

Fullness

Week 1- Baptism

Matthew 5:6: “Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled.” (NIV)

Psalms 42:2: My soul thirsts for God, for the living God. When shall I come and appear before God? (ESV)

Who shall be filled? Those who hunger and thirst after God, His ways and His presence.

We live in a consumer world, desperately seeking fulfillment, a fullness of life in our career, income, influence, sexual pursuits, experiences, hobbies, trips, purchases; the list goes on. According to Jesus, fullness will be found for those whose desires are centered on God.

Is Jesus saying there is no fulfillment in other pursuits, or that in our desire centered on God we will find real fulfillment in right relationship with those pursuits?

The Ethiopian and Philip- Acts 8:26-40 (Picture of them)

Setting: Great persecution hits the church, and in this one chapter Jesus' words will be put into motion: “from Jerusalem to Judea, Samaria to the ends of the earth.” Acts 1:8

Philip is experiencing revival in Samaria. Miraculous signs, Demons coming out of people in great displays. Many paralytics and cripples healed. Sorcerers believing, and many accepting Christ and being baptized. The Holy Spirit also came upon the believers there. The Bible describes that **Great Joy filled the city!**

All of a sudden, with no reason or warning, an angel tells Philip to leave all of this and go stand on a road **50 miles** away?

Why would God call Philip from the many to the desert to meet 1?

-Let's celebrate Philip's quick obedience (his pride or opinion didn't get in the way)

-Let's remember as believers the value of the one!

-Let's also remember that inside of each one are many others!

I believe God called Philip to this desert spot because a very hungry and thirsty seeker was calling out to God to be filled.

Let's see this Ethiopian not as a wealthy dignitary but as a hungry and thirsty seeker. There were many wealthy and influential people for whom God didn't arrange these

kinds of meetings. But this Ethiopian was coming back from going up to Jerusalem to worship. That may sound simple until you see the effort and cost this trip took.

This man came from a distance of approximately **1800 miles one way, 3600 miles** round trip. Riding in a carriage, most likely with a team of servants and guards.

(Picture of map from Ethiopia to Jerusalem)

For clarity, see this comparison **(Map of Miami to San Diego)**

What's in Jerusalem? The temple **(Picture of the temple)**

The temple was believed to be the place where heaven and earth came together. This is why Jesus' statements of being one greater than the temple here were so divisive. **(Matt. 12:6)** Jesus was saying the glory is not in this building; it's in Him. They worshiped a building instead of seeing the God it was meant to point them to. **(Now we who are in Christ are the temple...for another sermon)**

So this Ethiopian invested all this time and expense for the opportunity to be in God's presence. Can you see his hunger? Can you see his thirst?

Here is something that may shock you...he wouldn't even have been allowed inside the temple courts. First as a non-Jew, second as a eunuch (Deut. 23:1). But for simply the chance to be near God, to find true fulfillment was worth it.

He was most likely wealthy and influential, as the Queen Mother of Ethiopia's right hand. *He was educated and politically connected, but he wanted something beyond all of this. There was a longing in his heart that nothing else could fill.*

Many of us today do not stop long enough to realize that the longings and dissatisfaction in our lives are a cry for an encounter with God. We keep looking for the thing that will fulfill us rather than the ONE that fills us with abundant life till it overflows (Jn. 10:10).

As this man would return home thinking he had received all he could or was allowed to through religion, **he kept reading and pouring over the scroll of Isaiah** (pointing to his wealth and education). We can see he is still seeking and searching because empty buildings and sacred cities do not fill our hearts; only God can.

I believe this is why God moved Philip from Samaria's revival to meet with this one man on a desert road.

-It's interesting to note how often God doesn't meet us where we expected him to. God doesn't follow our script. He met him in the desert place, not in the sacred space. Maybe

so we do not put faith in a place but in the One. Maybe because He wants hungry and thirsty people to be filled wherever they may be seeking Him. He's the God who comes near.

Interesting point. He is reading from **Is. 53** but just three chapters later in **Is. 56:3-5**, we almost see this moment in prophecy unfolding.

3 Let no foreigner who is bound to the LORD say,
"The LORD will surely exclude me from his people."
And let no eunuch complain,
"I am only a dry tree."

4 For this is what the LORD says:
"To the eunuchs who keep my Sabbaths,
who choose what pleases me
and hold fast to my covenant

5 to them I will give within my temple and its walls
a memorial and a name
better than sons and daughters;
I will give them an everlasting name
that will endure forever."

We see the **eunuch's desire as well as his humility**. He is asking if Philip could teach him. Here is this wealthy, educated man looking at an average, unknown man, hoping maybe he could explain what his heart is yearning for.

But the Holy Spirit had set up this meeting, and the Ethiopian is not suspicious of Philip. Something within him must have borne witness and asked for his help.

Finally, after explaining all that had happened in Jerusalem in Jesus and revealing it to him through the very Scriptures he had been reading, **this man knew this was why he had made this trip: in search of this treasure, this pearl of greater price. Matt. 13:45-46.**

The eunuch's confession of Christ as the One he was hungering for and seeking is recorded as an immediate act of surrender in baptism.

We assume his confession of faith, but in this story we do not hear his words; we see his actions. A heart that has been so hungry and thirsty, so desperately seeking, has now found what his life has been missing.

Stop the carriage!

Here is water! (a muddy pond, a stream) We are not told, and this man didn't care what we are meant to see; it is his eagerness and earnestness. This wealthy, educated man isn't concerned with lowering himself into a muddy pond, stripping himself of his jewels and influence. Who is Philip? Not a king, not even an apostle, Philip began as one serving tables for the widows and poor in the early church and had begun evangelizing. This man didn't care about Philip's position or title; this man just wanted Jesus. He wanted the fullness his heart had been crying out for.

The bible says he went away rejoicing! (a state of gladness, happiness, well-being).

Notice, he was no longer pouring over Scripture looking for something; he had finally found what he had been looking for, and now he was full and could rejoice.

Now, when he read the Scripture, it wouldn't be to find God, but rather to know the One who found him on the desert road.

To those being baptized and to the rest of us:

The desire to be baptized comes from that hunger and thirst to know and love God. The act of surrendering your total self and life, past, present, and future, to Jesus.

Do not lose the reason for this baptism. It is not a one-and-done ceremony; like a wedding, it's a moment that enters you into a lifetime of relationship with the one you love.

My question today is: What will you do once you've been baptized? Will you check the box or will you move into a life that is full of adventures and journeys with God?

For those who have been baptized, are you still pursuing your relationship with God?

Here's the thing about "finding God." Once you have discovered Him and received Him, you discover there is more and more.

He is the one who forever satisfies, but also one who creates a continued hunger for more. Not a hunger or desire from deficiency, but a hunger of expectancy.

For our baptism candidates today, look how God set this day up for you because of your hunger and thirst. God loves you so much, and your fullness is now in Him. Keep eating and drinking from His table. Do not stop after today.

For those who feel that hunger and thirst, and who today realize they've been searching for things instead of the One, I want to invite you to give your heart to Jesus today.

Like the Ethiopian, why not be baptized today? Why wait? Who cares if you didn't come expecting this; neither did the Ethiopian expect to meet God on the roadside. God has

come to you today. Give your life to him and be baptized. We are here to help you make that happen today.

Let's pray.