



Circuit Contact
Welcome to our Circuit Worship for
28th April 2024
prepared by Deacon Peter Ogle

Worship in the following locations:

Circuit Service at Trinity Church, Leek at 10.30am
As we celebrate together the accreditation of Mark Fallows as Local Preacher in the
Methodist Church.

Please join us if you are able.



Call to worship

Shout for joy to the Lord, all the earth.

Worship the Lord with gladness; come before him with joyful songs.

Enter his gates with thanksgiving and his courts with praise;
give thanks to him and praise his name.

For the Lord is good and his love endures forever.

Psalm 100 verses 1-2 and 4-5 (New International Version)

Introduction

In Roots, a resource for preachers, today's theme is 'Journeying alongside others' It focuses on Philip, who led by the Holy Spirit, went along the road to Gaza. On the way he was led to an Ethiopian official who had been to worship in Jerusalem and had stopped to read some scriptures from the book of the prophet Isaiah.

Hymn **Brother, sister let me serve you** [Brother, Sister, Let Me Serve You \(The Servant Song\)](#)
[\[with lyrics for congregations\] - YouTube](#)

Prayer of confession and assurance of forgiveness.

We come in penitence for journeys not shared with those who needed companionship. We come in sorrow for not walking with and talking with those who needed us most. We come in sadness that we have let ourselves and others down and let you down when we have not accompanied those who have been searching for you. There are times when we could have done more. We confess our failings and seek forgiveness, as we seek also to forgive those who have not walked

with us because the burden was too heavy for them as well. In penitence we seek forgiveness. Lord, hear our prayer. **Amen**

The Lord forgives those who repent of their sins, of their failings and faults, and the Lord travels with us on our journey. **Amen**

Reading Acts 8 verses 26-40

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 from the Book of Isaiah the prophet. 29 The Spirit told Philip, "Go to that chariot and stay near it."

30 Then Philip ran up to the chariot and heard the man reading from 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.

32 This 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.

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

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

36 As 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?"

38 And he gave orders to stop the chariot. Then both Philip and the eunuch went down into the water and Philip baptized him. 39 When 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.

40 Philip, however, appeared at Azotus and travelled about, preaching the gospel in all the towns until he reached Caesarea.

Reflection

14 years this coming October, I began a sabbatical, after completing a redevelopment scheme at Holderness Road Methodist Church in Hull. It had been quite a challenge; I was tired and needed to recharge my physical batteries. I had chosen to look at Spirituality. Part of which was to spend a week on Holy Island at the aptly named Retreat House and Sedbergh.

It was a rented cottage near St. Cuthbert's Island on the west side of Lindisfarne. It was a wonderful week, with plenty of walks, these were mostly done on my own, but occasionally I was joined by another holidaymaker.

On one of these occasions, we walked along the eastern coastal path and came across of sign that said The Hut.

To our surprise, it had been decorated with a variety of objects and even seating. We chose to sit outside, one on each side of the door and gave thanks for the generosity of the person/ people who had taken the time to create the Hut. It was a most welcome gift, for we had walked about 7 miles and were in need of a rest. While I enjoyed the times of isolation, it was good to share the journey with this man. I hadn't met him previously; it was one of those 'coincidences or was it'?



Later on, I was staying in the West Wing of a friend's house in Sedbergh. It was actually part of their house that they could shut off and offer it to others, they probably liked watching an American TV series of that name. I was expecting Sarah and Toby to join me for a few days later. I decided to attempt the 3 peaks while I was there (no, not all in 24 hours). I had intended to do one before Sarah and Toby came and two after they had returned to Leek. Sadly, it didn't happen like that, Toby was admitted to Lancaster hospital with a hip problem and stayed for 5 nights. However, I did manage Ingleborough and Whernside, I never did Pen-y-Gent, maybe one day. While attempting Ingleborough, this stranger and I kept passing each other, each resting at different times. It transpired that this stranger was in his 90's and regularly climbed the mountain. I was in my early 60's. By the time we began to ascend the top of the mountain (which is very steep) I was seriously struggling. He accompanied and encouraged me to reach the top. When we got to the top, the sight was amazing. I thanked the man, when I'd stopped gasping for breath, and he turned round and went back down again. I gave thanks for the generosity of the man's words of encouragement and his time to enable me to achieve that goal.

Turning to our bible reading:

Setting Acts 8 verses 26-40 in its context, we need remind ourselves of the growth of the fledgling Christian Church as we read it recorded in the Acts of the Apostles and the Epistles. The apostles, rightly, continued some of the practices of Judaism and in particular, looking after the less fortunate amongst their number. One of the practices was that every Friday 2 members of the Synagogue went around the market and private homes collecting goods and money, that was shared among those in need. Because people were giving their lives to Jesus and joining an ever-growing body of believers. The apostles were finding it more and more difficult to give their attention to this basic need because of the demands of evangelism. (wouldn't it be wonderful to have that problem today?)

In Acts chapter 6 we read Luke's account of how that was resolved:

Verses 2- 6 reads: So, the Twelve gathered all the disciples together and said, "It would not be right for us to neglect the ministry of the word of God in order to wait on tables. 3 Brothers and sisters, choose seven men from among you who are known to be full of the Spirit and wisdom. We will turn this responsibility over to them 4 and will give our attention to prayer and the ministry of the word."

5 This proposal pleased the whole group. They chose Stephen, a man full of faith and of the Holy Spirit; also, Philip, Procorus, Nicanor, Timon, Parmenas, and Nicolas from Antioch, a convert to Judaism. 6 They presented these men to the apostles, who prayed and laid their hands on them.

From this passage we can note 3 things:

Firstly, it was a problem that was shared by all, rather than a small committee. Secondly, the people chosen were seen by the others to be full of the Holy Spirit and wisdom. Thirdly, when these men were chosen, the apostles prayed and laid hands on them, a practice that still continues today in the Methodist Church, not just for deacons but presbyters too. Turning to chapter 8, we find that God wasn't necessarily a respecter of job descriptions. The deacons, as they became known, were commissioned to "wait on tables" Here Philip had clearly been told to leave his post and follow the Holy Spirit's prompting. This led him to be in the right place at the right time. He, along with the early believers found themselves being persecuted, we find an account of Saul (Paul) in the next chapter, being given permission to seek out 'followers of the Way' a task he and others undertook with great fervour. Philip found himself in Samaria and like many other disciples spread the good news as they fled from their persecutors.

Having been told by the Holy Spirit to travel along the road between Jerusalem and Gaza, he came across an important official to the Queen of Ethiopia, who had been to worship in Jerusalem.

This official was sat in his chariot trying to make sense of a passage in the book of the prophet Isaiah. Prompted by the spirit, Philip asks if the official understands what he is reading. There follows a conversation in which Philip explains the good news about Jesus. The Ethiopian is so excited, he asks to be baptised. Philip baptises the man and as they come out of the water Philip is taken away by the Holy Spirit and the Ethiopian didn't see him again. I occasionally wonder what the Ethiopian thought at the time, but we read that he went back home rejoicing that he had been baptised.

To conclude:

Think about an occasion when you were in the right place at the right time, where was it? What happened? How did you feel? What did you do afterwards? The first disciples were called to "follow Jesus and he would help them become fishers of people." That call is still applicable today. All God asks is that we be prepared to be in the right place at the right time. **Amen**

Hymn **One more step along the world I go**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5jhAzbdKq6U>

Prayer

Here I am Lord:

Here is my body,

Here is my heart,

Here is my soul.

Grant that I may be big enough to reach the world,

Strong enough to carry it,

Pure enough to embrace it without wanting to keep it.

Grant that I may be a meeting place, but a temporary one,

A road that doesn't end in itself, because everything to be gathered there, everything human, leads towards you. (Michael Quoist)

The Lord's Prayer

Our Father, who art in heaven
Hallowed, be thy name.
Thy kingdom come,
Thy will be done,
on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread.
And forgive us our trespasses,
as we forgive those that trespass against us.
And lead us not into temptation,
but deliver us from evil.
For thine is the kingdom, the power and the glory, forever and ever Amen.

Hymn **Guide me O thou great Jehovah**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MgcJLqulKNw>

The grace of Lord Jesus Christ,
The love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit
be with us now and evermore **AMEN**