

## Acts 8:4-25 Race is no barrier

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I watched a documentary on India this week that showed the contrasts that exists in the culture of India. Part of the show a Feasts that lasted 10 days where people from every caste come together to celebrate. It also showed wedding of a very wealthy family which highlighted the great divide between rich and poor.

We just finished a major part of the story of Acts and the unstoppable message. The focus was the growth of the message in Jerusalem. Today we start into a new section which focus' on the growth of the unstoppable message in Samaria. It's the crossing of a great divide that brings two groups of people together because the Gospel is for everyone.

We will see that the message of Jesus for everyone. The question for us is do we believe the message is for everyone so that we share with everyone?

### 1. The promise that the message is for everyone

**Read: Acts 1:8**

Jesus said the Kingdom's going to be preached in Jerusalem. And Judea. AND IN SAMARIA. And the the ENDS OF THE EARTH.

Why? Jesus is for everyone.

On a Mission trip to Germany I went on in 1991 I experienced this. I met up with people from about 12 different nations who had all heard the Gospel of Jesus and wanted to share it with others.

Do you believe the message is for everyone?

Not that everyone will believe but it is the only way people can know Jesus.

Do you really believe it so that you share it with everyone?

**The promise of Jesus was that the message is for everyone.**

### 2. The cause of the promise going to everyone

**Read: 1b-5**

Do you notice what was the cause of the Gospel going out from Jerusalem?

There was persecution - The people were scattered - The people shared wherever they went.

We shouldn't think that those who left Jerusalem left as formal preachers. Most were "accidental missionaries" who talked about Jesus wherever they went. John Stott says: "The statement that they *preached the word in v.4* is misleading; the Greek expression does not necessarily mean more than *shared the good news.*"

It is not said that they set themselves up for public teachers; or that they administered baptism; or that they founded churches; but they shared everywhere the news that a Saviour had come. Their hearts were full of it. Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks; and they made the truth known to all whom they met. We can learn from this.

Instead of suffocating the message or stopping the message the killing of Stephen and the subsequent persecution caused the message to spread.

This is what happened in China in 1949 when 637 missionaries were forced to leave the country by the new Communist regime. This didn't stop the message going out as 286 of them went to other countries. Today there are 30-40 times more Christians in China.

Or think of how the Gospel came to Australia. It was when Great Britain decided Australia was a good country to send criminals to. A group of Christians including Isaac Newton and William Wilberforce chose a man to be the chaplain in Richard Johnson that the Gospel was brought to Australia.

*"Ultimately, evangelistic churches see more persons become Christians through the passionate efforts of individual Christians. More than any programs. More than any church events. More than anything else, we are the instruments God has chosen to use.*

*Sometimes we ask the question "What is my church doing to become more evangelistic?" But the better question is "What am I doing to become more evangelistic?"*

*Charles H. Spurgeon was right. We need more soul winners." Thom S Rainer*

### **3. The message crosses the race barrier**

**Read: 5-13**

**Let's look at this under three heading:-**

#### **a. There is a complete change of allegiance by the people of Samaria.**

Philip preached. What did he preach? Jesus.

Men, women and even Simon the sorcerer turned to Jesus. They turned from being attentive and following Simon as a 'Great Power' to following Jesus as 'the Great Power'.

#### **b. The Samaritans conversion is confirmed by the Apostles.**

**Read: 14-17**

So why didn't the Samaritans receive the Holy Spirit until Peter and John came and laid hands on them?

God withheld the giving of the Spirit so that the early church would not be split into a Jewish section and a rival Samaritan section.

This isn't just like crossing the border into New South Wales where in spite of all the jokes things are pretty much the same. They're going to SAMARIA. And the SAMARITANS were the SWORN ENEMIES of the Jews. It was a feud that goes back a thousand years. The Jews and the Samaritans were related. And I guess if you've ever seen a family feud, you'll know they're usually the worst kind. There was a family split 1000 years before. And the Samaritans had broken away; they built their own temple on Mount Gerazim; and from there on, the two nations were like OIL AND WATER.

The Jewish apostles and other believers had to accept the Samaritans' salvation as genuine, as evidenced by the gift of the Holy Spirit. But the point is, this is an exceptional passage, not a pattern for us to follow. The norm is spelled out clearly in the epistles.

What's going on here is UNIQUE. And the thing that makes it unique is that a very important BOUNDARY has just been crossed. There's a MIRACLE HAPPENING. More to the point, it's exactly what Jesus SAID was going to happen. And it's almost like CROSSING THE BORDER INTO SAMARIA is too big an event for the Apostles not to be in on.

And so it's like when they'd finished the new motorway down to the Gold Coast last year. Everything done. But they left the plastic barriers up in the new lanes so no one could use them for weeks - UNTIL THE PREMIER CAME for the official opening.

What is happening here in Samaria is THE START OF SOMETHING NEW. It's BIG. And the Apostles have got to be there for the opening. What we're looking at here is the very beginning of what we saw in the church made up of people of every different race you can think of. The fact that THE KINGDOM OF GOD isn't just for a bunch of Jews. It's FOR EVERYONE.

#### **c. The pretender is exposed**

**Read: 18-19**

Simon found to be a fraud. He wanted something to add to his power. His magic tricks. He wasn't seeking Jesus for Jesus sake. He was seeking Jesus for the goodies he thought he could get from him.

Peter makes it clear he is not a Christian.

Read vv.20-24

You know, we need to be careful. Because it's not that hard to find guys like Simon everywhere. Big reputation. Draw a crowd. They present themselves as ambassadors of Jesus. And yet in the end they're CON-MEN. Who

just want to build a reputation. Build a business. And the trouble is, among Christians, THERE'S A SUCKER BORN EVERY MINUTE.

And we're instinctively more impressed by a bloke who says he can get people out of wheelchairs – than by a message that can BRING TOGETHER PEOPLE who have been enemies for a thousand years. By trusting Jesus. We're instinctively more impressed by someone who doing healing than by a gospel that can bring together Greeks and Germans and you and me.

Sometimes we make Simon's mistake, don't we. We're fascinated by stuff that looks like power. And so we miss the point. THE GOSPEL IS ALL ABOUT JESUS. That's what brings the bigger miracles. His DEATH FOR OUR SINS. That breaks down barriers that can run so very, very deep.

We can be distracted by all sort of things so that we start talking and acting like they are the things that really matter.

A couple of years back, the **Maroochydore Surf Lifesaving Club** opened a beautiful new clubhouse. What turned out to be quite telling however was that the Maroochydore Surf Lifesaving Club made sure there was room for a beautiful restaurant; room for a surf bar and a gym; especially made sure there was room for 70 poker machines. But when the building was finished... Maroochydore Surf Lifesaving Club realized that there actually wasn't any room for the lifeguards. And so in all their exciting new plans and schemes, they'd actually forgotten their core business. They'd forgotten that the club was actually there to save lives.

We help save lives on behalf of Jesus. By sharing the saving news of Jesus with people who need saving.

*What will you talk about as you away from church today?*

*Will you go away talking about Jesus? Particularly the mission of Jesus and how you can play a part in it.*

God wants to reach all people, even those whom we may not naturally like. We have to drop any prejudice that might cling to us and see every person as someone who needs to hear the gospel. People you may not like need Christ. Militant atheists need Christ, and He can save them, too. People of other races need Christ, and He will have some from every people group there before His throne.

It's the same gospel for all people. All have sinned; all need a Savior.

Jesus Christ is the only Savior for all who call upon Him.

Like the people who were scattered so we are scattered.

I am not the only person who is to share Jesus. If that is the case lots of people will not hear. There are places and people God has placed you that he hasn't placed anyone else.

Do you see the place and people God has put with as where God as sent you?

Mums with other mums at school or childcare or next door. No one has the neighbours you have. No one is in the workplace you are in working with the you work with. No one else is with the people you are with at school or TAFE or uni.

A Christian lifestyle' is one in which we involve ourselves in the lives of our neighbors, seeking their good— especially their salvation

If you're not going to share Jesus with these God given people who is?

We all have our own mission field.

As Philip was the one for the Samaria so you are to the people in your life. And for most of you you don't need to go and find someone. There already people in your life. It's probably just a matter of taking that relationships a step forward. I'm not asking you to do anything extra. Or make another commitment. Or become busier. I don't want you to inwardly feeling burdened by another thing to do.

No but to keep doing what your doing with a different mindset. Relating to people for their good and ultimate good of knowing Jesus.

The Church or Christian that stops being a missionary stops being a Christian Church or a Christian church.

Have you stopped being a missionary?

Have we stopped being a missionary church?

Are we having relationships with people for their good and sharing Jesus with them so we are seeing most of our growth as a church through new believers. NO. Something needs to change if we are going to have a future as a church.

*Do you believe the message is for everyone so that you are sharing it with everyone?*