



SUPPORTING LUTHERAN PASTORAL EDUCATION IN AFRICA

A Recognized Service Organization of



WINTER 2019-2020 NEWSLETTER

A Sermon on Acts 8:26-40

by Rev. Dr. Charles Gieschen, Concordia Theological Seminary

As we all know, Epiphany is a season that emphasizes mission, the spreading of the light that came into this world in Jesus. Last Sunday's Gospel from John 1 emphasized the testimony to fellow Jews as John the Baptist, Jesus, and Andrew invited others to behold Jesus as the Lamb of God and Messiah. With so many honored symposia guests and students on campus this week from the continent of Africa, it is noteworthy that today's reading from the Book of Acts speaks about Philip spreading the light of Christ far beyond fellow Jews in Israel, beyond the Samaritans that Philip preached to as recorded earlier in Acts 8; today's reading speaks of the gospel miraculously spreading to Africa through an Ethiopian who had been visiting Jerusalem. Indeed, this account in Acts is the reason that several African American congregations in the LCMS are named St. Philip Lutheran Church.

Luke makes it very clear that the spreading of the gospel to this Ethiopian was not by happenstance, but divinely directed. Philip had been directed by the Holy Spirit first in the form of an angelic messenger telling Philip to rise and go on the road that heads south to Gaza, then again directed by the Spirit telling him to go over and join the Ethiopian in the chariot, and finally directed by the Spirit carrying him away shortly after the baptism of the Ethiopian. Luke also makes it clear this was not just any Ethiopian, but specifically a eunuch who was a court official of the Ethiopian Queen Candace, one was in charge of all her treasure....

This Ethiopian was reading the Suffering Servant Song of Isaiah 53 when Philip approached his chariot and asked "Do you

understanding what you are reading?" Like so many who desire to learn from the Scriptures, he recognizes his need for a pastor's guidance: "How can I, unless someone guides me?" Much like the hermeneutical lesson that Jesus gave the Emmaus disciples following his resurrection, so Philip gives this educated Ethiopian a similar hermeneutical lesson in interpreting Isaiah 53 and other Old Testament texts Christologically. Philip guides him to see that the servant spoken of here was neither a portrait of the prophet himself, nor of Israel as religious Jews think to this very day, but it is a prophetic portrait of God himself taking on the form of a servant in the incarnate son, Jesus. Philip guides him to see the God-Man Jesus as the servant who became the unblemished Lamb bearing the sin of every person who ever lived in every continent of this world who was brutally sacrificed at Jerusalem, not in the temple but on the altar of the cross for him and for all! Philip guides him to see that the Son, who was the very form and image of God, took on the form of a servant and humbled himself to death, even death on a cross to pay the price of all sin, even the deepest and darkest sin, for all sinners.

It is striking that this encounter climaxes with the Ethiopian eunuch asking to be baptized. That request tells us that part of Philip's proclamation involved how Jesus was the lamb of God who became the sin bearer in his baptism in the Jordan; in the words of Isaiah: "All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned—every one—to his own way; and the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all." Central to Philip's proclamation must have been that Jesus bore the sin of the world to the cross where his unblemished blood was poured out as the

atonement sacrifice for that sin; in the words of Isaiah: "Like a lamb that is led to slaughter . . . surely he has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows; yet we esteemed him stricken, smitten, and afflicted. But he was wounded for our transgressions; he was crushed for our iniquities; upon him was the chastisement that bought us peace." Philip must have proclaimed that due to this sin-bearing and sacrificed Lamb of God, now Christian baptism offers purification from sin, the pure righteousness of Christ, and peace with God to Jews and Gentiles, also to a Gentile eunuch from Ethiopia. Everything Philip proclaimed in the Spirit about this suffering servant to this one Gentile from Africa is also true for all of you from Africa and for each of you scared Gentile sinners from the other six continents of this world. Jesus carried your sorrows, was crushed for your iniquities, and has brought you, all of you, PEACE with God!

And so Philip baptized this African Gentile, vividly affirming our Lord's gracious, global mission of making disciples of ALL NATIONS, baptizing them in the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. This early incident in Acts reminds us of the early and present day importance of the African continent in the global mission of the church. While Lutherans in various parts of the world are often wringing our hands due to shrinking demographics, the Lutheran Church that has undergone much suffering in various parts of Africa, including Ethiopia, is growing....

May the Holy Spirit lead each of you faithful pastors from around the world to guide lost sinners loved by God—regardless of race, tribe or tongue—to behold in the Scriptures, at the font, and on the altar the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. In the name of Jesus. AMEN.

Preached at Kramer Chapel (23 Jan. 2020)

LTS Graduation

On the 21st of November, LTS held a graduation ceremony, in which six students graduated, most of whom will now enter a time of vicarage (internship).

- 1) Chernet Fitebo, from Mekane Yesu, Ethiopia. He is married and has two girls. He is planning to study further at University of South Africa. He wants to prepare himself better to go back to Ethiopia and to serve the church with a degree.
- 2) Peter Kizungu, from the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC). He will go on vicarage.
- 3) Gentil Magala, from the DRC. He will go on vicarage.
- 4) Nkosikhona Mkhabela, from the Lutheran Church of South Africa (LCSA). He will do his vicarage in one of the LCSA congregations.
- 5) Charles Ofentse Tsatsi, from the LCSA. He will do his vicarage in one of the LCSA congregations.
- 6) Dumisani Mokobedi, from the Lutheran Bapedi Synod, Pretoria, SA. He will do his internship with his church.



Financial Stewardship

- SPLMS remains committed to ensuring that every dollar you donate goes to LTS.
- In 2019, only 3.9% of incoming funds (\$379 total) were used for overhead (wire transfer fees, banking fees, website fees, logo design, etc.).
- All overhead was paid for by the donations of SPLMS board members. 100% of all other donations go to LTS.

2019 FINANCIAL REPORT

Total aid sent to LTS: \$27,500

\$15,000 for the Library Project

\$11,960 for student aid

\$540 for fire relief

\$1,325 to support LTS guest lecturers



TO SUPPORT

Saint Philip Lutheran Mission Society
c/o Rev. Anthony Oliphant, Redeemer Lutheran Church
123 E. St. Charles Rd., Elmhurst, IL 60126

PayPal via www.splms.org

Thrivent Choice

SPLMS can be supported through Thrivent Choice dollars. You can direct Thrivent Choice dollars through www.thrivent.com or by calling 1-800-THRIVENT

Amazon Smile

SPLMS can be supported through Amazon Smile, where a small percentage of every purchase goes to designated charities. Go to www.smile.amazon.com and search for 'Saint Philip Lutheran Mission Society'