

Witness Unhindered:
“From Scattered to Welcomed”
 Acts 8: 26–40

Thoughts to Shape and Spark Discussion:

“The world is full of darkness, but what I think we caught sight of in that tourist trap in Orlando, Florida, of all places, was that at the heart of darkness – whoever would have believed it? – there is joy unimaginable. The world does bad things to us all, and we do bad things to the world and to each other and maybe most of all to ourselves, but in that dazzle of bright water as the glittering whales hurled themselves into the sun, I believe what we saw was that joy is what we belong to. Joy is home, and I believe the tears that came to our eyes were more than anything else homesick tears. God created us in joy and created us for joy, and in the long run not all the darkness there is in the world and in ourselves can separate us finally from that joy, because whatever else it means to say that God created us in his image, I think it means that even when we cannot believe in him, even when we feel most spiritually bankrupt and deserted by him, his mark is deep within us. We have God's joy in our blood.” – Frederick Buechner

“Our contemporary situation is surprisingly similar to the early Christian context in which the normative understandings and practices of hospitality were developed. We, like the early church, find ourselves in a fragmented and multicultural society that yearns for relationships, identity, and meaning. Our mobile and self-oriented society is characterized by disturbing levels of loneliness, alienation, and estrangement. In a culture that appears at times to be overtly hostile to life itself, those who reject violence and embrace life bear powerful witness. People are hungry for welcome.” – Christine Pohl

“There’s a direct correlation between the accuracy of our memory and the effectiveness of our mission. If we’re not teaching people how to be saved, it’s perhaps because we’ve forgotten the tragedy of being lost. If we’re not teaching the message of forgiveness, it may be because we don’t remember what it was like to be guilty. And if we’re not preaching the cross, it could be that we’ve subconsciously decided that—God forbid—somehow we don’t need it.” – Max Lucado

“For thus says the LORD: “To the eunuchs who keep my Sabbaths, who choose things that please me and hold fast my covenant, I will give in my house and within my walls a monument and a name better than sons and daughters; I will give them an everlasting name that shall not be cut off.” – Isaiah 56: 4-5

Themes and Questions to Guide Reflection and Response:

- What from the Scripture passage or the sermon made an impression upon you? Are there lingering questions to be answered or rabbit trails to be followed for you?
- How does this passage impress upon you the sovereign, compassionate missionary heart of God?
 - Name all the instances of God taking the initiative in this passage.
 - Why do you think the church in Jerusalem had to be pushed out into mission through persecution?
- The sermon asserted that there was a God-shaped vacuum in the eunuch’s heart and the eunuch-shaped vacuum in the church’s ministry and life.
 - What was the hunger for the eunuch? Why was the promise of Jesus’ work so attractive?
 - Why did the eunuch need the church?
 - How have you felt that same sense of longing for welcome, belonging, home?
 - Why did the church need the eunuch?
 - Who are the least likely candidates for redemption/conversion in your family, work, networks?
 - What is your reluctance level in knowing/ministering to these folks?
- Christine Pohl emphasizes in her quote above that “People are hungry or welcome”.
 - How is this true for you? For those in your orbit?
 - How as a church can we be both graciously welcoming and also a place of truth and not mushy sentimentality and inclusion?