*Do You Understand?*

Acts 8:26-46

Texas was full of surprises. It was interesting to meet new people and we saw some things that were well worth seeing. But then there were the unexpected events that happened. One of those events happened as we traveled from Dallas to Fort Worth to eat and to see a rodeo. None of that trip was as we expected. First, it was hard to keep from getting lost even with our GPS. We made a couple of wrong exits but found our way back to the right highway. Then we saw the dark clouds in the distance. They looked pretty ominous and we were headed right for them. They came upon us fast. Just as it looked like we were about in them the tornado warning came on our phones telling us to take cover immediately. Not having the desire to be caught in a tornado and seeing that visibility in the murky green air around us was next to nothing we decided we were close enough to our destination to risk the rest of the drive in the precarious conditions. Almost immediately the rain came down literally in buckets but by the time we got to our exit, the streets were running rivers of water. The rain stopped and we could see huge areas of flooded streets and intersections and we had to detour to our destination. We found a way into town and actually found our restaurant. Seated by the window we saw that the river walk below us had actually become a river. Even the waiter was shocked by what he saw, logs, trash and trash barrels floating by below us. Needless to say, the rodeo was kind of disappointing after that adventure. I would say that we certainly found an unexpected adventure along the way to our destination.

Philip had a destination. The angel told him to go to a specific destination. He encountered an unexpected situation along the way. And was directed to deal with the situation by the angel. He encountered a man reading scripture and boldly approached him, asking if he understood what he was reading. The man asked him how he could understand when none of it has been explained. So Philip took the opportunity to explain what and who he was reading about. He told him about Jesus. The results were impressive. The man is so excited he wanted to be baptized and even when Philip disappeared quite suddenly he continued to rejoice.

We are witnessing events in this world that show the face of evil. The world has seen this kind of evil before. Those who are engaging in the evil, destructive events are good at leading others into their evil. Why are they good at it? They have passion about what they are doing and that passion is creating chaos, summoning the vulnerable into their chaos.

So, how do we counter that evil in the world? I would challenge us to think about how passionate we are about our faith, how passionate we are about God’s ways in the world. How many times do we miss God’s call to proclaim, to explain, to help others understand what God is doing through Jesus? How many times are we willing to stand up for our faith in situations where others are antagonistic against Christians or speak out about taking religion out of schools and public places, attempting to take religion out of life.

Part of the problem is that our next generation is growing up not knowing about God’s incredible act of love through Jesus. Many families are not taking their families to church, nor do they see the importance of religion. Here in the United States we are becoming an increasingly secular society. And I wonder if we Christians are becoming silent about what we know. How can people know about grace and love if it isn’t demonstrated through acts of faith and the story not told? How can people know the way of faith if it is not shared with others through story, song, prayer or acts of kindness and love. Do we explain well that an act of faith might be traveling through a severe storm believing that God will see us through? Are we able to explain that we go to church to be a part of something much bigger than ourselves, a collective event that focuses on God and gives us strength for the living of life in this often chaotic yet wonderful world? Does not God call us to go and share our faith?

The important thing about our faith is that it is meant to be shared. Jesus is not just a personal savior, but came to be savior of the world, the whole world. Perhaps God is calling us to find ways to share the story anew, not just among ourselves but with those who need a message to help them through the chaos of their lives. We can ask ourselves, “How is God calling us to share the story? What gifts have we been given to proclaim the salvation of the world? Why is it important to share God’s great gift to the world? The answers to those questions may lead us into situations where we have the opportunity to proclaim Jesus as an alternative, the antidote to the evil we see in this world. Can we afford to ignore the ways that God calls us to share our faith. Can we afford not to be passionate about Jesus?

If there is one thing that can change the course of the world’s history, it has been and continues to be Christ, the one who changes hearts and minds, who transforms how we think about the world. This man who suffered far more than most of us can imagine, who overcame death itself, has the ability to change lives and that makes a difference in the world. We are a people who live with hope, not despair about the condition of the world. We serve a living Christ, one who walks with us so that we can change the world. Jesus not only walks with us individually when we find ourselves in the middle of storms in life, but walks with the whole world when we are embroiled in the world’s storms.

We can with certainty say to our relatives, friends, companions along the way that God is continuing to work with the world, continuing to bring about healing even in the most destructive and evil acts.