

Lectionary readings: Acts 8: 26-40; Psalm 22: 25-31; 1 John 4: 7-21; John 15: 1-8

For reflection and prayer

- **Acts 8:** Philip was clearly open to the Spirit of God, open and listening for His guidance and leading. The Ethiopian was a God-fearer, someone open to the Jewish faith, but because he had been deprived of his sexuality, could never be accepted into the Jewish faith. Philip gets alongside this man and meets him where he is, explaining the Scripture to him. What struck me in this passage is the spontaneous baptism of this foreigner - no rules, no dogma, no conditions, the only requirement faith, the gospel open to all, regardless of colour, race, sexuality. Philip offered him love, acceptance and respect. The man went on his way rejoicing. It might be good for us to reflect on how open and sensitive we are to the Spirit's leading, how close we are to God and how willing we are to share our faith when we are faced with someone seeking more from life.
- **Psalm 22:** v27: *'People from every nation will bow down before the Lord.'* The Lord has no favourites - all are His children, acceptable to Him and loved by Him. v30: *'Our children will hear about the wonders of the Lord.'* Just as the Ethiopian returned home, full of praise because of all that the Lord had done for him, so we are invited to give thanks for all God has done for us and share His miracles with others.
- **1 John 4:** God is love. We know that because of Jesus. We are called to the same intimate relationship with God that Jesus had. We live in God and God lives in

us. We have to make God known through our love, through our seeing every human being as a beloved child of God. v18: *'Perfect love casts out fear.'* *'There is no room in love for fear.'* (The Message) Fear is crippling - no matter what kind of fear it is. It might be good for us this week to look our fears in the face and share them with God. Fear always has to do with the future. The present moment holds no fear. Let's reflect on how we can live more in the present, trusting the future to God, our Beloved.

- **John 15:** A branch will not bear fruit unless it is joined to the vine. Neither will we bear spiritual fruit unless we are in close communion with God through His Spirit, allowing the life of Jesus to flow through us, allowing His love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, gentleness, faithfulness, forgiveness and grace to grow in our lives. v4: *'Live in me. Make your home in me just as I do in you.'* God wants us to feel at home with Him and in Him, to share our whole life with Him, for He has made his home in us. Are there things that need to be pruned from our lives so that we have time to spend with God? Are there attitudes that need to be changed? Are there things that are cluttering up our lives and spoiling them that need attention?

A prayer

Lord, I'm not very good at remembering You. I go on my way and forget the depth of Your love for me. I miss so many opportunities to share You with others because I am not open to Your Spirit, and I allow myself to be filled with fear and anxiety. Lord, I want to live in You and be aware of Your presence in me so that I allow Your life to flow in and through me and become more like You. Show me how to clear a space for You in my life so that You can fill me with Yourself. Amen