

When I sat down and looked at the four scriptures for the day and knew that I had to pick two, I was uncertain which ones to pick. I settled in on the 1 John passage and the Acts passage. It feels very odd not to have the Gospel reading picked.

However, as we move towards Pentecost, I really felt that the 1 John and Acts text really spoke to me and hopefully, I can share why they are so meaningful to me and give you some practical insight on how this passage can make a big impact on you, me and then on Bay View as we move forward together as a faith community.

It all begins with love. Friends, we love **BECAUSE** God first loved us. God has given us a commandment. The commandment is simple, yet complex: Those who love God **MUST** love their brothers and sisters. Previously, we have shared about the importance of humility. When we have humility, this is in when we find our boldness. This boldness will enable us to extend this love to all. Our family and our beloved community extend far beyond our immediate family. It is extended to every human being in God's good creation.

If we are going to be bold and extend this love to every human being then we are going to have to push ourselves out of our comfort zones and do new things.

I love looking at quotes. Here are two quotes that I came across recently concerning comfort zones. Do they resonate with you?

*"As you move outside of your comfort zone, what was once the unknown and frightening becomes your new normal." - Robin S. Sharma*

*"The comfort zone is nothing else but a graveyard for your dreams & ideas." – Anonymous*

So, here is what I am wrestling hard with. What comes to your mind when you hear the following:

Every time we step beyond where we'd rather be, what we'd rather do, into what might embarrass or negatively impact us in order to share God's love; we answer the call.

So, what might be a way that we can answer the call?

I am going to give four phrases. Each phrase is only two words. Maybe you will want to write them down. Possibly put them on your bathroom mirror so you are challenged each day. Here they are:

- 1) Be Bold
- 2) Don't Fear
- 3) Share yourself
- 4) Do Love

Do love. It goes back to the greatest commandments that Jesus gave. Love God / Love Others.

I think Philip embodied these four phrases and that is what allows us to hear the story in Acts 8.

Ethiopian Eunuch and Philip have a deep conversation and the deep conversation occurs because they are willing to be open to one another. Philip did an extraordinary thing. But, here is the key aspect to understand, Philip was an ordinary person. When God's spirit arrived, the Spirit empowers ordinary people to do extraordinary things.

Matthew Skinner brings this to light when he reminds us that we are in the season of Easter and this season allows us to put cautious rationality on the shelf. When we do this, then we are to follow an unrestrained God into the world.

This is where the story of God expands. Individuals at the time could have imagined the Ethiopian was the end of the earths; the message that was shown on where the Gospel needed to go. I have been planting the seed the last few weeks; so, let me do some watering today; *“what will it mean for us, here at Bay View, if the Gospel is indeed Good News for ALL people, without exception?”* Who are we going to reach out to?

The Ethiopian was a representative of people who lived on the fringes of the inhabited world. There are many individuals who are living on the margins and they need to be shown love, care and compassion. They also need to have individuals who are willing to come into their space; like Phillip did with the Eunuch.

There could be a lot to unpack on the Eunuch and I do not think that today is the day to do that. However, there can be much paradox in the general understanding of the eunuch. The paradox comes in the perception and the reality of them.

The eunuch is powerless YET powerful

The eunuch is strange YET impressive

The eunuch is ignorant YET impressive.

There is ambiguity.

This could be a beautiful thing.

Here is what I want to circle back to. I asked “*what will it mean for us, here at Bay View, if the Gospel is indeed Good News for ALL people, without exception?*”. We have this story because Phillip was willing to engage. I can help guide, lead, and administer a church growth strategy. However, the Good News will ultimately be spread through our neighborhoods when individuals listening or reading this message will take up the mantle and carry it to the individuals who they rub shoulders with every day.

Many of us have probably had this Good News of Christ for most of our lives and with that, we sometimes become rigid and unresponsive to the needs around us to share the Good News with those who do not YET know the Good News and many times; we assume; in the world that we live in; everyone knows about the Good News; right? Let’s challenge that perception.

The last few weeks, I have been challenging us on who is not in our community? Who needs to be at our table?

The good news is inviting.

The eunuch who was an outsider became an insider. We do not know exactly what Phillip said but the eunuch discerns this story was going to become his story. A story of inclusion, participation, and belonging. Those are three powerful words. Those words come from the first convert of the church or at least the first we are aware of and that convert is from sub-Saharan Africa. Amazing. A resident theologian.

If you have been following along, this eleven-hundred-word sermon can be boiled down to 1% of those words. Eleven words. Here them again:

Be Bold

Don't Fear

Share Yourself

Do Love

Inclusion

Participation

Belonging

Thus, my friends, let us go out. Shed our fear. Be bold and share yourself by showering individuals with love. When we do this, we can include everyone, allow all to participate and provide a community where all belong. Let's do this! Amen!