

“Why Would God Love Me?”

The Rev. S. Shane Nanney – September 18, 2022

Acts 8:26-40

“Everyone has an invisible sign hanging from his neck saying,
‘Make Me Feel Important.’

Never forget this message when working with people.”

Unknown author

This world does a good job of making us all feel like we’re invisible.

Let me just ask, “Do you ever feel Worthless? Of no account? A failure? A screwup; or worse, do you feel like you are invisible?”

It happens all the time – to all kinds of people – and it has likely happened or maybe it’s happening to you.

There might be a lot of people in your school or in your field of work or around you on a daily basis and so you wonder, how important are you really? Do you wonder if anyone would lose any sleep if you didn’t show up tomorrow? Would they miss you if you were suddenly gone? Would they even notice?

There are times, even in church, that we don’t feel all that important. You might think that nobody even notices if you are there or not.

Well, the truth is that God is the one who wants you to know today that you are precious to him.

He doesn’t pester or flatter you because he wants to get something out of you. God has an interest in you, not because he wants to take your goods but because He wants to give you eternal treasures.

How can I say this with so much certainty?

When you take a stone and throw it into a lake, what happens to the water? There's kind of a gulp as the stone plops in, but then the waves begin to go out in a perfect circle. Then those circles spread farther and farther away from the center. That's what was going on in Philip's day. At Pentecost, all of Jesus' believers were in Jerusalem. Shortly after, persecution happened, and the believers were scattered. But that wasn't totally a bad thing, because they went out like ever-expanding circles.

The first mission field after the Jews were the Samaritans. *Acts Chapter 8* records Philip's hard work among these people. The Holy Spirit blessed Philip's work, and the church in Samaria was just going bananas. There were so many new Christians there that the Apostles Peter and John came from Jerusalem to help Philip with this huge successful Samaritan church. And it was in this big church, where things were happening, where Philip was doing such great work, that the Lord knew that it was time for that expanding circle to get even bigger. The Jews had the Word, the Samaritans had the Word, and now it was going to be given to other races as well. And so, we see the first verse of our text, *"NOW AN ANGEL OF THE LORD SAID TO PHILIP, GO SOUTH TO THE ROAD, THE DESERT ROAD THAT GOES DOWN FROM JERUSALEM TO GAZA."*

I don't know what Philip was thinking when he received this command, but I would have thought something like this: "Things are going great here. I've got tons of people to work with and share the Gospel and help them grow in faith. And now God wants me to go hang out in the desert?"

But you see, God doesn't view people as just an insignificant number. Each soul is precious to him. And there was one struggling soul that needed Philip's attention. He was the Ethiopian eunuch.

"SO, HE STARTED OUT, AND ON HIS WAY, HE MET AN ETHIOPIAN EUNUCH, AN IMPORTANT OFFICIAL IN CHARGE OF ALL THE TREASURY OF CANDACE, QUEEN OF THE ETHIOPIANS. THIS MAN HAD GONE TO JERUSALEM TO WORSHIP AND ON HIS WAY HOME, WAS SITTING IN HIS CHARIOT READING THE BOOK OF ISAIAH THE PROPHET."

This particular eunuch had become so empty and weary that he had traveled to Jerusalem to worship God. Here was a man who was looking for an answer to the question, “Why would God love me?” And this eunuch would have felt even more invisible during his trip to Jerusalem. Here was a wealthy man of prestige and power – his chariot and his position make this clear – but his black skin would have made him stand out.

I wonder how many people stared at him, or how many mean comments and jokes he overheard as he walked by. And you’d think, well, at least when he got to church, that sort of thing would go away, but eunuchs were forbidden by the Law of Moses to become full Jews. They could come near the Temple, but they couldn’t go through the inner gates. That would be a pretty tough kind of rejection to deal with.

So, this man, a black eunuch, had traveled for many miles to learn about God, but the closest he could get to church was the door. I imagine that it was a frustrating trip to Jerusalem.

Whoever showed any concern had probably noticed his nice rich clothes and was just after this money. Maybe that’s why he bought a scroll! On his way out of town, he saw a merchant with a pile of scrolls of papyrus on a table and he offered a few silver coins for a copy of Isaiah that the merchant assured him was a very valuable writing by a great prophet of God. So, he bought it and on the trip home, was reading his way through the scroll but it wasn’t doing him much good because he didn’t understand it. But the Lord loved this lonely man, so he arranged an appointment... A God Appointment. Then Philip ran up to the chariot and heard the man reading Isaiah the prophet.

“DO YOU UNDERSTAND WHAT YOU ARE READING?” Philip asked.

“HOW CAN I,” HE SAID, “UNLESS SOMEONE EXPLAINS IT TO ME?” So, he invited Philip to come up and sit with him.

Philip was taken out of a very successful church in order that this one valuable soul would understand God’s plan of salvation. God worked things out so that this eunuch was reading *Isaiah 53*.

The *Book of Isaiah* is sometimes called the 5th Gospel, because no Old Testament book talks about Jesus as much as Isaiah. And no chapter speaks about the work of Jesus for lost sinners better than Chapter 53. And from this, Philip taught the Ethiopian about his sin and his Savior. He taught him about Christ's resurrection, and our repentance, and the blessings of Baptism.

That very day as they were traveling along, they came to some water and this lonely man said how about me? Here is some water, what would hinder me from being baptized. Philip asked if he believed and when he said that he did, Philip took him down into the pond or river and then he baptized.

Afterwards Philip went on his way to a new God Appointment and the Ethiopian went on his way – rejoicing. Why was he rejoicing – because he knew that God loved him enough to send him a man to tell him about Jesus! And through God, the Holy Spirit working through Philip's witness, one lonely soul learned that he was a part of a family, God's family.

Listen, you are not invisible to God. The fact that you are sitting here in God's house today proves that. How many things did God do for you to make sure that you would be here today? How many appointments did God arrange to get you to this place here today to hear this message that God put in my heart to say to you?

Just as Philip did, God send others into your life to explain Christ's work for you, His death for you, and His resurrection for you. Whom did God put into your life to make sure that you were baptized? Who took time to teach you the Scriptures so that you would be ready to take Communion?

God wants you to know that in Christ, he has given you a seat at his heavenly table. No matter what your sins, they have been taken care of, and so you will be with the Lord forever.

Maybe we need to do a better job at remembering why we are here.

Look for the God Appointments that He has made with you for others! Open your eyes for ways to share your faith. It might not be as obvious as the person sitting next to you on the airplane having their Bible open to *Isaiah 53* and asking you what that passage means . . . though who knows, God works in mysterious ways.

But there will be opportunities this week if you open your eyes and look for them. The opportunity might come in the form of someone asking what you, a Christian, thinks about a certain movie or book, and you would be able to tell them about the Book of Books, which contains God's truth.

It might be someone wondering why there are so many bad things and evil people in this world, which would give you the chance to talk about the place you are going to one day, where there will be only good things and glorious people and a great God.

It might be someone, like the eunuch, not feeling very special, feeling more like a number than an individual, giving you the chance to tell them how valuable and dearly loved they are by God.

You can tell them what Christ did to make them a treasured person. How will God use you this week?

HOW GREAT IS THE LOVE THE FATHER HAS LAVISHED ON US, THAT WE SHOULD BE CALLED CHILDREN OF GOD! AND THAT IS WHAT WE ARE! ~ 1 John 3:1a

Amen.