

“Proliferation” Sermon for April 29, 2018,
Lectionary; Acts 8:26-40, Psalm 127:1-5 John 15:1-8

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Sermon Text: “I AM the vine, you are the branches, if you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing.... As the father has loved me, so have I loved you.

Now remain in my love.” John 15:5, 9 NLT

“But the Holy Spirit produces this kind of fruit in our lives: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness.” Galatians 5:22 NLT

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Philip was called to go south into the desert to Gaza.

He was in strange and unfamiliar territory, and he

encountered an Ethiopian Jew. He was not just a

member of the Queen’s court, but a Eunuch. In

accordance with the law of Moses concerning ritual

purity, he was unclean, not allowed to enter the

Temple. He had gone to Jerusalem and was limited

to stand in the Gentile courtyard, an outcast in his

own faith, not accepted, incompatible with Hebrew

teaching. And yet God chose to reach him, to

increase his kind in the beloved community, by

sending Philip to him. When Philip proclaimed Christ

to and baptized the Ethiopian, something different happened. “The Spirit of the Lord suddenly took Philip away.” The Eunuch saw him no longer, but went on his way rejoicing. We learn from this that God’s proliferation is not about how faithful, how effective and how important we are, but rather how useful we are in bringing God to life in the people we meet. Every human being was created to be a part of God’s tree. The human race was brought to life in the garden of God by the very wind, ruach, spirit of God. Our separation from God has dimmed the force of that life, but it is there, awaiting its awakening.

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Twice in our lectionary, Jesus identifies himself, the Christ, as the vine. First as the true vine in 15:1 and then as “I AM the vine in 15:5.” If the true vine is the I AM, then we are of the same tree as Christ and the same tree as God. The ultimate command of Christ,

is that bear fruit, that we proliferate. We are, like all cells, expected to multiply, to produce offspring, to grow God in others, to awaken others to the reality that we are God's. The African missionary to Europe, St Augustine of Hippo wrote, "Thou hast made us for thyself, O Lord, and our heart is restless until it finds its rest in Thee."

Like Philip, in the process of proliferation, we move beyond necessity to manner of living, to sharing the Spirit as a natural outcome of being fully attached to Christ. The fruit we proliferate is the fruit of the Spirit. It is not our wisdom, power and righteousness, but the wisdom, power and righteousness God has decreed upon us. We are special because human beings are God's branches on the tree of life.

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There is always fear involved in bearing fruit. Once we become fruit-bearing we lose control. We may

find ourselves among eunuchs, outcasts, undesirables, in fact the Psalmist says, God honors our lifting up the oppressed, identifying with the poor and outcast. This is not something to be legislated, this and “those people” are the very reason God has called us to proliferate. So often we focus on the fruit WE WANT and who we want, rather than on the dynamic relationship of being co-creators with the source of all life-yes even our lives. Philip did not know what’s next, but the connection is perfect love, that takes away all fear. The connected participate in bringing to life the spirit in all human beings, and the world begins to change. We call it, proliferation.

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As we share the fruit of the spirit: love, joy, peace, goodness, kindness, faithfulness, the celebration of lives, the human branches grow into the “tree of life” –the centerpiece of the garden of God. Live so

connected to people, to each other, transforms us into God's force for proliferation. Amen.