus comes on the scene and looks at them, **holding the eternal cure for death** and says..

Ladies...

- "I am the resurrection and the life
- He who believes in me
- Will live
- Even though he die
- AND
- **Whoever lives and believes in me will never die.**

You know, there are 2 forms of life.

The first is our physical life, the one you and I have right now.

The second is eternal life, the life of **FOREVER.**

While all of us will eventually breath our last, the Bible says believers

HAVE THE CURE for eternal death!

It's why during communion the Priest says: THEREFORE...

After this Communion prayer:

Through Jesus Christ our Lord, who on the first day of the week overcame death and the grave, and by his glorious resurrection opened to us everlasting life...

THEREFORE-With angels and archangels and all the company of heaven..we laud and magnify your Holy Name.

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My friends, through Jesus we have the cure for eternal death! Do we really believe it?

If we had the cure for cyclones, and cancers we would be shouting it from the housetops!

Why as Christians aren't we doing the same about the cure for physical death?

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I say all this, because here we are, the first Sunday after Labor Day, storms and all...

- Starting a new year in a sense
- Launching ministries
- Developing new routines and rhythms.

Yet if we aren't careful...

We can come to see the church the way a consumer would...

That it exists only for me and my needs.

Like a school, a museum, a club...

And of course, certainly we exist to care for each other as a family cares for each other...

and I believe we do that really well.

But we also exist to tell the world there is a way to never die!

To tell the world collectively we ...we have the cure for eternal cancer!

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And this is why I love Philip so much.

Philip was one of the 7 original deacons in the early church...

Philip has this

- incurable
- insatiable
- irresistible

Hunger to tell the world about Jesus!

In one of the most wonderful readings in all of Scripture, Acts 8..

An angel of God appears to this willing evangelist telling him to head south on a desert road..

We now know that road was the ancient highway from Jerusalem to Bethlehem--

a busy trade route where half the world went by.

Philip obeys...

The spirit then speaks to Philip a second time,

“Philip, go ahead and just stand near that chariot.”

Once again, Philip obeys.

The chariot as it turns out belongs to an Ethiopian Eunuch.

A Eunuch was one who “sterilized” for the purpose of trusted servitude in a royal household.

A “sterilization” meant to ensure these public servants would not be tempted when serving.

This particular Eunuch was a high court official of Candace, the queen of Ethiopia.
Spiritually he was a seeker..

In fact had just been worshiping in Jerusalem at the synagogue.

Now, something in that worship inspires him to read Scripture,

He’s so inspired he stops his chariot on the side of the highway to read more of God’s story.

In fact, the Bible goes into great detail here and outlines exactly what he’s reading...

The Eunuch is reading Isaiah 53..

- *“He was led like a sheep to the slaughter,*
- *and as a lamb before its shearer is silent*
- *so he did not open his mouth.*
- *In his humiliation he was deprived of justice.*
- *Who can speak of his descendants?*
- *For his life was taken from the earth”*

Philip standing near the chariot then has the courage to ask a question..

Do you understand what you’re reading?

And In a stroke of Biblical transparency,

the Eunuch replies through 9 words I pray we will never forget...

- “How
- can
- I

- Unless
- someone
- explains
- it
- to
- me?”

Think on these words a minute...what honesty!

The Eunuch then invites Philip to come sit with him in the chariot to ask him specifically..

Is the prophet talking about Himself or another?

Philip uses the opportunity to explain the passage:

That it is Jesus Christ who fulfills this prophecy,

Jesus...

Who gave His life to save the world from death.
Saving people from their sins.

As Philip explains the gospel, the Ethiopian eunuch repents and believes the Gospel!

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This story reveals the importance of three critical elements:

1. The Word of God
2. The Holy Spirit's leading
3. And a human evangelist.

The Word of God is our foundation, we aren't making this up...

There is salvation in no other name..

And Led by the Spirit,

God uses human evangelists to save the soul of another.

1. The Word of God
2. The Holy Spirit's leading
3. And a human evangelist.

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So, why on earth is it so hard to be share the faith that way today?

Why is it so hard to shout from the roof tops,

“We have the cure!”

No one needs to die eternally!

It seemed so easy for Philip,

Why is it so hard to tell the world we have the cure for eternal death?

Back to cancer and its cure.

Some have explained why cancer has not yet been cured.

Saying:

“It's so hard to cure because cancer involves our cells losing their ability to control their own growth,

and our bodies therefore have a hard time distinguishing cancerous cells from normal cells.”

In the same way...

I think it's hard for us to share the faith because we don't want to judge or distinguish between heaven and hell bound people..

We just inwardly hope everyone is going to heaven,

and it's really God's job and Christian professionals to handle all that.

Based on that theory let me give you '3' reasons why we find it so hard to follow Philip and what he did with the Eunuch.

The First is doubt, or cynicism.

- "Did Jesus really say that the unbelievers will live in eternal torment?"
- Did Jesus really say that the wage of sin is eternal death?
- He's a God of grace, I'm sure when they get to the pearly gates, there will be a last minute loop hole..

Doubt...this has single handedly stopped me from being a Philip to another....

God will handle it, it's above my pay-grade..

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Then Embarrassment!

C'mon in our heart of hearts we might say going door to door is so tacky,

it's what the Mormons with those thin black ties do,

It's so UN-Anglican!

Sometimes I hear folks saying, evangelism, that's just not my gift.

That's like saying I'm not gifted at Forgiving..

Most of us aren't gifted in evangelism but like forgiveness, it is part of what it means to be a Christian!

We have to stop being embarrassed by the word and thought of evangelism!

It's not a dirty word, and in fact is central to our identity as repentant believers in Jesus Christ!

As Historian Bruce Shelley said..

“It is easy to determine when something is on fire...

It ignites other material.

Any fire that does not spread will eventually go out.

A church without evangelism is a contradiction in terms, just as a fire that does not burn is a contradiction.”

- **Moving past Doubt, Embarrassment**

And finally fear...fear of being rejected from good friends.

If I tell him,

if I tell her about my faith she may never look at me the same way again.

It's why doing mission in foreign countries is so amazing.

You can be Philips to others more easily and honestly when you realize I may never see this person again, I've got nothing to lose..

The more we know someone, the more difficult it can be to be a Philip to them, including people in our own family.

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- Doubt
- Embarrassment
- Fear

I can't help but observe that our 3 obstacles to telling another spell out deaf.

The acronym for Doubt, Embarrassment and Fear .

Spells d.e.f....

These three obstacles can keep us deaf to the voice of the Holy Spirit.

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But Philip provides us a way through...

He provides two key teachings on sharing the cure...

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First, Philip acts out of obedience.

- When the Holy Spirit tells him to take the road he went...he goes..
- When the Spirit tells him to stand near the chariot he stands...

I can't tell you how many times I've heard the nudging of the Holy Spirit only to wave Him off...

Being a Philip begins with obedience..

in fact, the only real proof of our love for Jesus is our obedience.

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Second...notice Philip doesn't begin with the Eunuch with a theological treatise on the complexity of faith!

Philip begins with a question!

He meets the Eunuch where He is...

He doesn't force the creed down his throat..

...Do you understand what you are reading?

The Eunuch with such logic replies..

How on earth can I unless someone explains it?

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Obedience,
Asking questions

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My friends...

We have so many wonderful Philips in this congregation!

Last week, Director of Student Ministries Edwin Smythe and I

Kayaked up the Ashley River...

But decided we would Uber home instead of going against the tide.

So we get an Uber ride...and right in the middle of the ride...

Edwin in the spirit of Philip asks our driver a question..

Edwin asks..

Do you know Jesus?

I was a bit startled,

Yes your priest startled at such an exciting scene!

Startled but inspired!

Turns out our driver named Raymond was a believer...

But what a great Philip like question!

But we need more such Philips!

Today, through storms and all the busy-ness of life-

Today is the day we as the family of St. Michael's say ...

Lord, re-dedicate **all of us** as evangelists to help save the eternal souls of others!

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Charles Spurgeon, that great English preacher was asked this question:

Can "non-Christians" be saved if Christian people don't tell them about Jesus?

Spurgeon replies with great conviction....

That's not the question.

The real question is this:

Are WE

really saved

if we do not preach the Gospel to them?

There is no such thing as a private faith.

So, every year at this time we launch the Alpha Course.

A course that helps people understand the cure for death.

My nickname for Alpha is:

A conversation with an eternal consequence.

Alpha is like the labor and delivery unit for St. Michael's,

where we prayerfully and humbly birth new Christians.

Like the Acts 8 story...it's founded on:

1. The Word of God
2. The Holy Spirit's leading
3. And human evangelists.

Alpha is based on the Word of God,
led by the Spirit,

and needs human evangelists-

To do what Philip did..

Through obedience,

over doubt, embarrassment
and fear,

Simply asking the question of another...

Will you join me for Alpha?

Will you join me for a meal and a talk?

By doing so you could very well be saving the eternal soul of that person, the eternal soul!

There is nothing more exciting hands down than to see someone come to life in Jesus...

Like being a spiritual midwife...

watching the birth of another in real time, there is nothing on earth more powerful!

Back to Philip, his willingness to obey, and ask the question,

led to two life changing events in the life of the Eunuch..

1. First It leads to the Eunuch being baptized
2. Secondly, it leads this Eunuch to develop and form the Christian Church of Ethiopia!

Philip's willingness unleashes a new power of the Holy Spirit!

- **We have the cure**

- **Claim it**
- **Who is your Eunuch?**

It could be someone in your own family...

As it was for St. Michaelite Ellie Barr.

Ellie took our Alpha in the workplace course with Charlotte Riley when we were running it at the Yacht Club over lunch..

In the spirit of Philip,

Ellie then invites her son Capers,

but doesn't tell Capers it was Alpha.

With a twinkle in her eye She simply says,

Join me for lunch.

Capers shows up at the Yacht Club thinking he's just having a lovely lunch with his mother.

Well, long story short..

Capers Converts to Christ on the course,

Then Jodi his wife takes the course...

It would lead to:

- A restored faith
- A renewed marriage
- A new chapter as a father to his two sons
- And eternal life.

To top it off, Capers is now signed up to be a Philip in one of our Fall Alpha's!

My Friends..

We have the cure,

Who is your Eunuch?

Let us pray.