
Sermon
on Acts 8:26–40
“Growing through Bible-Reading and Prayer”

::: ZERO :::

*“Grace to you and PEACE from God our Father
and the Lord Jesus Christ.”*

1 Co 1:3. (NRSV)

::: Amen.

::: ONE :::

Dear Sisters and Brothers,

Today is Mission Sunday “E”.

After an introduction on the first of our Mis-
sion Sundays,

then the second one, Mission Sunday “P” on
“Proclaiming the Good News of Christ”,
now we are at Mission Sunday “E”...

**“ENCOURAGING SPIRITUAL GROWTH THROUGH
BIBLE READING AND PRAYER”**

Look at this collection of bibles we have here...

Each one of these bibles has a story.

I have quite a few bibles in my study. And each bible is linked to a certain stage in my life. Each bible tells its own story.

Interestingly most of my newer bibles seem to be barely used.

And there is truth in this perception. As nowadays I most instances I use a digital version... as an app on my phone, or for intensive studying – usually on my laptop.

I really understand it as a blessing to always have the bible at hand—wherever I am.

::: TWO :::

Today's scripture reading showed us a fact that we—in our modern way of living—might maybe overhear.

We hear about a traveler, an Ethiopian eunuch, on his way back from Jerusalem. We learn that he had been there to worship. No further facts on this.

May he be a proselyte, a gentile who became a Jew? We don't know.

But we're told that he seems to be a quite rich and important person—as he is travelling in a chariot.

AND, here comes the important fact: He has a scripture roll with him. A scripture roll that contains the book of the prophet Isaiah.

This is really special. Because scripture rolls were usually found in synagogues. Only rarely a person would be found who privately owned or had access to a scripture roll.

::: THREE :::

The scene we're introduced to also shows us, that we are not dealing with a mere coincidence, but that right from the beginning unto the end of the story.

An angel is at work—telling us that we deal with a divine action. And later the Spirit of God is at work—clearly stating that whatever happened to Philipp follows God's acting.

Everything happening here is a spiritual and divinely lead instance.

∴ **FOUR** ∴

Now, diving a little deeper into this story we learn that the eunuch from Ethiopia travelling in his chariot is fully focused on his reading of the scripture—more precisely the book of the prophet Isaiah.

And it is a challenge to him. How can he understand what the words in scripture mean without someone explaining it?

CHANGE OF SCENERY...

“Little”—Alex, believe it or not, at the age of ~8 years played being a preacher and preached to his grandparents.

“A little older”—Alex was part of a students’ bible club. We seemed to be kind of a holy club, meeting even before school started, to share biblical devotions.

“Just about to finish school”—Alex experienced quite a change in the perception of the bible. Suddenly a lot of things became kind of unbelievable. Alex asked questions. How can I understand unless someone explains it to me?”

But there were not so many whose explanations made sense to Alex.

“Having left school”—Alex found himself in a real distance to the bible. The bible just doesn’t make sense anymore, he thought.

∴ FIVE ∴

Then something quite interesting happened.

Alex, who had just finished his compulsory community service, was asked whether he could imagine becoming a pastor.

But Alex had a clear answer—which was ‘no’.

After about a year Alex decided to at least give it a try. Because many things pastors did, were quite attractive to Alex—except for the preaching.

But a change had been going on. Alex who felt completely isolated from the bible started to long for a new understanding of this book.

And after a year of internship, Alex started studying theology. And Alex felt like a dried-out sponge desperately longing to be filled with theological thinking and biblical knowledge.

And Alex made the experience that his theological professors were people who could explain things to him. And he soaked up every bit of knowledge he could get.

This is the one Alex standing in front of you today. The one who struggles with citing biblical verses but loves to understand the bible in its inner coherences. And who loves to discuss theology and the understanding of what we can read in the bible.

::: SIX :::

You may wonder why I speak such a lot about my life and my connection to the bible.

During the final semesters of my theological studies, I came across a word from FULBERT STEFFENSKY, a German theologian born in 1933. He says,

“What is mission? It is the non-violent, non-resentful and unintentional promotion of the beauty of a concept of life.

This promotion [...] is not done with the intention of converting someone to our own way of believing, but with the intention that the stranger also discovers the beauty of what we love and believe in.

If I love something and if I believe in something, then it is in the nature of this love that it publicly shows what it loves. [Mission is:] showing what you love.”

*Fulbert Steffensky:
Der alltägliche Charme des Glaubens, echter Verlag, p. 63.*

Today I love preaching, love sharing what my studying of the bible means to me—and what it might be able to mean for others.

I am convinced that the power of Philipp to clearly explain to the man from Ethiopia was the power of showing what he loved in the scriptures.

I am convinced that our power to mission, our power to show others what we love is also the power of us being lovers of the bible.

::: SEVEN :::

The famous Baptist preacher Charles Haddon Spurgeon, born in 1834 wrote,

“The Bible is not the light of the world; it is the light of the Church. But the world does not read the Bible, the world reads Christians! ,You are the light of the world.”

So let us be lovers of the bible. Let us read the bible abundantly. Let the bible be our most read book.

Let us share what we love, for us as disciples to grow deeper in our faith...

And let us share what we love with everyone—
...to discover the beauty of the light that shines
into the world—

...to bring the Good News of a life connected to
the Creator, Saviour and Perfecter to everyone.

::: Amen.