

## “Jump on In...the Water’s Fine!”

A sermon by Pastor Steve Easterday-McPadden  
for FUMC Grand Junction, Sunday, April 25, 2021

This sermon can be listened to on the FUMCGJ

website: <https://www.fumcgj.org/sermons/>

Scripture Text:

Acts 8:26-40 [NLT]

OPENING – Presentation of Pix/Graphics



Look at Philip’s facial expression. Are you shocked when something you say actually comes to pass?! 😊

On the more serious side, when we are trusting in the Holy Spirit to guide us, should we be shocked when things turn out to go in divine directions?

### SERMON THOUGHTS

As I said at the beginning of the service, we’re taking what I call “another look at the fruits of the Spirit” this Easter season. And I say it that way because we’re not delving into the list of the fruits that Paul names in his letter to the Galatians.

Instead, we’re looking at the activities of the Holy Spirit in the early church as told in the book of Acts and seeing in those activities other fruits that might inspire us and encourage us in our faith as followers of Christ in our own time.

Because if what the author of the letter to the Hebrews says is true, that “Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever”, then we can expect the fruits of His Spirit to ripen in our lives even as they did in the early church.

The first of the two fruits of the Spirit for today – from the experiences of both the Ethiopian Treasurer and Philip:

1. The Guidance of the Spirit flowing from trust in the Spirit

(\*Reflect on Anna’s Children’s Message: the Holy Spirit being like our roadmap and the Bible like our guidebook.\*)

The second of the two fruits of the Spirit for today – again, from the experiences of both the Ethiopian Treasurer *and* Philip:

## 2. Joy / Rejoicing

(\*Reflect on my own experience of being touched / filled with the Holy Spirit my senior year of high school. That was one of a few pivotal experiences of God that continue to be wells of life-giving water for me.\*)

### BACK TO THE SCRIPTURES

And so, going back to the Scriptures, I'd like to ask "What does baptism mean for us?" Or more to the point...What does your baptism mean to you? This is really important b/c it should mean something – in a big way! And we should be able to say it...to articulate it. Otherwise, I'm not sure it does have meaning.

I could rattle off the list of meanings of Baptism we learned in seminary or a list any of us could find on the internet, but that wouldn't necessarily be your or my answer to the question, "What does baptism mean for me?"

Looking at the root meaning of the word "baptism" or "to baptize" can give us a helpful angle on this. The word simply means "to immerse". Hence, our Baptist friends' insistence on full immersion baptism as the only legitimate form of it; that's what the word means. But, Jesus didn't command His followers to *immerse in water* candidates for baptism; although, that was

implied by the context of baptism. He commanded them "to baptize" – to immerse – "all nations in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit" (Matt. 28:19).

Which speaks loudly into our lives today: What are we immersed in? As the Youth Group explored in their weekend retreat/lock-in this weekend, "What is it that gives you your identity?" Is it your immersion in Christ, His life, His ways? Or it is something else entirely? What are you immersed in – because that's the particular meaning of your baptism.

I'm going to invite you to spend some time in the week ahead reflecting on this, and I'm going to challenge you to write your response – either on paper or on your phone, tablet, computer, whatever. You can research it if you want, but the formulation should be your own.

And if you find that to be a daunting task, I'd like to hear about it because if enough of you are struggling with this, maybe we should take a couple of hours in a class format and explore what baptism means. Or...if you find it such a meaningful exercise that you want to re-affirm your baptism, we can do that, too.

### CONCLUSION

The way that Philip taught the Ethiopian official about Jesus starting from the official's own Biblical frame of reference – nothing very learned or sophisticated, just passionate and curious – and the way he described life in Christ evoked in that Ethiopian official an immediate desire to live in, for, and through Christ.

I think the cartoon captured Philip's thinking!



Much to Philip's great surprise the Ethiopian official blurted out enthusiastically, "Look, here is water! What is to prevent me from being baptized?"

Afterward, the official went on his way rejoicing! Can you identify with him? I sure can.

Let's spend the week ahead asking the Holy Spirit to guide us, to direct our paths, to lead us to an encounter with the living Christ that we might find ourselves rejoicing, as well.

Let us pray...(\*Jessica, 9 AM; Charlotte, 11 AM\*)