

"REACHING THE OPEN-MINDED"

7 / 23 / 17

Acts 8:26-31 (32-40) (NRSV) (Was SERM_293; 6/30/96; 756, 7 / 27 / 03; 1055, 7 / 8 / 07; 1454, 7/22/12)

INTRODUCTION— THE YOUNG, SINGLE METHODIST PREACHER knocked on the door of the CHURCH MEMBER'S HOME. The woman of the house answered, and VERY EMBARRASSED, said, "**REV. DUDLEY, I THOUGHT I SUGGESTED THAT YOU COME AFTER SUPPER?**" REV. DUDLEY, not much of a COOK, smiled, and said, "**YES MA'AM, AND SUPPER IS *WHAT I CAME AFTER.***"

A LOT OF PEOPLE IN TODAY'S WORLD ARE **HUNGRY**— PHYSICALLY, YES, but MANY are **SPIRITUALLY** HUNGRY. THAT SEEMS TO BE A NATURAL PART of the HUMAN CONDITION— to HAVE a **SPIRITUAL THIRST**, a **SPIRITUAL HUNGER**.

I. HUNGRY PEOPLE

A. THE SPIRITUAL HUNGER OF PEOPLE TODAY

1. **EX.:** LOOK at all the DIFFERENT RELIGIONS in America today— we used to think of "DIFFERENT RELIGIONS" as different Xtn. Denominations— METHODIST, Baptist, Presbyterian, Pentecostal, Catholic, Episcopal, etc. NOW— EASTERN RELIGIONS; GROWING NUMBER of MUSLIMS— 8 MILLION UNITED METHODIST CHRISTIANS in the U.S. today— nearly **HALF** that many **MUSLIMS in the U.S. TODAY!!!**
2. The **BEATLES TINKERED** with **HINDUISM** in the 1960's— made it more ACCEPTABLE and INTERESTING for "BABY BOOMERS" to look into EASTERN RELIGIONS.
3. **RICHARD GERE**— the Actor— is a PROPONENT of TIBETAN **BUDDHISM**.
4. ON THE OTHER HAND, there are those in the NEW GENERATION WHO FIND THE WORLD SPINNING OUT OF CONTROL! THEIR HUNGER

IS SO GREAT THAT THEY CAN'T COPE WITH IT.

5. **CURT COBAIN** seemed to **HAVE IT ALL**— his “**GRUNGE ROCK**” group, “**NIRVANA**” — was on the **TOP** of the **CHARTS**, **SELLING MILLIONS** of **CD's** and **TAPES**— **HE WAS A MILLIONAIRE!!** **MARRIED**, with a **LITTLE BABY**— **YET the HOLE** in his **LIFE**, in his **HEART**, was **SO GREAT, SO PAINFUL**, **HE—tragically— KILLED HIMSELF!!**

B. THANKFULLY— People are more open today to **CHRIST** and His **CHURCH**

1. **FORTY YEARS AGO**— The **WATERGATE SCANDAL** CAUSED MANY **POLITICAL LEADERS** to **RE-ASSESS** their **LIVES**: And **MANY** **TURNED TO CHRIST**.

2. **FOR THE LAST TEN YEARS**, **CHURCH LEADERS** have been noticing **MORE** and **MORE** **YOUNG ADULTS**— **WHO HAD LOST INTEREST** IN **CHURCH** AS **TEENAGERS**— **RETURNING** to **CHURCH** in their **TWENTIES** and **THIRTIES**

3. **MANY** ARE FINDING THAT THERE IS a **HOLE IN THEIR HEART**, a **HUNGER IN THEIR SOUL**— AND ARE LOOKING for **GOD** TO FILL THAT HOLE, THAT HUNGER.

II. HUNGRY FOR CHANGE

A. HUNGRY FOR GOD — THEN

1. **PEOPLE** HAVE ALWAYS BEEN **HUNGRY** FOR **GOD**—
2. **JUST THINK OF THE ETHIOPIAN MAN**— in so **MANY** **WAYS**, *he should have HAD IT MADE !*
3. **HE WAS THE TREASURER TO THE ETHIOPIAN QUEEN**— A **POSITION** of **GREAT POWER** and **INFLUENCE**. **HE** probably also had **GREAT PERSONAL WEALTH**— he could afford the trip to **JERUSALEM**. **AND BEING THE HEAD OF THE TREASURY**, **HE HAD TO HAVE GREAT PERSONAL PRESTIGE** and **REAL POLITICAL SUCCESS!**
4. **YET**— **HERE HE WAS**— **STILL SEARCHING**. **HE WAS A GOD-FEARING**

GENTILE— that’s what HEBREW PEOPLE called NON-JEWISH MEN and WOMEN who WORSHIPED the GOD of ISRAEL as the ONLY TRUE GOD, but didn’t want to CONVERT to JUDAISM.

5. **AND STILL— the JEWISH FAITH WAS **NOT ENOUGH** FOR HIM.**
6. **He was — SEARCHING the SCRIPTURES FOR MORE.**

B. PHILIP — OUR EXAMPLE of “REACHING THE OPEN-MINDED”

1. **LED by the HOLY SPIRIT**
2. **WE, TOO, CAN BE LED BY the HOLY SPIRIT— to PRAY for those to WHOM WE MAY SPEAK TO ABOUT CHRIST.**
3. **PHILIP PROBABLY DIDN'T HEAR an “ETHEREAL VOICE” — IT JUST SEEMED SOMEHOW that GOD WANTED HIM TO GO DOWN THAT ROAD, and to GO UP TO THAT CHARIOT.**
4. **BE OPEN — to the small IMPRESSIONS of GOD’S SPIRIT on your MIND and HEART. GOD has LED me to people and to SITUATIONS many times— and SOMETIMES I wanted to go ELSEWHERE, and DO SOMETHING ELSE!! I had to watch things UNFOLD to REALIZE that GOD had a PURPOSE for me RIGHT THERE!!**
5. **The ETHIOPIAN TREASURER WAS READING from ISAIAH Ch. 53— about the “SUFFERING SERVANT” — a PROPHECY of JESUS.**
6. **PHILIP TOOK THAT OPPORTUNITY to TALK to HIM about JESUS!**
7. **TAKE or MAKE OPPORTUNITIES TO POINT SOMEONE TO CHRIST.**
8. **EX.: In L.E.A. class, when I laid out the EVANGELISTIC BOOKLET with a REFEREE on the COVER— GUY TELLING ME ABOUT GETTING SO DRUNK THAT WEEKEND, PICKED IT UP—**

C. HUNGER — FULFILLED ONLY by CHRIST!!!

III. THE HUNGRY — CHANGED AND TRANSFORMED!!

- A. AUGIE— was like a lot of college students in the 1960's, '70's '80's, '90's and TODAY— he was willing to TRY OUT NEW THINGS, and wasn't BOUND to BELIEVING and ACTING like his parents WANTED HIM to BELIEVE and ACT. His MOTHER, MONICA, was a DEVOUT, DEDICATED CHRISTIAN—his DAD, PAT, kinda' BELIEVED, but PUT OFF making a PROFESSION of FAITH in CHRIST and BEING BAPTIZED until he was in his fifties.
- B. AUGIE was a BRIGHT, VERY SMART guy— he thought about becoming a LAWYER, but finally settled on being a Teacher in schools and College. Like a LOT of COLLEGE KIDS, HE ADOPTED a philosophy that BELIEVED in GOD and was SIMILAR to CHRISTIANITY, but didn't involve BELIEVING IN and FOLLOWING JESUS CHRIST. He didn't want his MOTHER'S RELIGION to CRAMP HIS STYLE !!!
- C. AUGIE started LIVING with a girl— i.e., YOUNG WOMAN— he had met in COLLEGE. They lived together for ALMOST TEN YEARS, and HAD a SON together.
- D. WHEN HE was about 30, he heard a CHRISTIAN preacher that, for the FIRST TIME, made a lot of sense to Augie. He began to READ the BIBLE, and was SURPRISED that lots in the NEW TESTAMENT— the LIFE, the MIRACLES, the TEACHING of JESUS, and the ARGUMENTS of the APOSTLE PAUL in his Letters— MADE a LOT of SENSE!! The WORDS touched his HEART in a way NOTHING ELSE ever had!! WHAT FINALLY GRABBED his HEART was Romans 13, verse 13— *“Let us behave decently, as in the daytime, not in orgies and drunkenness, not in... immorality and debauchery, not in dissension and jealousy. RATHER, CLOTHE yourselves with the LORD JESUS CHRIST, and do not think about how to GRATIFY the desires of the sinful nature.”*

AUGIE was convinced. He had done a LOT of PARTYING in his day, and it never REALLY did him any good. HE TURNED to CHRIST as his LORD and SAVIOR.

E. AUGIE didn't ALWAYS have it easy after that. His little son died when he was FIVE, then his "Common-law" wife died, then his mother, MONICA, who had PRAYED for him ALL THOSE YEARS, DIED. BUT AUGIE stayed TRUE to CHRIST from that time on, and became A GREAT WRITER, defending the CHRISTIAN FAITH, and WINNING HUNDREDS, even THOUSANDS, to NEW—FOUND faith in CHRIST through his WRITING and SPEAKING. HE ONCE WROTE, "Our hearts are made for thee, O God, and we will find no rest until we rest in Thee."

SOUNDS LIKE any NUMBER of PEOPLE in MY GENERATION, and YOURS??? WELL, it should.

F. The GREAT THING— AUGIE was ST. AUGUSTINE, who lived 1,700 years ago, and became the GREATEST CHRISTIAN BIBLE TEACHER and THEOLOGIAN since the APOSTLE PAUL, 300 YEARS EARLIER. AUGIE (or AUGUSTINE) Sounds like he lived a pretty CONTEMPORARY, MODERN LIFE, didn't he? THE REASON for that IS: REPENTING of one's SINS, and TURNING ONE'S LIFE to the GUIDANCE and DIRECTION of the RISEN LORD, JESUS CHRIST— is the BEST CHOICE for EACH and EVERY PERSON of EVERY AGE!!!!

CONCLUSION — EVERY PERSON, in their OWN WAY, is at SOME TIME, probably MANY TIMES in their LIVES OPEN to HEARING about JESUS CHRIST, and HIS EVERLASTING LOVE for EACH of us. GOD wants us to FIND THEM, and TELL THEM!!