**On the Desert Road**

**The Word**

Read together Acts 8:26-40

**The Big Idea**

The story of Philip and the Ethiopian Eunuch reveals a God who pursues lost people in very personal ways and who longs to partner with his people in his pursuit of others. Our own experience of being pursued by him can motivate us to want to partner with him in his pursuit of others.

**Questions for Discussion**

1. As you consider the story of Philip and the Ethiopian Eunuch, what particular idea or detail was most impactful?

2. The story of the Eunuch is a beautiful story of a God who pursues people in very particular ways. How would you respond to a person who says, “I try to pursue God, but it just feels like I get no response from him?”

3. As you consider the topic of evangelism, what issues, hangups or passions do you bring to that conversion? How does this idea of “partnering with God in his pursuit of others” sit with you as a model of evangelism?

4. On Sunday it was suggested that we should seek to be very attuned to the work of the Spirit in and around us but that we should avoid overly spiritual language as we engage the people we feel prompted to pursue. How does that idea strike you?

5. Is there anyone in your life who God is putting on your heart as someone he might want to pursue at this time? Spend some time praying as a group for that person.

**Sermon Outline**

I. Introduction

A. God is the true hero in this story

 B. This story invites us into two realities:

 1. The joy of being pursued by God

 2. The Joy of partnering with God in his pursuit of others

II. The story through the Ethiopian Eunuch’s eyes

 A. He is an exotic foreigner

 1. African descent

 2. High political and economic status (the secretary of the treasury)

 3. Educated and wealthy

 B. He is a eunuch

1. Possibly born that way but probably castrated to serve faithfully/safely in the service of the queen

 2. An outsider unable to enter the assembly of God’s people (Dt 23:1)

 C. He is a worshiper of Yahweh who was willing to travel 1000 miles to worship

D. His experience in Jerusalem was most likely disappointing as he encountered obstacles for a person like him worshipping God in an intimate way

E. His experience in the Isaiah scroll was likely disappointing as he encountered obstacles in his understanding of God’s Word

 F. His sense of God’s pursuit of him on the way home must have been profound

 1. A random man running outside his chariot

 2. This man happens to perfectly understand the passage he’s reading

 3. All barriers are removed from him being baptized and welcomed into the people of God

4. Philip’s disappearance must have added to the miraculous nature of the experience

 5. Isaiah 53:3-6 spoke so personally to God’s love and care for him

G. He came to Jerusalem experiencing himself as a pursuer of God bumping into obstacles. He returns home realizing God is the pursuer who has broken down every obstacle

H. Hagar is another African who has a similar experience of feeling so seen and pursued by God (Genesis 16)

I. Many of us can testify to the very particular and personal ways God has pursued us (through Scripture, people, circumstances, etc.)

III. The story through Philip’s eyes

A. The context of this specific call is an established life of faithfulness with God

1. Philip is one of the 7 entrusted with caring for the widows

2. Philip is already doing great ministry in Samaria (8:5-8)

 B. The strangeness of the call

 1. A call to the desert road must have felt strange and very non-strategic

 2. A call to run alongside a chariot must have felt strange and embarrassing

 3. Each step of the way, God gave Philip just what he needed to know at that moment without knowing the full picture, and Philip obeyed at each step.

 C. The sovereign hand of God

 1. The perfect Scriptural passage for sharing the gospel

 2. The open heart of the Eunuch to receive the gospel

 3. What felt very non-strategic was very strategic from God’s point of view (the rapid spread of the gospel in Ethiopia may be attributed to the Eunuch)

4. “The purposes of God often seem strange to us, particularly when we are in possession of only a fragment of the total picture.” – Derek Thomas

 D. The spiritual nature of the encounter

1. God spoke in very spiritual ways to Philip (an angel, the spirit, the moment of opportunity)

2. But Philip doesn’t use overly spiritual language with the Eunuch (aka “God sent me to you” or “God told me to tell you.”

 F. Reflections for us

1. The topic of evangelism triggers a lot in many of us (off putting ways we’ve seen it done, guilt we don’t do it more, a lack of feeling equipped, etc.)

2. There’s a simplicity to this story that is helpful

a. If we’ve experienced ourselves as pursued by God, that’s a very powerful thing

b. Surely we long for others to have that same experience of being pursued

c. And what a privilege to be a small part of how God pursues others.

d. Ro 10:15

3. So here’s the posture

a. We pray that God would give us eyes to see where he’s at work

b. We pray God would give us willing feet to move towards where he’s at work with truth and love.