February 13, 2022

Acts 8-9: Sent

## *We are sent by Jesus, joining the Holy Spirit on the mission of God.*

*Sermon prayer*

* Potluck
* ACM
* Men’s and Women’s Events
* EvC Listen
* Super Bowl
* Israel Benediction?

# Hook—Evangelism Challenge Stories (3min)

* *Justin Garcia shared that he wrote two co-workers’ names down on his evangelism challenge card last month. They began—without him prompting—to share more about their work struggles, and one even began sharing about their faith. He was surprised they were having these conversations, but thrilled to be used by the Lord in this way—almost like he was SENT by God to listen. He realized these were the same people he had been praying for.*
* Prayer matters, these evangelism challenges matter. We are SENT people.
* Grab the card, fill it out, LISTEN to people (it is rare yet makes a difference, 10 min a day)
	+ Share your stories—email the church.
* Today: Philip’s ministry, Paul’s conversion, healing by Peter

 *Prayer*

# Acts 8:1-3—Sent People (5min)

8:1 Saul was one of the witnesses, and he agreed completely with the killing of Stephen. A great wave of persecution began that day, sweeping over the church in Jerusalem; and all the believers except the apostles were scattered through the regions of Judea and Samaria. 2(Some devout men came and buried Stephen with great mourning.) 3But Saul was going everywhere to destroy the church. He went from house to house, dragging out both men and women to throw them into prison.

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* + Judea and Samaria—the second zone from Acts 1:8.
	+ Early part of book focuses on Jerusalem, next Judea and Samaria, then on the mission to the ends of the earth.

## We are sent—this is part of our calling and identity.

* + Don’t let the message fail to be sent through you.
	+ *Ever missed an important text? I have had people sitting in coffee shops waiting for me because my phone wasn’t sending the messages I was trying to get through.*
	+ *God is trying to send messages through your life, love, and stories (witnessing)—send His messages through to people.*
	+ It took persecution for the Jerusalem church to go to their neighboring areas (there were Christians in other parts of the world).
	+ What will it take for you see yourself as SENT?
		- *Radiant Church—church plants are missionaries.*
		- *We ALL are.*

# 8:4-25—Sent to the Lost (5min)

4But the believers who were scattered preached the Good News about Jesus wherever they went. 5Philip, for example, went to the city of **Samaria** and told the people there about the Messiah. 6Crowds listened intently to Philip because they were eager to hear his message and see the miraculous signs he did. 7Many evil spirits were cast out, screaming as they left their victims. And many who had been paralyzed or lame were healed. 8So there was great joy in that city.

9A man named Simon had been a sorcerer there for many years, amazing the people of Samaria and claiming to be someone great. 10Everyone, from the least to the greatest, often spoke of him as “the Great One—the Power of God.” 11They listened closely to him because for a long time he had astounded them with his magic.

12But now the people believed Philip’s message of Good News concerning the Kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ. As a result, many men and women were baptized. 13Then Simon himself believed and was baptized. He began following Philip wherever he went, and he was amazed by the signs and great miracles Philip performed.

14When the apostles in Jerusalem heard that the people of Samaria had accepted God’s message, they sent **Peter and John** there. 15As soon as they arrived, they prayed for these new believers to receive the Holy Spirit. 16The Holy Spirit had not yet come upon any of them, for they had only been baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. 17Then Peter and John laid their hands upon these believers, and they received the Holy Spirit.

18When Simon saw that the Spirit was given when the apostles laid their hands on people, he offered them money to buy this power. 19“Let me have this power, too,” he exclaimed, “so that when I lay my hands on people, they will receive the Holy Spirit!”

20But Peter replied, “May your money be destroyed with you for thinking God’s gift can be bought! 21You can have no part in this, for your heart is not right with God. 22Repent of your wickedness and pray to the Lord. Perhaps he will forgive your evil thoughts, 23for I can see that you are full of bitter jealousy and are held captive by sin.”

24“Pray to the Lord for me,” Simon exclaimed, “that these terrible things you’ve said won’t happen to me!”

25After testifying and preaching the word of the Lord in Samaria, Peter and John returned to Jerusalem. **And they stopped in many Samaritan villages along the way to preach the Good News.**

* \*Map with Bible reference
* Notes
	+ Samaria—the Samaritans and Jews didn’t get along—but the Holy Spirit breaks down divisions and separation.
	+ Peter and John—for the Jer Church and for Peter and John—who needed to get out.
	+ V.25—they stopped in villages in Samaria to preach—they had been changed!!
		- Peter begins traveling outside of Jerusalem more, and this prepares him for the conversion of a Gentile in ch.10.

## \*The found are sent to the lost.

### \*Christians are called to a posture of pursuit (Luke 15)—we go rather than expecting the lost to come. (they are lost!)

* + - *Search and Rescue doesn’t work that way.*
		- *We are part of God’s great rescue mission.*

### \*Speak truth in love (even when it is hard).

# Sent to Those Different Than We Are (8min)

26As for Philip, an angel of the Lord said to him, “Go south down the desert road that runs from Jerusalem to Gaza.” 27So he started out, and he met the treasurer of **Ethiopia**, a eunuch of great authority under the Kandake, the queen of Ethiopia. The eunuch had gone to Jerusalem to worship, 28and he was now returning. Seated in his carriage, he was reading aloud from the book of the prophet Isaiah.

29The Holy Spirit said to Philip, “Go over and walk along beside the carriage.”

30Philip ran over and heard the man reading from the prophet Isaiah. **Philip asked**, “Do you understand what you are reading?”

31The man replied, “How can I, unless someone instructs me?” And he urged Philip to come up into the carriage and sit with him.

32The passage of Scripture he had been reading was this:

“He was led like a sheep to the slaughter.
    And as a lamb is silent before the shearers,
    he did not open his mouth.
**33He was humiliated and received no justice.**    Who can speak of his descendants?
    For his life was taken from the earth.”

34The eunuch asked Philip, “Tell me, was the prophet talking about himself or someone else?” 35So **beginning with this same Scripture,** Philip told him the Good News about Jesus.

36As they rode along, they came to some water, and the eunuch said, “Look! There’s some water! Why can’t I be baptized?” 38He ordered the carriage to stop, and they went down into the water, and Philip baptized him.

39When they came up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord snatched Philip away. The eunuch never saw him again but **went on his way rejoicing.** 40Meanwhile, Philip found himself farther north at the town of **Azotus**. He preached the Good News there and in every town along the way until he came to **Caesarea**.

* \*Map with Bible reference
* Notes
	+ Ethiopia = “Cush” meaning the entire area south of Egypt. This person had MORE prestige and power than Philip, yet he was searching for God. He was reading the book of Isaiah and had questions. God is working ahead of you!
		- Not “go bring God to them,” but “Come join Me where I am working.”
	+ Questions invite curiosity—Jesus asked over 70 questions. Ask more questions when you are sharing.
	+ *Esau McCaulley (black preacher)—it is important to tell stories from Africa, which is part of God’s story and God’s people // the eunuch (and black people) identify with a suffering Messiah*
	+ Philip began where the eunuch was at—good principle for all of us.
	+ Eunuch went back to Ethiopia—the church is STILL there, and traces their lineage back to this.

## \*Christians are sent to those different than we are.

* + Different faith (point to Jesus), different economically, age, culture, race.
		- We don’t have to leave our town, but we do need to GO and engage in relationships with those different than we are.
	+ Importance of mosaic and multiethnic ministry.
		- Rev 7—every tribe, tongue, and nation worship together (means culture and language last even into heaven, they are celebrated but they don’t divide).
		- Let’s strive for that now (it is hard work)
		- A testimony to the gospel for the world to see

## \*We are sent by Jesus, joining the Holy Spirit on the mission of God.

* + *I have been blessed to have amazing pastoral leaders in my life of different races. Anthony Jang, amazing church planter. Cesar Butraigo in Patterson. And people of all different races and cultures in this church—I love it!*
	+ *I get to coach a second-generation Ethiopian church planter who is in LA. He was a youth pastor in the Ethiopian church, and then launched a multi-ethnic church plant. His team is amazing, and I am blessed to be able to coach Israel. Even more, I have learned a lot from him about a lot of things, including race—we have had good conversations these last two years, and I have discovered some things that needed work inside of me. He has helped me grow and live into what the Bible teaches.*

# Sent to Those Who Were Once Enemies (7min)

9:1 Meanwhile, Saul was uttering threats with every breath and was eager to kill the Lord’s followers. So he went to the high priest. 2He requested letters addressed to the synagogues **in Damascus**, asking for their cooperation in the arrest of any followers of the Way he found there. He wanted to bring them—both men and women—back to Jerusalem in chains.

3As he was approaching Damascus on this mission, a light from heaven suddenly shone down around him. 4He fell to the ground and heard a voice saying to him, **“Saul! Saul! Why are you persecuting me?”**

5“Who are you, lord?” Saul asked.

And the voice replied, “I am Jesus, the one you are persecuting! 6Now get up and go into the city, and you will be told what you must do.”

7The men with Saul stood speechless, for they heard the sound of someone’s voice but saw no one! 8Saul picked himself up off the ground, but when he opened his eyes he was blind. So his companions led him by the hand to Damascus. 9He remained there blind for three days and did not eat or drink.

10Now there was a believer in Damascus named Ananias. The Lord spoke to him in a vision, calling, “Ananias!”

“Yes, Lord!” he replied.

11The Lord said, “**Go** over to Straight Street, to the house of Judas. When you get there, ask for a man from Tarsus named Saul. He is praying to me right now. 12I have shown him a vision of a man named Ananias coming in and laying hands on him so he can see again.”

13“But Lord,” exclaimed Ananias, “I’ve heard many people talk about the terrible things this man has done to the believers in Jerusalem! 14And he is authorized by the leading priests to arrest everyone who calls upon your name.”

15But the Lord said, “**Go,** for Saul is my chosen instrument to take my message to the Gentiles and to kings, as well as to the people of Israel. 16And I will show him how much he must **suffer for my name’s sake.”**

17So Ananias went and found Saul. He laid his hands on him and said, “Brother Saul, the Lord Jesus, who appeared to you on the road, has sent me so that you might regain your sight and be filled with the Holy Spirit.” 18Instantly something like scales fell from Saul’s eyes, and he regained his sight. Then he got up and was baptized. 19Afterward he ate some food and regained his strength.

Saul stayed with the believers in Damascus for a few days. 20And immediately he began preaching about Jesus in the synagogues, saying, “He is indeed the Son of God!”

21All who heard him were amazed. “Isn’t this the same man who caused such devastation among Jesus’ followers in Jerusalem?” they asked. “And didn’t he come here to arrest them and take them in chains to the leading priests?”

22Saul’s preaching became more and more powerful, and the Jews in Damascus couldn’t refute his proofs that Jesus was indeed the Messiah. 23After a while some of the Jews plotted together to kill him. 24They were watching for him day and night at the city gate so they could murder him, but Saul was told about their plot. 25So during the night, some of the other believers lowered him in a large basket through an opening in the city wall.

26When Saul arrived **in Jerusalem**, he tried to meet with the believers, but they were all afraid of him. They did not believe he had truly become a believer! 27Then Barnabas brought him to the apostles and told them how Saul had seen the Lord on the way to Damascus and how the Lord had spoken to Saul. He also told them that Saul had preached boldly in the name of Jesus in Damascus.

28So Saul stayed with the apostles and went all around Jerusalem with them, preaching boldly in the name of the Lord. 29He debated with some Greek-speaking Jews, but they tried to murder him. 30When the believers heard about this, they took him down to Caesarea and sent him away to Tarsus, his hometown.

31The church then had peace throughout **Judea, Galilee, and Samaria**, and it became stronger as the believers lived in the fear of the Lord. And with the encouragement of the Holy Spirit, it also grew in numbers.

* \*Map with Bible reference
* Notes:
	+ Damascus
	+ Jesus identifies with the suffering of His people (theology of suffering last week).
		- We will cover this story again in Acts—Paul tells it more than once.
	+ God didn’t heal Saul directly but sent a Christian—see the pattern???
	+ Saul was chosen to proclaim AND suffer.
	+ Jerusalem—the church he had persecuted
		- Barnabas brought him in and vouched for his changed life.
		- We all need a Barnabas in our lives!
	+ Church is now in Judea, Galilee, and Samaria—two of the three zones covered.

## \*We are sent to those who were once enemies.

* + The early church confused the ancient world—Jews and Samaritans united together. Jews and Gentiles, male and female, slaves and free people and nobles all worshiping Christ—in the same space. This was very confusing in their stratified, status-heavy world.
		- Christ has torn down the walls.
		- Forgiveness is vertical and horizontal.
		- Boundaries are important, and reconciliation is not the same as forgiveness.

### I love being in a church that can confuse our world—

* + - *Youth and adults boyfriend and girlfriend break up, and they are still in church*
		- *People experience conflict, deal with it, talk about it (not avoid it), without gossip—and stay! Their friends don’t understand—most people just leave and talk bad about the church. We deal with it and grow stronger—it is weird.*
		- *There have been people who come to our church and ran into someone from their past in our church—and they have history or just get on each other’s nerves. I have seen the Holy Spirit tear down those walls, bring in forgiveness, and help them see they are not the same people they were ten years ago.*

# Sent to Those Hurting and in Need (5min)

32Meanwhile, Peter traveled from place to place, and he came down to visit the believers in the town of **Lydda.** 33There he met a man named Aeneas, who had been paralyzed and bedridden for eight years. 34Peter said to him, “Aeneas, Jesus Christ heals you! Get up, and roll up your sleeping mat!” And he was healed instantly. 35Then the whole population of Lydda and Sharon saw Aeneas walking around, and they turned to the Lord.

36There was a believer in **Joppa** named **Tabitha** (which in Greek is Dorcas). She was always doing kind things for others and helping the poor. 37About this time she became ill and died. Her body was washed for burial and laid in an upstairs room. 38But the believers had heard that Peter was nearby at Lydda, so they sent two men to beg him, “Please come as soon as possible!”

39So Peter returned with them; and as soon as he arrived, they took him to the upstairs room. The room was filled with widows who were weeping and showing him the coats and other clothes Dorcas had made for them. 40But Peter asked them all to leave the room; then he knelt and prayed. Turning to the body he said, “Get up, Tabitha.” And she opened her eyes! When she saw Peter, she sat up! 41He gave her his hand and helped her up. Then he called in the widows and all the believers, and he presented her to them alive.

42The news spread through the whole town, and many believed in the Lord. 43And Peter stayed a long time in Joppa, living with Simon, a tanner of hides.

* \*Map with Bible reference
* Notes
	+ Lydda and Joppa
	+ Tabitha (also known as Dorcas)—different kind of evangelism style (not intellectual or confrontational but hospitality)
		- She helped those in need.
* We are sent to the lost
	+ To those different than we are
	+ To those who were once enemies

## \*Sent to those hurting and in need.

* + Tabitha helped the poor, and so should we. We are sent to bring justice to the poor, who are often exploited or taken advantage of.
		- There are ways to truly help (and ways that we think are helping but hurt).
		- Best way is to work through organizations that are doing the work every day.
	+ Peter was available for the sick and dying.
		- Jesus told us to visit each other.
		- *Our church has been doing that—and we won’t stop. Let us know when you have a need. Especially through your LG.*
	+ We go to the hurting and LISTEN.
		- *Our evangelism challenge. You in?*
		- The world right now is hurting…big time. We are sent.

# \*(mp) Punch—Sent (3min)

* A friend in Phoenix told me a story about working in a coffee shop for much of his office work there. He became friends with someone who was also his son’s friend from school. My friend kept the door open for the God conversations, but the young man, now in his mid-twenties, was never open to it. Then one day he emailed my friend and asked if they could meet and talk about God, the Bible, and life. My friend enthusiastically replied, “Yes of course!” They met and had a great conversation, and the young man asked to meet again. Soon they were meeting every other week as this young man asked questions, explored faith, and considered becoming a follower of Jesus. As of right now, he has not made that decision—but he is on the journey, and has a Christian along with him.

## We are sent by Jesus, joining the Holy Spirit on the mission of God.

* + Are you willing to GO?
	+ What does that mean this week? Go for it, in a practical way.

*Close in Prayer*

*Bumper Out*

Benediction

* Connect Card, here to talk
* All Church Meeting
* Benediction—Acts 1:8
	+ Ghenet or Israel Ethiopian Benediction?