



Morning Worship

May 2021

Philip and the baptism of the Ethiopian

INTRODUCTORY PRAYER

As we gather, we feel the presence of God in us. We ask for the grace of the Holy Spirit to open the word of God.

OPENING PRAYER:

Welcoming and loving God,

We are all baptized into one body in Christ Jesus.

We are children of the same God.

We are one together through faith.

Through the power of Your love given us, may we welcome all into the fellowship of faith and the promise of Your grace.

Amen.

FIRST READING: Acts 8:26-40 (New International Version)

Philip and the Ethiopian

²⁶ Now an angel of the Lord said to Philip, “Go south to the road—the desert road—that goes down from Jerusalem to Gaza.” ²⁷ So he started out, and on his way he met an Ethiopian eunuch, an important official in charge of all the treasury of the Kandake (which means “queen of the Ethiopians”). This man had gone to Jerusalem to worship, ²⁸ and on his way home was sitting in his chariot reading the Book of Isaiah the prophet. ²⁹ The Spirit told Philip, “Go to that chariot and stay near it.”

³⁰Then Philip ran up to the chariot and heard the man reading Isaiah the prophet. “Do you understand what you are reading?” Philip asked.

³¹“How can I,” he said, “unless someone explains it to me?” So he invited Philip to come up and sit with him.

³²This is the passage of Scripture the eunuch was reading:

“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.

³³In his humiliation he was deprived of justice.
Who can speak of his descendants?
For his life was taken from the earth.”

³⁴The eunuch asked Philip, “Tell me, please, who is the prophet talking about, himself or someone else?” ³⁵Then Philip began with that very passage of Scripture and told him the good news about Jesus.

³⁶As they travelled along the road, they came to some water and the eunuch said, “Look, here is water. What can stand in the way of my being baptized?” ^[37] ^[c] ³⁸And he gave orders to stop the chariot. Then both Philip and the eunuch went down into the water and Philip baptized him. ³⁹When they came up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord suddenly took Philip away, and the eunuch did not see him again, but went on his way rejoicing. ⁴⁰Philip, however, appeared at Azotus and travelled about, preaching the gospel in all the towns until he reached Caesarea.

REFLECTION: “And Philip baptized him. When they came up out of the water, the eunuch did not see him again, but went on his way rejoicing”.

SECOND READING: 1 John 4: 7-21 (The Message).

God Is Love

⁷⁻¹⁰My beloved friends, let us continue to love each other since love comes from God. Everyone who loves is born of God and experiences a relationship with God. The person who refuses to love doesn't know the first thing about God, because God *is* love—so you can't know him if you don't love. This is how God showed his love for us: God sent his only Son into the world so we might live through him. This is the kind of love we are talking about—not that we once upon a time loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as a sacrifice to clear away our sins and the damage they've done to our relationship with God.

¹¹⁻¹² My dear, dear friends, if God loved us like this, we certainly ought to love each other. No one has seen God, ever. But if we love one another, God dwells deeply within us, and his love becomes complete in us—perfect love!

¹³⁻¹⁶ This is how we know we're living steadily and deeply in him, and he in us: He's given us life from his life, from his very own Spirit. Also, we've seen for ourselves and continue to state openly that the Father sent his Son as Saviour of the world. Everyone who confesses that Jesus is God's Son participates continuously in an intimate relationship with God. We know it so well, we've embraced it heart and soul, this love that comes from God.

To Love, to Be Loved

¹⁷⁻¹⁸ God is love. When we take up permanent residence in a life of love, we live in God and God lives in us. This way, love has the run of the house, becomes at home and mature in us, so that we're free of worry on Judgment Day—our standing in the world is identical with Christ's. There is no room in love for fear. Well-formed love banishes fear. Since fear is crippling, a fearful life—fear of death, fear of judgment—is one not yet fully formed in love.

¹⁹ We, though, are going to love—love and be loved. First we were loved, now we love. He loved us first.

²⁰⁻²¹ If anyone boasts, "I love God," and goes right on hating his brother or sister, thinking nothing of it, he is a liar. If he won't love the person he can see, how can he love the God he can't see? The command we have from Christ is blunt: Loving God includes loving people. You've got to love both.

HOMILY

The reading from Acts marks the point when the preaching of the apostles widens out from the vicinity of the lands around Jerusalem. Philip is directed to find a man travelling back from Jerusalem to Ethiopia. He is a powerful person – an official in charge of the Queen's treasury. Philip is told to stay near to the man – in effect to be available to the man and be ready to speak to the man about Christ.

The Ethiopian official would have been very different to Philip: a stranger, a powerful man and very different in appearance and culture. Ordinarily we might think that Philip would have been a reticent, wary or perhaps little fearful meeting this powerful stranger from a foreign land. But Philip places his trust in God and he goes to find the man. As we see, all the differences that exist between Philip and the Ethiopian man have no effect on their encounter. The man who is reading from Isaiah sees Philip and asks him to explain the text. Philip willingly joins the Ethiopian official to tell him about Christ.

The second reading talks about God's love and ours. God loves us and we must love one another. The love we show to each other makes us complete with God. Verse 18 is striking:

¹⁸ There is no room in love for fear. Well-formed love banishes fear. Since fear is crippling, a fearful life—fear of death, fear of judgment—is one not yet fully formed in love.

Fear is the opposite of love. If we fear something, then it stops us from showing love. Philip overcame any fear he might have had in order to spread the message to the Ethiopian official. Had Philip been fearful he may not have spoken to the Ethiopian official. It was Philip's love – the love from God - that was the important factor.

There are so many examples of increasing fear in our world but there are also many more examples of love overcoming fear. Well-formed love banishes fear.

As we start to mix with other people after our isolation during lockdown, we may encounter anxiety or experience fearful behaviour. God's love and the love we show to others will be so important in the coming months. By showing love to others we reveal God's love.

As a consequence of the Ethiopian official meeting Philip, he is baptised and becomes a believer. He goes "on his way rejoicing" and we can assume from these words that he would have spread the message of Christ to the people he meets when he has returned home. Such is the power of God's love and the message of Christ.

In the Book of Common Prayer there is an affirmation that reminds us of the commitment we make through our baptism; to be like Philip in proclaiming the good news of God in Christ; to overcome fear; and to love all others. As we say the affirmation together reflect on the two readings today. Reflect on how these readings are absorbed into the words of the affirmation. So we can go forward over the coming days and weeks with love. We can go on our way rejoicing.

AFFIRMATION OF COMMITMENT

Those who are baptized are called to worship and serve God.

Will we continue in the apostles' teaching and fellowship,
in the breaking of bread, and in the prayers?

With the help of God, we will.

Will we persevere in resisting evil,
and, whenever you fall into sin, repent and return to the Lord?

With the help of God, we will.

Will we proclaim by word and example
the good news of God in Christ?

With the help of God, we will.

Will we seek and serve Christ in all people,
loving your neighbour as yourself?

With the help of God, we will.

Will we acknowledge Christ's authority over human society,
by prayer for the world and its leaders,
by defending the weak, and by seeking peace and justice?

With the help of God, we will.

Eternal God, our beginning and our end,
preserve us in the new life of baptism;
as Christ receives us on earth,
so may he guide us through the trials of this world
and enfold us in the joy of heaven,
where we live and reign,
one God for ever and ever.

Amen.

PRAYERS

We pray for this day and its tasks;
We pray for the world and its needs;
We pray for the Church and her life;
We pray for leaders of the nations and for peace between all nations;
We pray for the natural world and the resources of the earth
We pray for all who are in any kind of need.

LORDS PRAYER

**Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name.
Your Kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as in heaven.
Give us today our daily bread.
Forgive us our sins, as we forgive those who sin against us.
Lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil.
For the kingdom, the power and the glory are yours.
Now and for ever. Amen**

CLOSING PRAYER:

Loving God.

**We can only love others with Your love as Your love floods into our hearts,
for of ourselves our love is so limited.**

Pour forth Your love into our hearts,

so that the love of Jesus streams out from us as rivers of His living water.

In Jesus' name we pray.

Amen.

THE GRACE:

May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ,

And the love of God,

And the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with us all, now and evermore.

Amen.

*To end this service of worship please listen the hymn "Come let us sing of a wonderful love"
provided by the Chet Valley Churches, which can be found using the following link:*

<https://youtu.be/3BZfXTCUbr8>