

May 3, 2021
Fifth Sunday of Easter
Transformation!

Out There

Rev. Emma Chattin
Preaching

First Reading ~ *Acts 8:26-40*

Then an angel of God spoke to Philip and said, “Be ready to set out at noon along the road that goes down from Jerusalem to Gaza, the desert road.” So Philip began his journey. It happened that an Ethiopian eunuch, a court official in charge of the entire treasury of Candace, queen of the Ethiopians, had come to Jerusalem on a pilgrimage and was returning home. He was seated in his chariot reading the prophet Isaiah. The Spirit said to Philip, “Go over to this chariot and join it.” So when Philip ran up to it, he heard the eunuch reading the prophet Isaiah, and asked, “Do you understand what you are reading?” The eunuch replied, “How can I, unless someone guides me?” And he invited Philip to get in and sit beside him. This was the passage of the scripture being read:

“Like a sheep he was led to the slaughter,
and like a lamb silent before its shearer,
so he does not open his mouth.
In his humiliation justice was denied him.
Who can describe his generation?
For his life is taken away from the earth.”

The eunuch asked Philip, “About whom, may I ask you, does the prophet say this, about himself or about someone else?” Then Philip began to speak, and starting with this scripture, he proclaimed to him the good news about Jesus. As they were going along the road, they came to some water, and the eunuch said, “Look, here is water! What is to prevent me from being baptized?” He ordered the chariot to stop, and both of them, Philip and the eunuch, went down into the water, and Philip baptized him. When they came up out of the water, the Spirit of God snatched Philip away; the eunuch saw him no more, and went on his way rejoicing. But Philip found himself at Azotus, and as he was passing through the region, he proclaimed the good news to all the towns until he came to Caesarea.

Second Reading ~ *adapted from Father Richard Rohr in
“The Cosmic Christ: How a Forgotten Reality can Change Everything”*

The point of the Christian life is not to distinguish oneself from the ungodly, but to stand in radical solidarity with everyone and everything else. This is the full, final, and intended effect of the Incarnation—symbolized by its finality in the cross, which is God’s great act of solidarity instead of judgment. Without a doubt, Jesus perfectly exemplified this seeing, and thus passed it on to the rest of history. This is how we are to imitate Christ, the good Jewish man who saw and called forth the divine in Gentiles, like the Syro-Phoenician woman and the Roman centurions who followed him; in Jewish tax collectors who collaborated with the Empire; in zealots who opposed it; in sinners of all stripes; in eunuchs, pagan astrologers, and all those out there, “outside the law.” Jesus had no trouble whatsoever with otherness. In fact, these “lost sheep” found out they were not lost to him at all, and tended to become his best followers.