

## Psalm 22.25-31

[Worship]

25 From you comes my praise in the great congregation; my vows I will pay before those who fear him. 26 The poor shall eat and be satisfied; those who seek him shall praise the LORD. May your hearts live forever! 27 All the ends of the earth shall remember and turn to the LORD; and all the families of the nations shall worship before him. 28 For dominion belongs to the LORD, and he rules over the nations. 29 To him, indeed, shall all who sleep in the earth bow down; before him shall bow all who go down to the dust, and I shall live for him. 30 Posterity will serve him; future generations will be told about the Lord, 31 and proclaim his deliverance to a people yet unborn, saying that he has done it.

**Consider:**

[Words]

On the one hand, it's no surprise in Acts: A high government official is intrigued and perplexed by a classic biblical text of nonviolence. And yet his questions are lucid ones (indeed the scholars still ask them of the servant songs in Isaiah): Of whom does the passage speak? The prophet? Someone else, perhaps a messianic figure? Or is this a more collective image, of a remnant or even Israel as a whole?

Philip seizes the question as an opening. He begins where the Ethiopian official is. He tells the story of Jesus as though its form and outline were there to be seen on the page with the suffering servant, or as though gospel nonviolence and the way of the cross could trace its roots to this very text.

Nonviolence is of the moment in these chapters. Stephen's fiery and forgiving martyrdom is accomplished and a full tilt persecution is abroad (chapter 7). Saul, still breathing threats, will be stopped dead in his tracks in the next (chapter 9). Between Stephen and Paul is Philip, crossing barriers first to

the hated Samaritans, now to a black African (a Gentile even?) from beyond the imperial borders. The conversation concerning the servant song is a still point around which much is swirling.

In Luke-Acts, love of enemies is the acid test of the gospel. In the letters and gospel of John, the acid test is to love one another in community. (I won't presume to judge which is the tougher.) The commandment to love is connected to the vine (another image that goes back to Isaiah, 5:1-7). In fact, the vine in John is essentially an equivalent for what St. Paul calls "the body." You can't bear the fruits if you don't have the roots. The branches stay connected. They abide in love.

Philip, for his part, speaks as though the roots were nourished in the servant songs. He acts as though the vine could sprawl across the map. As though its branches needn't stop for barriers or border guards. As though love of strangers or even enemies and love of community were not so different as we like to imagine.

*Do these Isaiah and Acts verses speak of your divine community; In finding a confessional point of agreement to begin righteous connections, do they refer to you as well?*

[Scripture]

## Acts 10.34-40

34 The eunuch asked Philip, "About whom, may I ask you, does the prophet say this, about himself or about someone else?" 35 Then Philip began to speak, and starting with this scripture, he proclaimed to him the good news about Jesus. 36 As 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?" 38 He commanded the chariot to stop, and both of them, Philip and the eunuch, went down into the water, and Philip baptized him. 39 When 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. 40 But 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.