

Series: How Jesus Acts through Us Today; Sermon: **How God Embraces the Excluded**; delivered by **Josh Moody**, senior pastor, on June 7, 2020

Bible text explored: Acts 8:26–40

²⁶Now an angel of the Lord said to Philip, “Rise and go toward the south to the road that goes down from Jerusalem to Gaza.” This is a desert place. ²⁷And he rose and went. And there was an Ethiopian, a eunuch, a court official of Candace, queen of the Ethiopians, who was in charge of all her treasure. He had come to Jerusalem to worship ²⁸and was returning, seated in his chariot, and he was reading the prophet Isaiah. ²⁹And the Spirit said to Philip, “Go over and join this chariot.” ³⁰So Philip ran to him and heard him reading Isaiah the prophet and asked, “Do you understand what you are reading?” ³¹And he said, “How can I, unless someone guides me?” And he invited Philip to come up and sit with him. ³²Now the passage of the Scripture that he was reading was this:

“Like a sheep he was led to the slaughter
And like a lamb before its shearer is silent,
So he opens not his mouth.

³³In his humiliation justice was denied him.
Who can describe his generation?
For his life is taken away from the earth.”

³⁴And the eunuch said to Philip, “About whom, I ask you, does the prophet say this, about himself or about someone else?” ³⁵Then Philip opened his mouth, and beginning with this Scripture he told him the good news about Jesus. ³⁶And as they were going along the road they came to some water, and the eunuch said, “See, here is water! What prevents me from being baptized?” ³⁸And he commanded the chariot to stop, and they both went down into the water, Philip and the eunuch, and he baptized him. ³⁹And when they came up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord carried Philip away, and the eunuch saw him no more, and went on his way rejoicing. ⁴⁰But Philip found himself at Azotus, and as he passed through he preached the gospel to all the towns until he came to Caesarea. [ESV]

Review and application:

Today’s passage may seem to be a diversion from the Book of Acts’ orderly account of the early church’s witness proceeding (Acts 1:8) from its Jerusalem center to Samaria, and then starting to spread to the ends of the earth. So why this shift to intercepting a single traveler on a desolate road?

1. What privileges (*verse 27b*) belonged to this chariot rider?
But what exclusion did he also experience . . .
. . . racially, as an “Ethiopian”? (See *Jeremiah 13:23*.)
. . . physically, as a eunuch? (*Isaiah 56:3*.)
. . . religiously, as uncircumcised? (*Genesis 17:14; Deuteronomy 23:1*.)
2. How (*verses 26-27a; 29*) did God act to insure that he was included?
3. Why (*verses 32-33*) do you think the eunuch was pondering this particular Scripture?
Starting from this passage (*Isaiah 53:7-8*), would you be able to explain the good news?
Where might Philip have proceeded from there? (See *Isaiah 11:1-5* and *56:4-8*).
4. What (*verses 36-39*) made the eunuch so eager for the baptism offered to followers of “the way”?

In 2015 Miroslav Volf, who comes from an area of Europe contested by Serbs and Croats, and wrote Exclusion and Embrace, said, "We live in a world where hatred is being stoked, and indifference is being practiced."

5. Have you been indifferent to the exclusion of some others?

How could you extend God's embrace to someone who feels excluded?