

WONDERSTRUCK: INSPIRING LOVE

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Acts 8:26-40

26 Then an angel of the Lord said to Philip, 'Get up and go towards the south to the road that goes down from Jerusalem to Gaza.' (This is a wilderness road.) 27 So he got up and went. Now there was an Ethiopian eunuch, a court official of the Candace, queen of the Ethiopians, in charge of her entire treasury. He had come to Jerusalem to worship 28 and was returning home; seated in his chariot, he was reading the prophet Isaiah. 29 Then the Spirit said to Philip, 'Go over to this chariot and join it.' 30 So Philip ran up to it and heard him reading the prophet Isaiah. He asked, 'Do you understand what you are reading?' 31 He replied, 'How can I unless someone guides me?' And he invited Philip to get in and sit beside him. 32 Now the passage of the scripture that he was reading was this: 'Like a sheep, he was led to the slaughter, and like a lamb silent before its shearer, so he does not open his mouth. 33 In his humiliation justice was denied

him.

Who can describe his generation?

For his life is taken away from the earth.' 34 The eunuch asked Philip, 'About whom, may I ask you, does the prophet say this, about himself or about someone else?' 35 Then Philip began to speak, and starting with this scripture, he proclaimed to him the good news about Jesus. 36 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?' 38 He commanded the chariot to stop, and both of them, 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 snatched Philip away; the eunuch saw him no more and went on his way rejoicing. 40 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.

REFLECT & DISCUSS

1. Read the passage slowly. Then take a deep breath and read it again. What word, phrase, or image stands out to you?
2. The book of Isaiah is incredibly important to the early church. The prophet speaks of a "second exodus" or "another way out" of the bondage, oppression, suffering, humiliation, and degradation that Israel faced because of invading armies and exile. The God who liberated the enslaved Hebrew people once before would make a

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new way for God's people.

When Jesus declares his mission statement in Luke 4, he quotes from Isaiah. Read the passage Jesus quotes and claims to fulfill: **Luke 4:14-20**. In Acts, the Eunuch *also reads from Isaiah* and asks for help from Philip.

- a. How does the inclusion of the Eunuch continue on the mission of Jesus as outlined in Luke 4?
 - b. How comfortable are you at asking for help from others?
3. Eunuchs were sexual minorities that were excluded from some aspects of Temple worship (Leviticus 21:20; Deuteronomy 23:1). Jesus explicitly includes eunuchs as a way to understand and live out the Kingdom of God (**Matthew 19:12**). Now, Philip is making space for a eunuch to experience the good news of his full inclusion in God's grace and family. What does it mean for Christ's church to continue in that trajectory of making a grace-filled space for those who are otherwise rejected, excluded, or marginalized?
4. The "way of wonder" is a way of attention and receptivity toward what is bigger and beyond ourselves: from the beauty of creation to the grandeur of self-giving love to the astonishment of a community of genuine care. Think back and reflect on moments when you have been

"wonderstruck" by a demonstration of self-giving love or by the experience of a community that genuinely helps one other.

5. Jesus embodies the "way of wonder" as God's own self-giving love. How can Christ's church nurture and extend the "way of wonder"? How can you cultivate wonder in your life and in your faith practices?

Take time to pray for the gift of wonder.

"[Humankind] will not perish for want of information; but only for want of appreciation. The beginning of our happiness lies in the understanding that life without wonder is not worth living. What we lack is not a will to believe but a will to wonder."

— Abraham Joshua Heschel, *God in Search of Man*

"I would say about individuals, an individual dies when he ceases to be surprised. I am surprised every morning that I see the sunshine again. When I see an act of evil, I'm not accommodated. I don't accommodate myself to the violence that goes on everywhere; I'm still surprised. That's why I'm against it, why I can hope against it. We must learn how to be surprised. Not to adjust ourselves. I am the most maladjusted person in society.

— Abraham Joshua Heschel

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