

Summary of the sermon – November 3, 2013, 9h30

Reading of the Holy Scripture: Acts 8, 26-40

Theme of the sermon:

Surprising, a high Ethiopian official is belonging to Jesus.

1. Spectator and participant

Probably, it's the first time you visit a reformed or protestant worship service. Then you need explanation of the words and rituals in the church. For example: What means baptism? What means the gospel of Jesus Christ?

We all need such explanation, also the members of the congregation. Your presence makes you participant of the service.

We also are spectators and participants in the story we read in Acts 8,26-40. There are several surprising elements in this event.

2. Action of the Holy Spirit

Baptism shows that Christians belong to Jesus Christ. People regret their mistakes and want to begin a new life. Baptism shows that you get Jesus' stamp upon your life.

The Holy Spirit arranges all the things in this story. Look for example at verse 26 and verse 29. It's surprise after surprise. So the Holy Spirit works.

3. The Ethiopian

It is a surprising meeting between Philip and the important Ethiopian official. He is 'the Minister of Finance' of the Queen of Ethiopia. A person with a black skin. He had worshipped the Lord God in Jerusalem. He is very interested in the religion and the holy books of Israel. He has purchased the book of Isaiah. And he reads aloud.

4. Philip the interpreter

Philip asks the Ethiopian: 'Do you understand what you are reading?' The man says: 'No. I need interpretation of the prophecy of Isaiah.'

Philip is a man full of the Holy Spirit. He has already told the gospel of Jesus in Samaria. He is the right man at the right place and at the right time.

5. The gospel of Jesus

The Ethiopian official is reading Isaiah chapter 53 about the lamb that is slaughtered. Who is that? Philip tells the man the good news of Jesus. He departs from the chapter the Ethiopian was reading.

In the same manner Jesus told the gospel of the Messiah to the two disciples on the road to Emmaus, Luke 24,13-35.

Philip brings the word of Jesus to the man from Ethiopia and he brings that man to Jesus. That's a surprise.

6. The unavoidable baptism

Luke tells the story as if you are there and see it happen. The Ethiopian sees water and wants to be baptized. Philip baptizes him without any objection. One more time very surprising through the Spirit.

Being baptized shows that this man now belongs to the Lord Jesus.

7. Glad with Jesus

The story's end is short and joyful. Philip was snatched away by the Holy Spirit. And the official went happily on his way to his land and his queen. For now he belongs to Jesus. He is glad with Jesus.

The gospel of Jesus rapidly arrives in Africa, earlier than in Europe and America. Also surprising. Stay we only spectators or are we getting participants in worshipping the Lord Jesus?

The story of the Ethiopian official is surprising. So do the baptism of *Femke Ilse Smit*.

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