

The Spiritual Gift of Evangelism: Isaiah 40:28-31; Jeremiah 29:11; Acts 8:26-38 Sermon Notes from Sept. 29, 2013

Stories -- everyone likes to hear a good story; repeat a story -- Gary, IN airport; any story that my father-in-law tells...

Stories -- significant moments in our lives

Baptism of Leia and how her family got together -- objects to help us remember to tell that story -- baptismal candle...

Milestone moments

These stories are retold again and again by families -- how we pass on the memories & important moments

We have a good story for you today from the book of Acts, a story of word, water, and witness -- a story of Phillip and the Ethiopian Eunuch

The Ethiopian Eunuch -- an official who has status, who was an important person, yet is not accepted in the Temple b/c he's a eunuch -- let's just say that he's not all there... (the law strictly forbid a eunuch from entering the temple, Deut. 23:1) and yet...he is reading aloud from the book of Isaiah even though he is not accepted! He is reading God's word...something has drawn him to it.

Enter Phillip who comes into the story at just the right time -- let's read that passage together and then let me tell you about Jesus...

Not the wrong time...evangelism, telling the story of God's good news, is often seen as something negative...someone that you don't know showing up at your front door trying to save you by frightening into heaven (it doesn't work that way, in fact, it usually makes people close the door).

Someone assuming that because you're Lutheran or baptized as a baby or (fill in the blank) you better get it right....again, it makes people turn away and it makes it be about what they do instead of about what God does for us.

Why was the timing so right? It was guided by the command of the Holy Spirit to go and join him at just the right time to tell the story. The angel of The Lord sent Phillip.

You see, Phillip entered the Story at the right time to tell the story when the Ethiopian was ready to hear it.

*He didn't give a well planned/crafted sermon

He didn't take out his notecards

He didn't make a little drawing of the Ethiopian Eunuch on one side of the cliff, Jesus on the other, and the cross in between to connect them

*"Not a story for the story's sake," but a story that tells us @God who shows up in our lives

*"We should practice a faith that continually seeks understanding rather than an understanding that is seeking faithful followers. God is the ultimate object of our faith."

Phillip shares the story about Jesus (the word) and pretty soon the Eunuch is asking to be baptized (he sees water!)...and why not! He hears that God is for him! He has read and been taught about what Jesus has done for people like him and it seems to make sense to him to be baptized. The water with the word of God and the witness of Phillip...

And yet, it is not just the Eunuch who is converted, for in a way, Phillip is converted as well. He may have been an unlikely person to reach the Ethiopian Eunuch who was of a different ethnicity, a different economic class, a different category altogether. Why would they have anything to do with each other? And yet here they are, reading and studying God's word...baptizing...

How much do we change when we help another person? How much do we change when we see and hear what the good news of Christ means to someone? How much are we affected by the story of Jesus breaking through in someone's life and we find ourselves retelling that story again and again?

*"We are converted by those we seek"

*"The story of Jesus is our story"

Please take out your handout on the spiritual gift of evangelism as you consider if this is one of your gifts...(read list)

May we, like Peter, be open to the Spirit's guidance to share your word, the good news, as your witness at the right time. Amen

***Helpful Resources**

John Wimmer "Telling the Story by Heart" in Faith & Leadership

Mitzi Smith, Working Preacher

Nadia Boltzmann Weber, The Hardest Question