

“I CAN DO ALL THINGS THROUGH CHRIST WHO STRENGTHENS ME:

I – ACT!”

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Elkton United Methodist Church

July 10, 2016

Acts 8:26-39

John 15:1-8

As I begin this morning, I have to tell you that I’m really excited about today’s sermon and all of the sermons for the rest of this summer. I’m starting a new sermon series, which as you can see, is entitled “I Can Do All Things through Christ Who Strengthens Me!” Each week, we will look at things Christ strengthens us to do – like, today “act,” and in future weeks, things like “fight” “trust,” “pray,” and “survive,” among others.

But what makes the series special, and what I’m excited about, is that each week, in addition to my words, we will hear a testimonial from someone else in the church. We’ll hear personal stories about people who acted, fought, trusted, prayed and survived. I know their stories, and I guarantee you that you’ll be moved by them and inspired by God’s moving in their lives.

So today, we start with the word “Act.” And we’ll look at that through two stories – first - the story of Philip and the Ethiopian eunuch, found in the 8th chapter of the Book of Acts. You heard Rick read it a few minutes ago.

Philip, a disciple of the Lord, was going about his business one day when he heard the voice of an angel call to him. The angel told him to “get up and go” to a certain place – the road leading from Jerusalem to Gaza. The scripture tells us that Philip did it – he didn’t question why in the world he was supposed to go there, he didn’t make excuses that it didn’t quite fit into his schedule that day, he didn’t ask for more information – he just got up and went!

And when he got to that place, he saw a man sitting in his chariot reading scripture. The man was an Ethiopian, a eunuch, a man high up in the service of the Queen, in charge of her treasury. Again, the angel nudged Philip – “go over to his chariot and talk to him.” So Philip did. He went over to the chariot and started a conversation with the man. “What are you reading? Do you understand it?”

Well, no, the man was reading a passage from Isaiah, and he didn’t understand it, so he asked Philip to help him. And so Philip did. The passage was a prophecy about a lamb being lead to slaughter and justice being denied him. Philip helped the man to understand that the words were about Jesus, and then he told him all about Jesus – about his birth, his life, his ministry; about his teachings and healings and witness; about his suffering and death, and about his

resurrection. He shared fully and completely the good news of Jesus Christ with the Ethiopian eunuch, and he did it so fully and completely and faithfully, that the eunuch opened his heart and asked to be baptized. He accepted Jesus as the Lord of his life.

Just when that man needed help, God sent Philip. At the exact right time and in the exact right place, God put faithful Philip, knowing he would give that man what he needed, just as God gave Philip everything he needed. God put Philip in the right place, gave him the right words, the right heart, everything he needed in that moment. When the angel of the Lord said “get up and go,” Philip got up and went, he acted, and because he did, a man came to know Jesus as his Lord and Savior. A life was saved and changed forever.

Friends, none of us ever knows when God, or an angel from God, will speak to us or nudge us to act in some specific way. Probably all of us, or most of us have experienced it already at one time or another – that feeling that God wants us to do something. And probably many of us could stand up and share how we listened to that voice or nudge, even though we were unsure, and God never failed us.

But this morning, we’re going to hear just one of our stories. It’s something that happened to Henry Jacobs years ago. Take a look at the screen now, and hear his story.

(Video clip of Jake helping to save a child who had fallen through a frozen pond and was dying.)

Thanks be to God indeed! Jake was right. If he hadn’t driven home a different way from work, if that woman hadn’t flagged him down, if the clothesline hadn’t been there – but all of that happened, and it was all at the hands of God.

Jake told me as we talked, that, at the time, he just sprang into action. He knew what to do because of his work with the fire department. But everything came together, and everything worked out well, because God was in the midst of it, causing all of the things to fall into place. Jake answered the call to “act,” and God gave him everything he needed to do it.

I don’t think Jake will mind me telling you that after it was all over, after he had gotten home and told Marge about it, and had gotten cleaned up and warmed up, after he sat down, he wept over the enormity of it all. That’s when it became crystal clear to him that God was in it through it all.

Oh, my dear friends, whenever you feel the Spirit move you to do something, to act, do it. It’s God calling you. And, do not be afraid, because He who calls you also equip you, and best of all, will be with you in whatever He calls you to do. If he wants you to talk to someone, he’ll give you the words. If, like he did with Jake, he wants you to do something, he’ll put things in place to help you.

The important thing is to say “yes” when he calls and “act” – like Philip, like Jake – say “yes.” Because indeed, you will find, that you **can** do all things through Christ who strengthens you. Thanks be to God.

Amen.