



FIFTH SUNDAY OF EASTER

FIRST READING: Acts 8:26-40

A reading from Acts.

²⁶An angel of the Lord said to Philip,
“Get up and go toward the south
to the road that goes down from Jerusalem to Gaza.”
(This is a wilderness road.)

²⁷So 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 ²⁸and was returning home;
seated in his chariot, he was reading the prophet Isaiah.

²⁹Then the Spirit said to Philip, “Go over to this chariot and join it.”

³⁰So Philip ran up to it and heard him reading the prophet Isaiah.
He asked, “Do you understand what you are reading?”

³¹He replied, “How can I, unless someone guides me?”

And he invited Philip to get in and sit beside him.

³²Now 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.

³³In his humiliation justice was denied him.

Who can describe his generation?

For his life is taken away from the earth.”

³⁴The eunuch asked Philip,

“About whom, may I ask you, does the prophet say this,
about himself or about someone else?”

³⁵Then Philip began to speak, and starting with this scripture,
he proclaimed to him the good news about Jesus.

³⁶As 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?”

³⁸He commanded the chariot to stop,
and both of them, Philip and the eunuch, went down into the water,
and Philip baptized him. ▶

FIRST READING *Candace = KAN-duh-suh Isaiah = eye-ZAY-uh Azotus = ah-ZOH-tus
Caesarea = sez-uh-REE-uh*

The successful oral reading of any narrative (story), including this one, rests squarely on the reader knowing the story. There is no substitute for reading the story aloud over and over again in preparation for its presentation. Without exception, the more familiar the reader is with the text and direction of the story, the more moving it will be to the hearer. It is important to recognize that the climax of this story is in verse 38. While verses 39 and 40 are not unimportant, they are not the verses toward which the story moves. (Note that *the* Candace is the queen's title, not her name, so watch the pronunciation, and don't forget the *the*.)

³⁹When 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.
⁴⁰But 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.

The word of the Lord. *or* Word of God, word of life.

PSALMODY: Psalm 22:25-31

SECOND READING: 1 John 4:7-21

A reading from First John.

⁷Beloved, let us love one another, because love is from God;
everyone who loves is born of God and knows God.
⁸Whoever does not love does not know God, for God is love.
⁹God's love was revealed among us in this way:
God sent his only Son into the world so that we might live through him.
¹⁰In this is love,
not that we loved God but that he loved us
and sent his Son to be the atoning sacrifice for our sins.
¹¹Beloved, since God loved us so much,
we also ought to love one another.
¹²No one has ever seen God;
if we love one another,
God lives in us, and his love is perfected in us.

¹³By this we know that we abide in him and he in us,
because he has given us of his Spirit.
¹⁴And we have seen and do testify
that the Father has sent his Son as the Savior of the world.
¹⁵God abides in those who confess that Jesus is the Son of God,
and they abide in God.
¹⁶So we have known and believe the love that God has for us.

God is love, and those who abide in love abide in God,
and God abides in them.
¹⁷Love has been perfected among us in this:

SECOND READING

"God is love," is perhaps as famous a Bible passage as any. This text explores the ramifications of that reality. It answers the question "So what?" There is a marvelous simplicity in some of the verses. Others are more subtle, more complex. The reader will do well to be invested in the text, giving careful thought to the verses that are not immediately understood. Meaning cannot be transferred to the hearer until the reader has it firmly in hand. This reading (more, perhaps, than many) requires prayerful consideration before working on the delivery.

that we may have boldness on the day of judgment,
because as he is, so are we in this world.

¹⁸There is no fear in love, but perfect love casts out fear;
for fear has to do with punishment,
and whoever fears has not reached perfection in love.

¹⁹We love because he first loved us.

²⁰Those who say, “I love God,” and hate their brothers or sisters, are liars;
for those who do not love a brother or sister whom they have seen,
cannot love God whom they have not seen.

²¹The commandment we have from him is this:
those who love God must love their brothers and sisters also.

The word of the Lord. *or* Word of God, word of life.

GOSPEL: John 15:1-8

The holy gospel according to John.

「Jesus said:」

¹“I am the true vine, and my Father is the vinegrower.

²He removes every branch in me that bears no fruit.

Every branch that bears fruit he prunes to make it bear more fruit.

³You have already been cleansed by the word that I have spoken to you.

⁴Abide in me as I abide in you.

Just as the branch cannot bear fruit by itself unless it abides in the vine,
neither can you unless you abide in me.

⁵I am the vine, you are the branches.

Those who abide in me and I in them bear much fruit,
because apart from me you can do nothing.

⁶Whoever does not abide in me is thrown away like a branch and withers;
such branches are gathered, thrown into the fire, and burned.

⁷“If you abide in me, and my words abide in you,
ask for whatever you wish, and it will be done for you.

⁸My Father is glorified by this,
that you bear much fruit and become my disciples.”

The gospel of the Lord.

GOSPEL

More than most, this text will benefit from solid pauses after nearly every sentence—with the possible exception of the two sentences in verse 2. Allow each thought time to sink in. It will help a familiar text to be heard in new ways.